



The initial shock of being advised that one's child has cancer is simply overwhelming. I was not a stranger to blood disorders and cancer. In 1995 my mother passed away from AML in only four short weeks after diagnosis. She had struggled for twelve years with thrombocytosis and myelofibrosis, but it was ultimately the blood cancer which overcame her. That experience, however, could not prepare me for the diagnosis of my own son, Matthew, with t-cell ALL a week after his fourth birthday.

Like most mothers, I scrambled to immediately refocus my energies in tackling the daunting mission which lay ahead – that of doing everything that I could in order to support my son and beat this horrible disease. Little did I know at the time that my personal struggle would grow as did my compassion for all of the other families and children that I met who were suffering through similar cancer issues. Each family has its own story, as the twists and turns of coping with cancer manifest themselves in various ways. Emotionally, financially and physically, the struggle with cancer is often unbearable.

If there is a silver lining, it can only be the heightened sense of compassion that develops in us for those who suffer and the renewed determination to eradicate this deadly killer. I became acutely aware of the tremendous need for continued research, community support and above all, the necessity of increasing public awareness of blood cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma. So many young children afflicted with these, struggle for years even after treatment while others simply succumb. For me, this has become an intolerable truism.

Thankfully, Matthew continues to be in remission. However, my work as a cancer survivor's mom will continue until blood cancers have a permanent cure. The Light The Night® Walk symbolizes the hope and the possibilities for removing this darkness, as well as acknowledging the support for all the good work done so far. With increased awareness I believe that blood cancers will be beaten in our lifetime. No amount of darkness can extinguish the candle of hope that we as a community continue to promote every year.