



Cancer Survivor Gives Message in a Bottle



Nicole asks readers to call her to learn how they can donate used wine bottles for her outreach to cancer patients. Her number is 479-925-8150.

*May you always have an angel by your side,
Watching out for you in all the things you do,
Reminding you to keep believing in brighter
days,
Finding ways for your wishes and dreams
To take you to beautiful places...*

Nicole Y. knows that well-chosen words can be a powerful source of encouragement for individuals struggling with cancer.

As a cancer survivor herself, the 35-year-old wife and mother of seven children developed “Message in a Bottle” as a hopeful outreach and a way to “give back.”

She collects, cleans and decorates empty wine bottles, then writes inspirational messages and

includes poems such as “May You Always Have an Angel by Your Side” from which the above excerpt is taken. She then sends the bottles to fellow cancer patients throughout the world.

“I believe God gave the idea to me,” the Bentonville, Arkansas, woman said in an interview. She plans to develop “Message in a Bottle” as a nonprofit organization.

In July 2003 when she was pregnant with her son, Wyatt, Nicole lost her vision and was diagnosed with ocular melanoma, a rare form of cancer.

Because of her condition, she had to deliver the baby two months early. Only days after Wyatt’s birth, she underwent surgery to remove her left eye.

In October 2005, a PET scan revealed malignant lesions on her liver and later, in February 2006, a spot on her brain.

Fortunately, she learned of Mercy Medical Airlift and made arrangements to travel to M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. She flew there five times for surgery and chemotherapy. “The gamma knife got it all,” she said of the tumor in her brain.

Following that treatment protocol, she enrolled in an experimental program called “anti-CTLA4,” at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

“It’s curing me!” Nicole said. “The MRI is completely clean.”

So far, MMA has provided Nicole with five round-trip flights to Pittsburgh.

“Mercy Medical has been my savior,” she said. “It has made it possible for me to have the best medical care.”

Despite Wounds, Soldier's Fighting Spirit Prevails



Encouragement from his family (here Kevin is shown at Walter Reed with his dad, mom and brother) is an important part of the healing process.

Sacrifice...is the passion of great souls," wrote the Swiss philosopher Henri Frederic Amiel.

Army Spc. Kevin Hardin lives out that shining truth.

The 21-year-old combat medic was in bed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, recovering from a 13 ½ hour operation to repair severe injuries incurred in Iraq following a rocket-propelled explosion.

When orderlies wheeled by with a gurney carrying a newly-wounded soldier, Kevin rose straight up and started pulling his plugs and tubes out, his mind shouting, "I'm going to get up and talk to that soldier. I know what he's feeling! It's scary. I want to tell him it's going to be okay—I'm here for you."

Hospital staff calmed him down and told him that indeed they wanted him to talk to the wounded but not now; he must give himself time to recover.

Kevin was on patrol in Samarra, Iraq, on September 30, 2007, when the explosion hit his Humvee. The blast sent 12 pieces of shrapnel into his skull and took fingers from both hands and flesh from his arms. He has no feeling in his hands except for in his right pinkie.

To date, he's undergone 18 surgeries, including bone and skin grafts that have earned him the nickname "Patches." He faces many more operations and "still has a long way to go," his mother, Terry Hardin, says.

She says that as a medic, the hardest thing for him is to be dependent on help from others.

Kevin's father, Charles, has been by his side since day one, giving up his job as a security guard in order to do so.

His mom, Terry, works as a legal secretary for a law firm in Palm Beach County, Florida. She has two other sons at home in Jupiter--Kyle and Keith--and an older son, Kenny, who lives in Massachusetts with his wife and daughter.

Kyle, 16, and Keith, 14, had to withdraw from school due to the family's recurrent trips to Walter

Reed. They are enrolled in a public "virtual" school. It's a lot for Terry to manage.

Therefore, when she found Mercy Medical Airlift's program, Air Compassion for Veterans (ACV), on the Internet and learned of the free flights available to her family, she felt enormously relieved.

"Without their assistance, it would have been virtually impossible for us to travel to D.C. to be at Kevin's bedside during this very difficult time," she noted.

Jim Smith, MMA vice president of operations and ACV executive director, said, "It is an honor to serve



Sp. Hardin helps carry school supplies for Iraqi children. He says his service there was "all about the children, so they can have freedom."

this heroic family in their time of need."

Kevin, who received the Purple Heart, remains upbeat. People often ask him if he has any regrets.

"What is there to

regret, if you're doing it for your country? I would do it ten times over," he said.

Something for Nothing?

Flying the Desk: A Word From President Ed Boyer



Of course there's no free lunch – but the transaction cost of your donating to MMA (or whatever organization) is free to you and free to us!

You don't even have to pay postage! Thank you for reading my enclosed letter.

Mission Report

Fiscal Year To Date

(July 2007--January 2008)

- Missions Coordinated...5,162
- Missions Completed....4,877
 - Child Missions...514
 - Veteran Missions..1,877

For information on making a donation or to learn more about MMA, please visit our website: www.mercymedical.org.

Phone: (757) 318-9174.

#11844

