

A gift of HOPE

Written by Deb Egenberger

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‘The world doesn’t change until we do something to change it.’

Cancer has gouged its way into the deepest crevice of Christy Aden’s core.

The disease has changed her faith and molded her daily attitude toward life.

Interestingly, though, cancer is not a diagnosis Aden has ever heard for herself. Her mother Mary Theasmeyer has a clean bill of health as well.

Still, cancer drives the duo to make a difference one yellow buttercup flower at a time.

At the tender age of 16, Aden lost her best friend to leukemia. Two years later, a second close friend died from an extremely rare form of cancer.

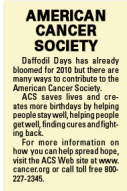
Since then, Aden and Theasmeyer have watched as countless friends, family members and neighbors have battled cancer in one form or another.

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“There isn’t a single person who doesn’t know someone who has fought cancer or who has died from cancer,” Aden said. “And if you don’t know someone, you will in your lifetime.”



That’s why Aden is passionate about raising money to fund cancer research through the American Cancer Society’s Daffodil Days. Her mother shares her enthusiasm.

“We all have bills,” Aden said. “In this economy, we’re all strapped but the world isn’t going to change unless we do something to change it.”

Aden and Theasmeyer became catalysts for that change when they signed on as Gothenburg representatives for Dawson County’s Daffodil Days fund-raising effort.

The mother-daughter team began selling daffodils in early February with only a short time frame to work in.

They collected more than \$2,000 of the county’s \$10,000 total.

“We didn’t have a goal dollar-wise,” Aden said. “For us it’s more about getting the word out, about giving hope to the people who are fighting cancer.”

Not only did local individuals purchase daffodils for themselves and their loved ones but large corporate sponsors and several Gothenburg businesses contributed big bucks to make someone’s day anonymously.

Theasmeyer said Monsanto and Frito-Lay both purchased cases of 500 flowers with the

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intention they be delivered to hospice patients or other local residents affected by cancer.

“It’s an incredibly generous gift of hope,” Theasmeyer said.

But that’s how Gothenburg folks are, they agreed.

“This community has been hit hard by cancer,” Aden said, “and people always step up and contribute to a good cause.”

Cancer research funded by such drives as Daffodil Days hits close to home for Aden and Theasmeyer.

Aden’s mother-in-law, Nancy Aden, is living proof that research helps.

“If it had been 10 or 15 years ago when my mother-in-law was fighting cancer, she wouldn’t have had the new drugs and the chance to survive,” Aden said. “That’s what this is all about.”

And the hope.

“Without hope, you have nothing,” Theasmeyer said.

Even though her father had terminal cancer and everyone in the family knew the outcome would be his eventual death, Theasmeyer said she never passed up an opportunity to share his positive attitude, his hope.

And when close family friend Matt Jobman was diagnosed with brain cancer, Aden learned

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about hope yet again.

“I kept telling myself after all the people I knew who had died from cancer, I couldn’t do it again,” she said of her neighbor and child’s godfather. “But he helped me realize I was fighting cancer the wrong way. I was letting it get to me and I didn’t even have it.”

Cancer, she said, feeds off of everything negative. A positive attitude may not stop the disease but it will help develop an outlook of hope no matter how grim things look from the outside.

“Matt accepted his cancer,” Aden said. “He always said it would be OK, that he was OK. He helped me understand that.”

Even after his death in 2007, Aden says Jobman has been a ray of hope for her. It’s that kind of hope and change in attitude Aden and Theasmeyer want to bring to others through Daffodil Days.

“The reality is not everyone is going to survive,” Aden said. “But on the other side of that, cancer does not have to be a death sentence.”

Money for cancer research is making a difference every day with new treatments and drugs coming out all the time. Every dollar helps.

“If the little bit of money we’ve raised with this can help just one person, we’ve done what we set out to do,” Aden said. “If I never know that person’s name, if I never meet them, it doesn’t matter. I know someone loves them as much as I’ve loved the people I’ve lost.”

Recently, an elderly Gothenburg woman contacted Theasmeyer about purchasing daffodils but she was unable to leave her home to deliver the money.

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Theasmeyer said she drove to the woman's house and during conversation learned the woman is battling colon cancer.

"Here she is living with this terrible disease and all she wanted was for someone to come get her money for daffodils and deliver the flowers," Theasmeyer said.

The mother and daughter delivered daffodils on Thursday last week.

"Daffodils are such a simple thing that can mean so much," Aden said. "Look outside at the snow and the winter we've had. It's time for flowers and daffodils tell us spring is coming.

"For someone with cancer maybe they can look over at a vase of daffodils and have hope."

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