



Susan has always inspired and motivated others both personally and professionally, but little did she know that at age 44 she would need to channel her energy into fighting for her life. After what was to be a relaxing, fun cruise to end the summer of 2014, Susan began experiencing pain and sickness. After the pain medication that was prescribed wore off, the pain was even more prominent, and Susan insisted on going to the ER where she was admitted for a blood transfusion after her bloodwork showed her counts were low. Two days later she received the devastating diagnosis, she had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL) with a Philadelphia positive chromosome mutation.

Her journey was going to be a fight, but fortunately there was a clinical trial she qualified for consisting of 8 rounds of Hyper-CVAD chemotherapy followed by 24 months of maintenance chemo. After 5 months of fighting countless infections her body grew toxic of the chemo, so the decision was made to not complete the heavy chemo and go straight to the maintenance phase. She will be reliant on a medication for the remainder of her life, but that is a small price to pay for keeping Susan's continued remission.

Susan missed seeing her son, Andrew, off to his first day of middle school and her daughter, Amanda, off to 5th grade, she had to put her doctorate degree on hold, and countless other missed moments. The journey was rocky, requiring her husband, Rob, to juggle his job and his new role of caregiver, but under the weight of this all, their faith never wavered. Together, with their extended network of family and friends, the Nichols family never lost sight of life's small and cherished victories. One of which was Andrew's decision to sign on as a Student of the Year candidate for Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

While LLS had not been on their radar, they learned first-hand how impactful LLS is when Susan began her trial which included a medication similar to the medications made possible through LLS research and support. When it came time for Andrew to sign on as a Student of the Year (SOY), he didn't hesitate, and his sister was right by his side. Andrew combined SOY with his Eagle Scout project, and through his entrepreneurial spirit and tremendous love for his mother, Andrew and team surpassed their goal raising \$47,000 for LLS. Rob is also helping to support LLS as his company (Wells Fargo Advisors) representative for their corporate sponsorship of Light the Night.

It has taken several years for Susan and her family to find and embrace their "new normal". Today, Susan is back to pursuing her doctorate and she and Andrew enjoy being able to mentor the next generation of LLS Student of the Year candidates. Susan is without a doubt grateful to be here, but admits that the past several years have been tremendously difficult for her. She bears some survivor's guilt, and everything is still very much through a leukemia lens for her and her family. However, she is more intentional with her life, and isn't afraid to lean on others to carry her through. Her faith is stronger than ever, and she knows it will guide her as it has this entire journey.

