

Running for a cause

GW senior formed liver cancer foundation in memory of friend

by Nicole Wetherell
Hatchet Reporter

"When you lose your best friend, you don't know what to do," said senior Sherri Weinstein, recalling her feelings in October 2001, when her best friend Adrienne died from primary liver cancer. But after discovering that primary liver cancer, also known as Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC), is one of the most overlooked and under-researched forms of cancer, it didn't take long for Weinstein to realize that something had to be done.

Now, three years later, the GW senior is devoting her life to researching and raising awareness for HCC. At the end of October, Weinstein will run in the Marine Corps Marathon to raise money for the cause.

In May 2001, Adrienne Wilson was rushed to the emergency room after experiencing intense pain in her right side at school. Within two days, doctors had concluded that primary liver cancer, the fourth most common cancer in the world, had led to the development of tumors in her liver and lungs. The cancer was caused by chronic hepatitis B and C, which was passed on to Wilson from her mother at birth and, until then, had not displayed any symptoms. Wilson passed away just three months later at the age of 15.

Weinstein, who became friends with Wilson after meeting her in a

high school dance class, was devastated by the loss.

Since then, Weinstein has been devoted to raising HCC awareness. She is a founding board member of Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association, established by Adrienne's sister, Andrea Wilson, in 2002. As the chair of Blue Faery's medical research committee, Weinstein created a Patient Education Brochure on the causes, diagnoses, stages, symptoms and treatment options for HCC. According to Sherri, Blue Faery's brochure is the first of its kind, outlining the basic information that people diagnosed with HCC and their families need to know. It is currently distributed at four major hospitals throughout the United States.

In addition to distributing information about HCC, Weinstein is involved in efforts to raise money for the cause. On October 31, she will be running the Marine Corps Marathon to raise money as a member of "Team Blue Faery." Raising money for the foundation has led Sherri to run this marathon twice before – in 2002 and again in 2003. Before then, Weinstein said she had "never even run a real mile."

"It was the only thing in my life that I really didn't think I could do," Sherri said of her first race. "But I did it," she said with a smile.

Now, the GW student works out six days (for a total of about 15

hours) per week to prepare for the 26.2-mile race. She has also been working hard to obtain sponsorship from her family, friends and co-workers by sending out letters asking for donations. So far, \$1,400 has been raised for Blue Faery from the upcoming marathon alone.

Unlike previous marathons, Weinstein will be running with a friend for the late October race. Susanne Eymmer, a personal friend and first time marathon runner, will be the other half of "Team Blue Faery."

Weinstein's mission of raising awareness about HCC has affected almost every aspect of her life. After originally entering GW as a mechanical and aerospace engineering major, she decided to change her major to statistics with the hope of being able to apply the skill to a career in medical research and public health. She will be attending graduate school majoring in bio-statistics next year.

Sherri finds donating her time to Blue Faery to be a rewarding way of honoring Wilson's memory. She plans to continue working with the non-profit organization and raising awareness for HCC for many years to come.

"If we save someone's life," she said, "it doesn't get any more rewarding than that."

For more information on Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association or to make a donation, visit www.bluefaery.org. ■



Jeff Baum/photo editor

Sherri Weinstein (left) runs with her friend Susanne Eymmer in preparation for the October Marine Corp Marathon.