



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action

Remembering Patrick While Helping Others

"One cannot get through life without pain...What we can do is choose how to use the pain life presents to us."

- Bernie S. Siegel

Shawn Nolan is a warrior. He has been relentless in fundraising to improve the lives of kids with cancer and to fund research to eradicate it. He is living proof of how one can turn the negative energy from losing a child into a positive activity to help others cope.

Pediatric cancer is the cause closest to Shawn's heart. His son Patrick was taken by the disease in 2003 when he was only 4 years old. Diagnosed with a liver condition at six months of age, Patrick was under a physician's care almost all of his life. His liver cancer came as a complete shock, as did his passing just 17 days after it was discovered.

Dedicating their lives to honoring the life of their son, Shawn and his family are making a difference in the life of our parish and our greater community at large. The Nolan family has been a part of SMMP for 28 years. Shawn attended RCIA 18 years ago and became a Catholic at that time.

From the depth of his grief, Shawn became determined to "prevent other families from going through what we did". He began to support the Relay for Life, an event that supports the American Cancer Society. After raising nearly \$250,000 over 10 years, Shawn discovered the St. Baldrick's Foundation, which specifically targets research for pediatric cancer. He was hooked. (His daughter Moira still leads the Relay team in Patrick's honor.)

"Think of your child, then, not as dead, but as living; not as a flower that has withered, but as one that is transplanted, and touched by a Divine hand, is blooming in richer colors and sweeter shades than those of earth."

- Richard Hooker, British theologian

Shawn believes in the work of St. Baldrick's Foundation so much he shaves his head each year to call attention to the fundraiser. (over 10,000 children in the United States will be diagnosed with some form of pediatric cancer in 2014) On March 1, Shawn and his team of family, friends and community members had their heads shaved at the St. Baldrick's fundraising event at the Naperville Marriott. On hand were literally hundreds of local police and firemen and a couple of school teams there to have fun and do something tangible for a good cause.

When Shawn was asked how his church played a role in this, he replied "it brought us (his family) closer to our faith. St.

Margaret Mary has been our home in our darkest hours. We would never have made it through something like Patrick's passing without faith and a community to share it with."

Shawn says "with how happy Patrick was, he would not be happy watching us be sad." What an attitude after all that has happened.

If you want to help Shawn and the Nolan family support this cause, go to <http://www.stbaldricks.org/participants/mypage/663646/2014> and you can make a donation on line. Or, as we watch his hair grow back over the next several weeks, you can get behind his parish ministries including PADS and Men's Club.

"There is no footprint too small to leave an imprint on this world." - Author unknown

- by Phil Samuels



Parish Heartbeats is an occasional bulletin column that celebrates the ways St. Margaret Mary parishioners make a difference in the lives of others.