

Life stories

A celebration of lives well lived and people well loved
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Danielle Lankin was 'sparkle in your eye'

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The true character of a person is often revealed not during good times but how she reacts to adversity.

It's hard to think of a more difficult situation than the one 20-year-old Mount Albert native Danielle Lankin found herself in in 2013.

It started with headaches. She thought nothing of it but, after awhile, her mom, Deborah, insisted she be checked out by a doctor.

'I thought, 'This is crazy.'

**She had been
100 per cent.
Perfectly healthy!**

"I thought, "This is crazy," Deborah said. "She had been 100 per cent, perfectly healthy."

The news from Southlake Regional Health Centre was not good — Danielle had a brain tumour the size of a fist.

Danielle was diagnosed with brain cancer after having the large mass removed. The surgery damaged her cognitive skills and left her paralysed on her right side. She started aggressive treatments of chemotherapy and radiation.

The easy thing would have been to wallow in self-pity but Danielle was determined, instead, to live life to the fullest. "She held strong right to the end," Deborah said. "Her world had crashed down but she still had good spirit and could laugh and joke."

Danielle would go in to schools in the York Region District School Board and local colleges and share her story about fighting brain cancer.

Danielle grew up in Mount Albert and attended Mount Albert Public School and Huron Heights Secondary School. She had just started studying nursing at Georgian College when she was diagnosed.

"She would have graduated from Georgian this year," Deborah said.

Danielle chose to go into nursing because she always wanted to work with people and loved science in school. "She would have made a fabulous nurse," Deborah said.

The response from the community eclipsed anything her family could have imagined. They blew past their original goal of \$25,000 and raised more than \$40,000.

With the help of her family, Danielle fought her disease with courage.

The family rallied around her and supported her as best they could. Danielle's older sister, Jaime Lynn, started a fundraising page on gofundeme.com in 2014 to raise money to support her medical care and quality of life.

The Lankins wanted to install a ramp and lift in their house, so they could move Danielle with greater ease.



ERA FILE PHOTO

Danielle Lankin's friends and family held a Journey Against Brain Cancer - Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser in May 2013. Here, Danielle is surrounded by her loving family, mom, Deb and sisters, Lindsay (left) and Jaime Lynn. To read the story, follow: bit.ly/1RYWVwp

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Danielle was able to go to Florida, Whistler and Vancouver in her final year.

She fought her disease with amazing courage but eventually succumbed to cancer in January 2015. She was 21.

Last month, Deborah and Danielle's sisters, Jamie Lynn and Lindsay set off luminaires in her memory.

Danielle's legacy lives on even

after she passed away. She donated her eyes, which are being used by a 32-year-old and an eight-year-old. Deborah was at Sunnybrook recently and Danielle's radiologist still had the funky socks Danielle gave him.

"She will truly be missed. She was the highlight and sparkle in your eye," Deborah said.

Life stories



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"Adored by children, universally respected and an inspiration to her peers, Mrs. McCluskey was a tireless volunteer, quick to deflect the praise heaped on her."

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