

Attacking wall of fear on cancer

Fifteen years ago, my daughter, Amber, died from cancer. To save others from the same anguish, I photographed her experience, kept an intimate diary and wrote a book, "The Secret Legacy."

Thus began my journey and my (so far) futile attempt to break through the overwhelming fear that surrounds cancer, to educate people and to unite the cancer community to work together to eradicate this terrifying disease.

Instead of open eyes, minds and hearts, I encountered a stone wall. I spent years banging my head against it until I saw what lay beyond: the politics of cancer; the world behind the headlines and promotional brochures; the companies whose success depends on the proliferation of the disease; a medical community beset with infighting and competition; politicians who promote "the war on cancer," but are unwilling to support legislation to win it, and hundreds of organizations, filled with thousands of people, all working separately to save millions of cancer victims.

Despite this bumpy road, my work with the people at Hospice of the Chesapeake reminds me: Never give up and never accept cancer as an inevitable part of life. To this end, I have three goals: Take the focus off of the statistics and put it back on the people; ask the medical community to look at all cancer therapies around the world ... with an open mind, and publish my book myself so that Amber will become the face of cancer, not just another number. ...

Imagine a monument, similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, that would honor the more than 12 million people who have died from cancer in the quarter-century since President Richard M. Nixon launched the "war on cancer." It would be more than 16 miles long.

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