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Mother and Daughter Vow to Fight Cancer as Teammates

By Nick Marnell



Fighting cancer is a family affair for the Browns.

Photo provided

The Brown family of Moraga had just survived a terrifying experience, but an encore lurked in the shadows.

Finley Brown beat kidney cancer late last year, making international news as a group of her biggest fans, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District firefighters, escorted her to her final chemotherapy treatment.

"I never knew it was possible for someone to look forward to going to chemo," said her mom, A.J. Brown, as her 6-year-old daughter beamed from the fire engine on the way to the hospital.

But instead of emitting a massive exhale, Brown, general manager of the California Academy of Performing Arts, fought through a constant state of anxiety. She did not feel relieved at all. "We just went through something really tough for our family. Why aren't I walking on air?" she said.

The answer came out of nowhere.

The Browns were about to depart on a mid-April Hawaii trip, presented to Finley by the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Before the family left, Brown visited her Lafayette dermatologist for a Botox treatment, and she asked the doctor to check out a mole on her leg. The dermatologist removed the mole and called Brown after the biopsy result.

"I know what you just went through with your baby girl," the doctor told Brown, "but this is melanoma." Brown, whose family has a cancer history, knew it was the deadliest form of skin cancer. She set up an appointment with a plastic surgeon in Lafayette for when she returned from Hawaii.

"I appreciated the irony of taking Finley on her Make-A-Wish trip; meanwhile I'm the one with cancer," Brown said. "My vanity saved me. I'm probably the first person in history who can say Botox saved my life."

The surgeon cut out a chunk of Brown's leg, with Finley nurturing through the procedure and the rehab. "It was magical to see her growth and her wisdom," Brown said.

Brown initially felt angry — that the family should have been done with cancer, that their quota was filled. Her spirituality helped dispel the rage. "You forgot what family you were messing with. You forgot that God has been doing beautiful work through Finley, and He was close by," she posted on her Facebook page in a "message to cancer." "He made sure we caught you before your tentacles got too deep."

As Brown continues to recuperate, she admonished Lamorindans to not take anything for granted. "Get checked out," Brown said. "Especially if you are over 40, with light skin and light hair and blue eyes.

"What a shame it would be for anybody to lose their life over something that could be prevented."

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College Communications Programs Offer More Than Just Idle Talk

By Elizabeth LaScala Ph.D.

Careers in digital, print and broadcast journalism, advertising and public relations are among the most desired by college students. However, early success in these fields requires students to build their resumes while they pursue their degrees.

What are some of the things that colleges do to help their students succeed?

- They maintain faculty and staff relationships with major employers. One stand-out is the University of Cincinnati, which requires all communications students to do co-op assignments, usually with the major media outlets or employers in the city. Co-op extends the degree program over five years. Students alternate semesters of paid work with on-campus classes during the middle three years of their education. While co-op is an expensive proposition at private universities such as Drexel and Northeastern, the University of Cincinnati is a state school that charges approximately \$26,400 in tuition and fees for an out-of-state student. Scholarships are available to further reduce educational costs. Communications positions are noted for low entry-level salaries. The opportunity to work and receive scholarships can be quite attractive.

- They employ career counselors dedicated to the major. Northwestern, Penn State and Syracuse are highly regarded not only for their faculty and resources, but also the career services that are dedicated towards helping their students find internships as well as full-time jobs. While Northwestern is located within a major media market, Penn State and Syracuse are not. However, the career centers at Penn State and Syracuse do an excellent job at working with the university's alumni base to help their students find work. These schools are also excellent options for aspiring sportswriters. Their athletic programs are quite successful and well-staffed with talented media professionals.

- For students who are interested in advertising and public relations careers, they offer

an education that balances business and the liberal arts with the technical skills required to go to work. It is not necessary to be an advertising major to work in advertising or public relations. A general business major or liberal arts major with a business or communications minor can suffice. However, potential employers will expect interns and entry-level employees to have a skill set that includes strong writing, presentation skills and analytical skills. It will be difficult for an entry-level hire to advance to mid-level and senior-level positions without them. Among the small and mid-sized colleges that fit the bill include Franklin & Marshall College and Muhlenberg College, both located in Pennsylvania; two others of note are Marist College, located in New York, just outside of the Big Apple, and the College of New Jersey.

- For journalism students, they offer an opportunity to complete a second major. Most college journalism programs will recommend that students double major, usually in a subject that the student might be reporting when he or she goes to work. Criminal justice, economics, international relations and political science are popular second majors. Reporters with strong academic backgrounds in the sciences will be in high demand within major media markets. Liberal arts colleges make it easier to complete a double major. They have fewer required courses than universities that have a separate accredited school of communications. But there are also larger universities such as the University of Connecticut, the University of Delaware and Rutgers-New Brunswick that place their communications majors within their college of arts and sciences, making a double major possible. Another option is to minor in journalism and take more courses in other subjects such as a foreign language, demographics or statistical analysis.

- They host a high-quality college daily or weekly newspa-

per. The editors of the better papers are often invited to college journalism conferences not only to receive awards, but also to network with professionals who might have internships or jobs to offer. The Associated Collegiate Press recognizes excellence in student media with collegiate journalism's preeminent award, the Pacemaker. Pacemakers are awarded in each category of publication — online, newspaper, yearbook and magazine. Among the best daily newspapers: the Indiana Daily Student at Indiana University-Bloomington. Among the best weeklies: The Ithacan at Ithaca College (New York) and The Pendulum at Elon University (North Carolina).

No one needs to attend a super-selective school to work for a quality college media outlet, become an attractive candidate for an internship or to move into a rewarding career after graduation. But anyone who expects to be a serious candidate for employment in journalism, advertising or public relations needs to show that he or she has taken advantage of the opportunities that their college and its community had to offer. Their employers will expect them to be go-getters from the very start.



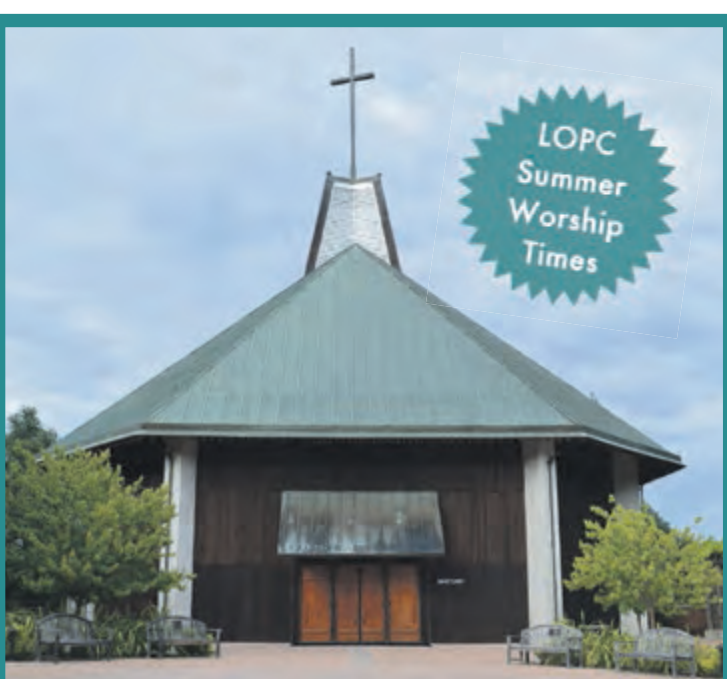
Elizabeth LaScala, Ph.D. is an independent college advisor who draws upon 25 years of higher education experience to help guide and support the college admissions process for students and their families. Dr. LaScala is a member of NACAC, WACAC and HECA. She can be contacted at (925) 891-4491 or elizabeth@doingcollege.com. Visit www.doingcollege.com for more information about her services.



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