



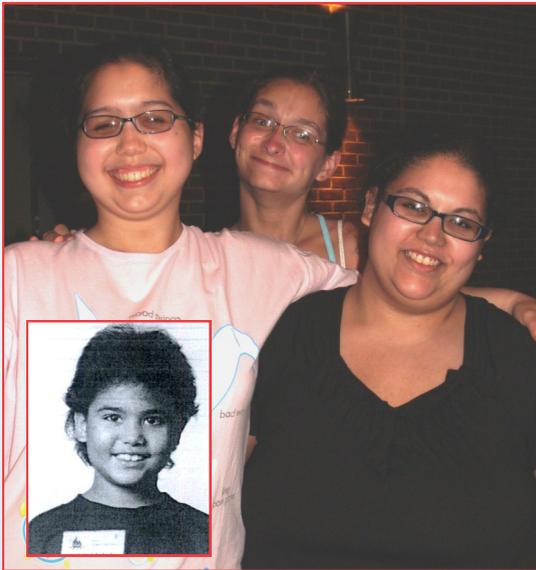
30 Years & 30 Heroes

Hero #18 of 30

“The most important step we ever unknowingly made in Arayna's life was steering her to her future life-long Special Love family.”

That's how **Arayna's** mother, Rippy sums up their long, painful cancer journey. For Arayna, beating leukemia was easy — at least compared to the late effects that her treatment has caused a decade and a half later and which leaves her mostly homebound. Arayna was first diagnosed in 1994 at age 7 and attended her first camp a year later. She enjoyed many years of fun with Special Love and it wasn't until she got to college that she began to have complicated and mystifying symptoms that left her in so much pain she had to return home. The pain increased for *three years* until a palliative care physician and the late effects clinic at Georgetown's Lombardi Cancer Center diagnosed two degenerative conditions resulting from the chemo that was administered during Arayna's original diagnosis. She completed another lengthy course of chemo last December and remains at home.

“She fights pain every minute of every day,” says Rippy. “Yet she remains cheerful and upbeat despite being harassed by two caring brothers and having to supervise her absent-minded mother while caring for her giant lap dog—a Great Dane!” Arayna also adds, “At Camp I feel at peace, no longer “different” in an isolated fashion but made to feel that although I am one of a kind, now I really belong someplace! I'm finally ‘at home.’ ” Speaking of home, this year Arayna's family moved to Linden, VA, “to be closer to those we love the most—our Special Love family!”



(From top) Arayna (right) with friends at Young Adults with Cancer (YAC) Weekend 2012; her 1995 camp portrait (inset); dressed for success at Camp Fantastic '95 with friends Jamie and Dr. Phil.

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