



The WHY of HopeStrong

Besides the obvious reason of why we raise awareness for childhood cancer, the story behind the creation of HopeStrong is special. In 2013, Cedar Creek High School lost one of our very own to cancer. At the same time, Mrs. Mary Cervantes, a long time BISD employee, was the attendance clerk at CCHS. Mrs. Cervantes' grand daughter, Nikki, then 6, was going through the final rounds of her treatments and doing well in her recovery. Nikki was diagnosed at age 4 with a rare cancerous brain tumor. The entire staff followed her path to being cancer free. She was and is our little warrior. It was also during this time that we were graduating a cancer survivor. So that year, at the annual Pink Out game, Mrs. Cervantes and I were talking about Nikki's progression and how we, at Cedar Creek High School, were so affected by cancer.

I will never forget Mrs. Cervantes saying "You know... wouldn't it be cool to see the stands ALL GOLD at a game next year?" And there it was. HopeStrong was born at that very moment. It needed to happen. A small group of us got together – myself (with help from our student council), Mrs. Cervantes, Christy (Nikki's mom & Mary's daughter), and Renee (Mary's other daughter & Nikki's aunt) who was working for the district at the time. We came up with the name and brand of "HopeStrong" and decided to invite every school in our district to raise awareness for childhood cancer. After all, we are ALL in the business of kids, and unfortunately, cancer can hit any one of our students at any time. We decided to sell shirts, ask for sponsors, and raise as much money as we could. We knew that we wanted all of the money we raised to go somewhere special, and that place was St. Jude. St. Jude is leading the way the world understands, treats and defeats childhood cancer. The best part about St. Jude is that families never receive a bill for their treatment, travel, housing and food – because all a family should worry about is helping their child live. Can you even imagine what these kids and their families go through?

We never thought that we would raise the amount we did in year one, but we've raised more every single year. To date, we have raised \$82,736.60 in the short time we have run the HopeStrong campaign. I hope to hit our \$100K mark this year! We could not do this without the help of a bunch of amazing liaisons at each campus that run their shirt sales and donation drives, as well as the many community businesses and schools that help sponsor the shirt production. During our campaign, another survivor has been added to our special crew– Bridget Smith, a sophomore at CCHS. It is so cool to walk around town and see HopeStrong shirts from the last four years and see all the wonderful people who have supported this cause.

BISD has built a partnership with St. Jude and they are very appreciative of our donations year after year. It feels great to know that we are helping families get through some pretty tough stuff, AND at the same time, praying that it doesn't hit our little community again. So we're going to keep on rolling. Here's to a great year five! And as always, we ARE HopeStrong for a cure.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart~
Dawn Vinklarek
Cedar Creek High School