

Kelli Wiley

Personal Essay

I am a survivor of cancer with three years of weekly high-dose chemotherapy and ten days of brain radiation. I am also an accomplished artist and dancer. My mentor is cancer. I learned so much from the disease, from the pain, the process, and from my fellow patients. I learned compassion, hope, fear, love, patience and strength. My parents, as my mentors, taught me to say, "I love you" and "I am sorry", and to not hold anything inside of me that I would regret not saying to them.

My immune system was never healthy enough to have friends, so art became my best friend. It is my intention to major in Fine Arts. I would like to be an art director for film, a special effects makeup artist, or high school art teacher. With the tools I learn, I hope to realize my dream of volunteering to paint murals on the walls of adult cancer centers to make the chemotherapy treatment a more encouraging experience.

I would be so honored and grateful to be awarded this scholarship. My parents cannot pay for my college. They lost their business, have high medical bills, my mother just became permanently disabled, and my father is the sole support for our family. He was laid off last year and eventually hired at a lower pay. Our home equity is gone and with it the only way we had to pay for college. We struggle to put food on the table. My father is four years from retirement and we have nothing left. I want to make a difference in the world and I can only gain the skills I need to do that from attending college. I have been given a second chance on life and I do not intend to squander that.