

After her battle with cancer ended, one young woman's memory will live on through a scholarship

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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COTTAGE HILLS - Haley Michel fought valiantly against non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and a rare blood disease, HLH, for eight weeks before she succumbed to her illnesses.

To celebrate that fighting spirit, her family and friends have decided to continue the battle against cancer through what will become an annual 5k run and a scholarship through Civic Memorial (CM) High School, from which Michel graduated in 2015. She was only 20 when she passed on April 29, 2017, just before 7 a.m. at Barnes Jewish Hospital.

She perished just before her friends and family hosted a 5k run in her honor. Her sister, Lindsey Michel, said Haley Michel was a fan of running, so such an event would have been perfect. When the run was planned, her family had hoped to use that money to continue the march toward her recovery. Unfortunately, those plans were cut short by her untimely death.

Lindsey Michel's boyfriend, Ethan Harshbarger, is very close to the family. He said the run had nearly 400 people attend it.

"It went really well," he said. "A lot of people showed up."

That run will continue to be an annual event, he said, with future runs generating funds for a scholarship in her name, which is in the early stages of being developed right now.

"The scholarship as of right now we are giving away one for a nursing student, and we are looking into giving another one away to a student of our choosing, but we are not sure how much the scholarships will be yet," Lindsey Michel said in an email. "It just depends on how much is raised."

The first scholarship fundraiser will be held on June 11, 2017, from 3-7 p.m. at the Wood River Knights of Columbus Hall. Harshbarger said the event will include a raffle and silent auction as well as a live band. He said money raised will go toward the scholarship after all expenses of Haley Michel's sickness and death have been covered.

According to her obituary, Haley Michel was an all-around active student. She was a member of Mu Alpha Theta, National Honors Society, Student Council, Spanish Nation Honors Society, was an Illinois State Scholar and a Silver Medallion Award recipient.

At the time of her passing, she was enrolled at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) as a sophomore, and was a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Phi Eta Sigma and National Honors Society. She studied nursing and made the dean's list.

Her hobbies included hiking, biking and spending free time at the gym.