

The Story of Kinship

Often mentoring relationships turn into much more than an adult impacting the life of a young person. It turns into a tale of friendship, mutual encouragement and growth. Nothing could be truer for this trio. No one would have predicted the journey Missie Sogge and Mark Leach were beginning when they decided to become mentors to Sanay, then finishing up the 5th grade at Unity school. She was a cute, spunky girl, dealing with being a young teen. Sanay says, remembering back to that time that she didn't have a lot of friends, so having someone there for her- who accepted and liked her, was invaluable.

Missie, a 5th grade teacher at Unity school, soon became a confidant and her classroom a regular stopping place for Sanay. Even when Sanay transitioned into Middle school, she still found her way to Missie's room several times a week- stopping to touch base.

Who knew that there would be a profound twist in their friendship? Theirs is a story about sharing life with one another- whether that is an easy or difficult journey. In August, 2008, Sanay was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Missie, having battled a kidney disease for several years, and on her way to her second kidney transplant now transitioned from a caring ear/ shoulder, to one who could understand first hand the stories and struggles Sanay was going through.

I sat down with Missie and Sanay and asked them about their 3 ½ year match. The fondness that they had for one another was evident as we chatted over ice cream treats. There was an ease in their conversation that comes from the familiarity of friendship and time. They attribute flexibility and liking similar things with the success of their match. When asked what the highlight of their match has been, they didn't respond with a spectacular activity, but rather shared about times of simply hanging out together. They like to watch movies together, bake together, or just play with Mark and Missie's pets. They

have also turned their attentions outward, talking about the time that they redecorated a room at CRA. Missie smiled at Sanay and said that she sometimes felt like she was Sanay's "get out of the house card". Sanay nodded and smiled in return.

They smile and giggle, showing each other their newest battle scars or sharing stories about treatments, crabby moments in the hospital or who's medicine tastes like what. Life has led them to a place with stories and dialogue that most of us can't fully understand, but for the two of them it is a language that comes easy now. There is comfort in sharing such experiences and stories with another, especially one who can hear the unspoken in the sentence or laugh with you about subjects others of us may be uncomfortable with.

Although illness is a part of their relationship, their match is not defined by it. Their story is one of friendship and support. Charles Swindoll says, "People who soar are those who refuse to sit back, sigh and wish things would change. They neither complain of their lot nor passively dream of some distant ship coming in. Rather, they visualize in their minds that they are not quitters; they will not allow life's circumstances to push them down and hold them under."

This article and photo was developed by Amy Danielson, Kinship Service Coordinator.

