



One of Emily's last wishes to Gene and me was: "Mom and dad, please do something to make me famous."

Really? Famous? Oh she must have meant, famous amongst family and friends. NO!! She meant famous - as in, you will read about Emily Lyman one day in history books, famous. Yes, really!

Those who knew Emily are not surprised by her final wish. I, as her mother, am sure she would have succeeded in becoming famous. The determination she showed in her day to day living still leaves me in awe. Here's an example: Emily played basketball until her bent elbows and fingers, due to Graft vs. Host disease, forced her to stop because catching, throwing, and shooting became a huge challenge. Instead of complaining about her condition, she stayed involved with the sport by changing her role - team manager for her sister's team for 3 years.

December 9th, 2012, Emily's legs were in terrible pain (we didn't know why) but Lizzy's team was in the basketball playoffs. Emily insisted on going to the game, so via piggy back rides from Gene to and from the car, we brought her to the match where she kept her final books. The following Tuesday we discovered that the leukemia had returned and she died 36 hours later. She hid such tremendous pain because she was determined to live life!

So it is not surprising that the word UNSTOPPABLE was recently used to describe Emily. Wow – so accurate! 13 years of treatment – 4 years of chemotherapy, a bone marrow transplant, full body radiation for 7 days, 2 years of Photopheresis at Dartmouth and Tufts, endless spinal taps, blood transfusions, x-rays, heart tests, blood tests, hospital stays and doctor's visits, just to name a few... and STILL her classmates really never knew her journey because she chose TO LIVE and not to define herself by her disease. She kept up with all of her classwork, rarely using her disease and treatments as an excuse for not getting her work finished on time. What child is able to do that?

When Emily began 7th grade, as part of a class assignment, she wrote a letter to herself, to be opened upon graduation from middle school. The following is an excerpt:

"Dear Emily,

I am writing to you from October of 2010 when you and me are in 7th grade. You are feeling very out of place right now as your friends all become interested in boys and things like that, when you still just want to be a carefree kid, even though you are older than them. You also can't do lots of things because your Graft vs. Host disease has caused you to have bent elbows, a bent knee, tight skin, and bent, puffy fingers. You do the best you can to think positive and make the most of the situation though. You don't even let your visits to Dartmouth twice a week for photopheresis get you down. You try to see the silver lining in everything but sometimes you have trouble. If you still have this problem, try to fix it, because it will make you much happier....

The advice I give you will still probably be in your head when you read this, but in case you have forgotten it, here is what I have to offer: When you're sad, think about all of the good things you have in life and how lucky you are to have them. Always look on the bright side of things. Do what you enjoy. Don't let other people influence your actions too much. Try your best at everything and most of all, be the good person I know you are. Never stop trying.

Love your very best friend,

You

So how do I fulfill Emily's wish? As overwhelming as this task seems, it has helped me to keep moving forward and to follow through with Emily's UNSTOPPABLE spirit. The *Inspired By Emily Art Project*, which led to an art show and a book publication ([Emily and Her Wish to Be Famous](#)) have given me credibility to create the Emily M. Lyman Foundation. The

foundation supports Vermont and local New York families fighting the pediatric cancer battle. Visit our website to see the families that we have been supporting: www.inspiredbyemilylymanfoundation.org

The Emily M Lyman foundation has been slowly growing since its inception 3 years ago. Thanks to huge fundraising events in the past 12 months by Regal Gymnastics (<http://www.regalgym.com>), Kathleen Porter of North Photography (<http://north-photo.com>), the Reeve's family, the Flamingo Frenzy Fundraiser, and group donations from Rice Memorial High School and Mater Christi School we have raised an additional \$12,000! I am overjoyed that individuals not only believe in the Emily M Lyman Foundation, but also financially support our cause!

My goal for the year 2017 is doubling our fundraising efforts as well as adding a new component to the foundation's mission. Along with financially supporting Vermont and local New York families, the Emily M Lyman Foundation will be offering "Mini Wishes" to pediatric cancer inpatients at the University of Vermont Medical Center. Children will be able to wish for "mini" things that will lift their spirits during their hospital stay – a stuffed animal? An X-box game? A DVD? Art supplies? A snazzy comforter? Toys? Games? An ice cream party in the room? I will be working directly with the Child Life Department, life long friends formed during Emily's 13 year treatment, to grant these "mini wishes".

Every time I write a check to support a family going through the pediatric cancer fight I literally smile, not only because I am directly helping a family in need, but also because I know this is what Emily would have wanted. I just hope with every check that I write (accompanied by an Emily poem) the recipients remember Emily's name.

"My overall goal though, whether it is accomplished through a job or something else, is to be remembered. I have always wanted to do something to insure that one day in the future teachers will tell their students that today they will be learning about Emily Lyman. I want this dream to come true because otherwise, eventually, I will be forgotten and to me that would make the things that I've done in my life a lot less meaningful."

by Emily Lyman

"If one lights a fire for others, it will also brighten one's own way."

I am very excited for the future of the Emily M Lyman Foundation. Please help foster this excitement by donating to the foundation this holiday season.

All donations of \$100 or more will receive a free copy of Emily and Her Wish to Be Famous

Please detach the following form and send it to Emily M Lyman Foundation, 161 Appletree Point Road, Burlington, VT 05408. Check or credit card accepted. You can also go to the foundation website and pay using Pay Pal.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Credit Card Company: _____ Credit Card #: _____
Name on card: _____
Credit Card Expiration Date: _____ Security Code: _____
Amount to Charge: _____

The Emily M Lyman Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3)