

Julie Alongi not only overcame her own battle with cancer, but also helped her son win his fight with leukemia when he was three years old. Those trying experiences inspired her to dedicate her time and efforts to helping other children overcome terminal illnesses with her not-for-profit organization, Rosepetals.

For the past twelve years, Rosepetals has assisted more than six thousand families with specialized care, toy purchases and celebrations for children, as well as financial aid for medical expenses, rent, food, clothing and at times funeral costs.

HudsonMOD spoke with Alongi about her life's passion and how Rosepetals has affected the lives of so many.



Q: You've been a cancer survivor for more than 30 years. How did your fight against cancer help establish Rosepetals?

A: After my own personal experience with cancer, I decided I wanted to share with so many others all I had learned. The idea for Rosepetals naturally emerged from that. We have been a not-for-profit charity for 12 years. The spiritual inspiration has always been St. Therese of the Little Flower who continually taught that the way to peace and happiness is to cultivate the heart of a child. The hearts of children fill all of Rosepetals' activities.

Q: How many families have received aid from the not-for-profit organization? Could you share an experience with a family that benefited from Rosepetals?

A: To date, Rosepetals has been able to serve over six thousand children and their families. Virtually all of our children face end-stage terminal disease. One of my favorites is a special surviving young man named Danny who has been with us now for 12 years. He has had three brain surgeries for a tumor removal which has left him blind in one eye. We are waiting for the results from his last surgery, which replaced two arteries in the brain. He is a gifted young man who plans one day to be an illustrator for animated movies.

Q: How has this organization impacted the lives of these families and yours?

A: The impact of Rosepetals upon the families of the children becomes most profound and life changing as parents learn to face the inevitable together with their child. Working with the children and the families under these most difficult circumstances has enabled me to develop a deep sense of compassion and patience, particularly for those in my charge.

Q: Your son beat cancer. What advice would you give to other parents who are fighting the same battle?

A: A parent of a child with cancer should say a daily prayer to St. Therese, as she will without fail make her presence known and somehow display a rose as proof of her intervention. Never be afraid to ask as many questions as needed. Knowledge is, after all, power.

Q: What's the most rewarding aspect of being a volunteer hospice counselor?

A: The children invariably never complain and are a true inspiration. They teach me how to live and how I should behave in the face of any obstacle. I have discovered that I cannot live without them.

Q: Do you plan to expand Rosepetals beyond the New York and New Jersey area?

A: Growing Roses is our project to increase the impact and influence of Rosepetals Inc., to meet the expanding need for quality pediatric hospice care. The more Roses, the more we are able to care for the children and parents. Roses refers to the daily services and activities we provide for children and parents such as frequent bedside visitations, specialized counseling for family members and children, seasonal celebrations, supervised social gatherings and games. Roses also refers to guidance and assistance with imminent life choices, financial aid and funeral arrangements as necessary. Roses stem from donations and increase our ability to care for these special children.


Q: What are your future goals for the organization?

A: Rosepetals is seeking to acquire a property that can be utilized as our organizational headquarters, which will also serve as a full support hospice residency for terminally ill children and their families. Families can then spend their last moments together with dignity in a quiet, comfortable and nurturing environment rather than alone in a hospital.

Q: How does someone volunteer with Rosepetals?

A: No volunteer is permitted onto the wards or to assist without training. What Rosepetals really needs most is financial donations, particularly to facilitate specialized cases.

To donate to Rosepetals, please visit Rosepetals-Hospice.org or send a check payable to Rosepetals, Inc. to 825 Bloomfield Avenue, #107, Verona, NJ 07044. All donations are tax deductible.

 *To read more about Julie Alongi, visit us online at HudsonMOD.com.*

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