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Gardner-Webb Joins a Local Teen's Fight Against Cancer

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Office of University Communications

April 3, 2012

Gardner-Webb University, local schools, churches, and the community in the Boiling Springs and Shelby area are coming together to help support and cheer on a local middle school student with cancer.

In June 2010, Crest Middle School student Seth Strickland was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a type of bone cancer that primarily targets children and teenagers. Seth began treatments, underwent surgeries, and persevered through physical therapy. After a year, he was cancer free and returned to school for his eighth grade year. However, doctors discovered more cancer on Seth's lung at a routine checkup in November 2011.

This discovery has resulted in a whole new round of treatments, surgeries and medical expenses, not to mention a new onslaught of psychological challenges. But Seth isn't fighting this battle alone. The community is coming out in droves to support the Strickland family by organizing fundraising efforts to help offset the costs of Seth's medical expenses.

Several weeks ago, many Gardner-Webb University staff, faculty and students partnered with Boiling Springs Baptist Church for a Sports Spectacular event that raised over \$20,000 for the Stricklands. The evening included a dinner, silent auction and several speakers.

Several local women, including Lou Ann Scates, GWU registrar, organized the Sports Spectacular. The event was set up as a parade of tables fundraiser. Each table was sponsored and decorated by an individual or an organization. In addition, each of the over 300 attendees purchased a ticket that included admission to the fundraiser and a traditional BBQ rib dinner.

Not only was GWU football paraphernalia donated for the auction, but the football team itself lent a helping hand by waiting tables during the dinner and helping with the auction. "We could not have done it without the help from the student athletes. I was so proud of our students that night," said Scates.

Dr. Tracy Jessup, senior minister to the University and personal friend of the Strickland family, emceed the event. GWU senior football player Steve Demilio shared how he has been personally touched by Seth Strickland's story. Leo Sayles, head women's volleyball coach, and Ron Dickerson, Jr., head football coach, spoke as well.

The following Saturday, Gardner-Webb University was also involved in another event to support Seth and his family. "Strides for Seth," a 5K Fun Run/Walk was held over a course of trails and paved roads throughout the campuses of Crest Middle and High Schools. WGWG, Gardner-Webb's radio station, was a sponsor for the event, along with several other area businesses and organizations.

The Strickland family has a long and close connection to Gardner-Webb. Seth's parents are alumni and the family attends church with many faculty and staff members. John Strickland, Seth's father, owns Boiling Springs Carpet and Tile. His wife, Sharon teaches first grade at Springmore Elementary School and has taught the children of many GWU staff members.

Noel Manning, director of University Relations and a close friend of the Strickland family explained, "Not only are John and Sharon Strickland alumni of Gardner-Webb, they have embraced this community and have chosen to build their lives here. They are a part of the Gardner-Webb family, and family takes care of each other."

Written by communications intern Jeanie Groh.