

NOVEMBER 2022

Greetings:

When I was approached to write this letter to accompany the JAJF Smile Book, my first thought was how ill equipped I am to verbalize the immense impact our WOW! Experience had on my family and me. How do you write about a cherished memory that has shaped your life?

Just before my 16th birthday my father, Jack, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at the age of 47. My mom, sister and I were not prepared for how quickly our lives would change and how cruel this disease could be. By the next spring, the cancer had spread, and my sister Kristina left college to come home to be with my dad.

While my mom did a heroic job of shielding us, there was a lot of stress in the house. The constant cycle of doctors, treatments, awful side-effects, late night research on the “next” drug trial, and awaiting updates from his most recent scans took its toll on all of us. The focus on what was important in our world had changed drastically in 12 short months.

One day my Mom announced we would be taking a trip to Florida and she had a special surprise. The JAJF team had learned that even though I lived in Georgia, I was a tremendous University of Florida football fan. JAJF planned a customized WOW! including a VIP fan experience at the University of Florida’s spring football practice. I was extremely excited! Both Coach Meyer and his star Quarterback, Tim Tebow, spent a significant amount of time with me and my Dad. It was very special and our entire family had the best time on our WOW!

We did not know at the time, but it would be our last trip together as a family of four. As a dad myself now, I can deeply appreciate how happy my dad was to see me so excited. That day is a memory that I know he cherished, and I still do.

The gift of precious time together that the Jack & Jill Late Stage Cancer Foundation provides families who are enduring tremendous stress is unique. Calling timeout to cancer for young families is an antidote for the patient, the spouse, AND the children. This experience taught me how important it is to give both financially and in the service of others. I hope you will join me in paying it forward to help send the next JAJF family on a WOW! Experience.

When you donate to JAJF, you are directly helping treat families like mine to WOWs to create lasting memories together. Please enjoy this book of smiles as a reminder of exactly where your support goes and as a huge thanks for helping JAJF make WOWs possible every day. Please join me and donate online today at JAJF.org.

Have a wonderful holiday season with family and friends and thank you for joining me in this effort!

Austin Dragoun
JAJF WOW! Experience Recipient, 2008

