



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Jess Kean, Communications Director

jkean@childrenscause.org

LOCAL STUDENT NAMED CHILDHOOD CANCER SCHOLAR

WASHINGTON, DC – The Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy (CCCA) is pleased to announce that Isha Kunnath, a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria, is a 2019 CCCA College Scholar award recipient. Isha is a childhood cancer survivor planning to attend the University of Virginia this fall.

As a CCCA College Scholar, Isha will receive a \$2,000 academic scholarship and will complete an advocacy project that benefits children with cancer. Isha was selected as one of two award recipients based on her academic achievements, letters of recommendation and chosen advocacy project.

Isha was diagnosed with Pre-B Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia when she was 12 years old.

"No one was quite sure how to treat the 'cancer kid,'" Isha said. "Cancer creates an impenetrable bubble of loneliness that friends and family - while invaluable - can't get through because only other cancer patients can understand. But I didn't know anyone else with cancer. The only other patients at my clinic were babies and toddlers, the most common age group for acute lymphoblastic leukemia."

Today, Isha is preparing to graduate high school with an impressive academic and extracurricular resume, including internships with United States United Health Services and the YMCA Marketing, Communications and Community Relations Departments. She has also served as a Red Cross Youth Task Force Liaison, an Amnesty International Human Rights Advocate, and a volunteer for the Cancer Research Society and Relay for Life.

She plans to major in biology when she begins her undergraduate career this fall. For her chosen advocacy project, Isha will create an online program that combats the social isolation faced by pre-teens and teens with cancer. Her "Childhood Cancer Companion Program" will include a website with message boards and chat rooms for kids, plus a mentorship component that connects 10-to-18 year old cancer patients with adult survivors of childhood cancer.

“After surviving cancer, it’s not easy to integrate yourself back into society, especially when you’re trying to discover your identity. That’s why you need someone who’s done it before or is doing it with you,” said Isha. “Doctors and nurses are more than capable of taking care of a patient’s physical health, but this program aims to benefit a patient’s mental health, creating solutions for kids who already have enough on their plate.”

The Children’s Cause for Cancer Advocacy (CCCA) is the leading national advocacy organization working to achieve access to less toxic and more effective pediatric cancer therapies; to expand resources for research and specialized care; and to address the unique needs and challenges of childhood cancer survivors and their families. CCCA leads efforts to ensure that these needs and perspectives of children with cancer are integrated into the highest deliberations on health care and cancer policy at the Federal level.