

Giving Back What Cancer Has Taken
By Nancy Johnson, CMP

It started as any ordinary day in early September, when school begins and athletic young men endure harsh physical punishment to prove their prowess on and off the sports field. The daily regime is rigorous and often ends with sore muscles and aching knees, so it's no surprise that Robert's mother equated the after school complaining as "ordinary growing pains." How was she to know that what she thought was just innocent fun on the football field would evolve into a six-month ordeal resulting in an above-knee amputation and rendering her son a cancer survivor.

Robert's story began on September 25, 2007 when he was admitted to the hospital to undergo a battery of tests that ultimately lead to the diagnosis of Ewings Sarcoma – a form of bone cancer that had attacked his left tibia. After aggressive rounds of chemotherapy and periodic hospitalization doctors determined that the tissue and muscles were dying. The decision was made that amputation was unavoidable. Four hours later Robert left the operating room an above- knee amputee. With his leg gone but spirit intact, Robert's main concern was being able to walk to school on the first day of eighth grade.

Robert's story is not unlike that of thousands of men, women and children with physical impairments who dream of living the life they had before the loss of a limb. With the help of the Challenged Athletes Foundation and the first annual "Rock on the Green" 5K and 2K fun walk and spin-a-thon, funds will be raised to get individuals with physical disabilities physically active again. The individuals receiving these funds are those who have overcome adversity and lead active lifestyles. The goal of "Rock on the Green" is to provide individuals like Robert with the proper adaptive and prosthetic equipment to support participation in the sports they love.

On September 12, Robert's dream of a future in high school sport may become a reality. His story of courage and perseverance is remarkable and for that he's been chosen as our first annual Rock on the Green grant recipient.

To make a donation contact Gail Baumgarten at 925- 838-2227 or email rockonthegreen9-12@sbcglobal.net.

To sign up as a participant visit www.rockonthegreen.com.

With your contributions, CAF hopes to give back what cancer has taken from Robert - the ability to live an active lifestyle through competitive sports and the belief that anything is possible.