

Massaro: Scholarships set up to help cancer survivors

March 18, 2003

CENTENNIAL - Steve Marchello was unable to fulfill his dream. So he made it possible for others to realize theirs.

Bone cancer killed him three years ago. But before he died, Steve instructed his parents on what he wanted done. Two weeks before he died, he asked them to use his life insurance policy to set up a scholarship foundation.

"I'm not going to be around to do it, so you guys do it," he said.

Steve's parents, Franci and Mario, had taken out a life insurance policy on him when he was a year old. They founded Legacy of Hope, which administers the Stephen Marchello Scholarship Foundation, which has given \$46,000 to young cancer survivors.

Steve, 28 when he died, was an only child. He was also a child with a heart."

He was always worried about the other person," said his dad, Mario Marchello. "When he was getting chemotherapy, he was always asking about other patients."

Mario remembered that right after they'd settled into their Centennial home they found a spider in the basement.

"He had to take it outside," Mario said. "And when I asked why he didn't squish it like most people would do, he said it had as much right to live its life as everything else."

Franci remembered Steve's first barbershop haircut. He was 2.

"The barber gave him a pack of gum," Franci said. "And he offered every customer a piece. He didn't get any for himself."

He liked hockey. He played for Heritage High School. And he played for fun with good friend Mike Mann. They even crafted a Stanley Cup replica that went to the winner. They outgrew the games, but not the friendship. On his deathbed, Steve told his mom to give the cup to Mike, who now serves on the board of Legacy of Hope.

Steve was 16 when doctors told him he had bone cancer. "It went into remission for 10 years," Franci said.

He was in medical school in 1998 when he knew it had come back.

"He knew too much and where it was taking him," Franci said.

In November 1998, Steve came home to stay. The progressive intrusion of the cancer paralyzed him and took his sight.

"He didn't live to see his dream of being a doctor," Franci said. "But he said to give the money to the foundation and give it to kids who survive."

This year's fund-raiser is April 8, with a family style meal and silent auction at Bella Ristorante, 8770 E. Arapahoe Road. Required reservations: (303) 886-5018. Half the \$40 cost is tax-deductible.

If you can't make the dinner, tax-deductible donations can be sent to: Stephen Marchello Scholarship Fund, Wells Fargo Bank, 2350 E. Arapahoe Road, Centennial, CO 80122, Attn: Liz Martinez.