

## 2004 Mother of the Year – Emily Kelley

The other day I took my mom to the hospital so she could go in for her umpteenth surgery on her throat. There was this sense of calm about her that made me think about all that she has been through in the past few years. That thought became even clearer as she was filling out the monotonous doctor's office questionnaire and it blatantly asked the question, "Name all illnesses you have experienced in the last five years," and my mom laughed and sarcastically said "Everything."

When I was in fifth grade, my mom was diagnosed with a "throat cancer," as she likes to call it, mainly because there really was no name for it. The lump just appeared one day and grew larger and larger until she finally got it checked out. The lump ended up being a high level tumor and thankfully had not yet spread to other areas of her body. Immediately they took her into surgery and took out lymph nodes, muscle and the lump on the left side of her neck, and that was just the beginning. Over the next year she went through radiation session after radiation session with the doctors killing everything from the neck up because there was no way to know where the cancer had come from. This in turn not only killed her immune system, which caused a serious case of pneumonia a year later, it also made her throat swell so much that five years later just eating solid food is an everyday battle.

Even through all this, my mom did not once miss taking me to a riding lesson. Not once did she skip out on a horse show, and not one time did she tell me that she can't do this anymore. The word "Can't" was never and will never be a part of my mother's vocabulary, because my mother is one of the strongest willed people you will ever meet. She would go from the hospital to pick me up from school and then take me out to the barn where she would sit in the freezing cold and watch me ride. Not once did her face show the pain or serious emotion she was going through at the time because she had to be strong for my sister and me so she could be strong for herself. Even with all the medical bills adding up she still did whatever she could to make it affordable for me to do what I love and what makes me happy.

I feel so lucky to be able to share the love of horses with my mom. She can understand how much this all really means to me. I know that no matter where this sport takes me, my mom will be right behind me, supporting me, and giving me a shoulder to lean on. That goes true for riding and for life. I am 16 years old and just beginning to realize what a truly devoted, beautiful, and strong mother I have. Throughout my life she has taught me many things. My mom was the catalyst to my passion when she let me ride her horse when I was two months old. With that experience she also always taught me how to get right back on when I was bucked off, and most importantly she showed me to live life for all it is worth and never back down from a challenge.

With this I would like to nominate Emily Kelley for the OHJA 2004 Mother of the Year.

Brittany Kelley