

## **Massaro: Scholarship helps survivor chase dream**

**July 10, 2003**

SEDALIA - Nicole Van Woensel is thinking about her future, which is a good thing considering at one time, she wasn't sure she'd have one.

She had cancer.

It's in remission. And Nicole is headed east for her own mission - college.

Nicole received a \$10,000, four-year scholarship from the Stephen T. Marchello Foundation, named in honor of a young man cancer claimed. It was his dying wish that a fund be set up for kids who survive cancer.

The foundation handed out an additional \$8,000 to six others.

Nicole, 18, had her cancer pretty much under control by the time she entered Bear Creek High School, where she was an honor student. It was junior high that was miserable.

"I had strep throat for, like, five months straight," she said. "And I was getting bumps. They thought it was mono."

Doctors finally referred her to Dr. Seth Reiner, of Denver, who performed a biopsy that detected cancer of the soft tissue on her scalp.

"It was a rough year and a half," Nicole said. "I had four surgeries and a bone marrow biopsy. My sophomore year, I had my last surgery. Dr. Reiner is definitely my hero. Make sure you mention him a lot."

Reiner has also encouraged Nicole to study what interests her most - forensic medicine. It wasn't television that influenced her, but a book.

"Actually, those TV shows are fake," she said. "When I was in sixth grade, my sister had this book about serial killers. I started reading it. And I wanted to figure out why they did it."

Nicole is active in her community and sings in her church choir.

She has always liked to sing.

"I love musical theater," she said. "I tried out for choir in high school, and made it. Then I tried out for musicals and it all went from there."

Nicole still has periodic checkups, the latest two months ago.

"I know my body well enough that when I'm not feeling well, I go in," she said. "I was feeling pretty good when I went in the last time. I just wanted to be sure."

Nicole has spent her young life in the southwest suburbs - Littleton, Lakewood and now Sedalia.

Now, she's moving to go to Kansas State University.

Scholarship aside, Nicole will still have to work to pay for her education. She said she'll take out loans, too. But that's fine with her.

"I wouldn't be going to college without the scholarship," she said. "It's always been my dream to go away to college."

Donations: Stephen T. Marchello Scholarship Foundation, in care of Eric Brakowski, Wells Fargo Bank, Southglenn Branch, 2350 E. Arapahoe Road, Centennial, CO 80122.