

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I remember vividly the phone call I received at 3:20am, just a few short hours after I left my brother's bedside in ICU. My life had abruptly changed forever. My big brother and best friend, Michael, had lost his 3.5 year battle to colorectal cancer; his body could no longer keep up the fight. This painful moment marked the end of my brother's courageous battle.

Michael endured 18 months of the most aggressive chemotherapy treatment that his doctors had ever prescribed, multiple radiation treatments and several complicated surgeries. Throughout our dreadful journey, Michael, and our family, never lost hope. Although we all felt scared and helpless, he remained optimistic and strong and was an inspiration to us all. When he wasn't feeling too tired from his treatments, he pushed himself to dine at his favorite restaurants, attend baseball games and concerts and enjoy his family and friends. He planned trips with Shana, his fiance, although they sometimes had to be cancelled because he was just too weak. In the end, there was nothing more to be done. Michael passed away at the young age of 33, leaving behind his family, fiance and friends.

With Michael's passing, Michael's Mission was born. My family and I wanted to help support others going through the same horrible experience. Michael always said that when he got better, he wanted to give back to others diagnosed and living with colorectal cancer. What Michael found most difficult to deal with was the lack of relevant and quality information about the disease, the inability to interact and share experiences with other patients and the lack of funding for research trials and patient support services. He was also incredibly frustrated with the lack of attention and information regarding the side effects associated with colorectal cancer.

Although Michael never got the opportunity to fulfill his dream, Michael's Mission is helping colorectal cancer patients and families on his behalf and in his honor and loving memory. We hope you will support us in our efforts.

With warm wishes,
Scott Soussa
Founder

Dear Friends and Supporters,

"Your life can change in an instant." I never fully understood the meaning of this until it happened to me. There have been many instances that changed my life. Namely, the day I met Michael. Regrettably, another was the day Michael was diagnosed with rectal cancer.

The first few months following the diagnosis were like a choose-your-own-adventure. Michael was 30 years old, a Crohn's patient and with Stage 3 rectal cancer. Removing the tumor mass and undergoing several cycles of radiation and chemotherapy wasn't without an extraordinary amount of complications. Without much incertitude, Michael remained calm and collected. His courage was like nothing I had ever seen or could have imagined. Despite his optimism, we grabbed onto every positive note that we could. In the end, having him in my life was the biggest one. His grace, courage, and determination inspired friends and family to form Michael's Mission.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life and treatment options for patients, particularly young patients, like Michael. Michael had sought out patients with similar symptoms and we learned this was a common need. As such, Michael's Mission has built a patient community where patients can communicate and share experiences. We also focus on research initiatives to help address the side effects related to treatment and hope to provide counseling for patients and their families.

Enhancing quality of life- one of Michael's Mission core values- is some- thing that aims to provide patients with some control in a very uncontrollable situation. From ostomy rashes to nausea, the daily struggles can appear amplified compared to the cancer itself.

To date, the most personal life changing moment was losing Michael. While we can't bring him back, and each cancer patient is unique, the overall process of being diagnosed and living with cancer is very similar. We hope you will support our mission to improve the quality of life and reduce the suffering of other patients.

With gratitude,
Shana Auerbach
Founder