

## **Tuxedo Junction Speech**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Phoebe Lindner and I'm a cancer survivor.

In 2006 I was 16 years old. One day I was sitting in my year 11 biology class, when I rubbed my neck and found a lump. I'd never really had much energy as a kid but I'd been feeling more tired than usual for a couple of months. I just put it down to the rigors of studying for the year 11 IB course. I went to my doctor, expecting to have a short course of antibiotics. It came as a shock to find out I had stage 2B Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

As a result, I had to undertake 6 months of Chemotherapy. I spent 6 hours every second Friday in a big chair in Cabrini Hospital, being pumped full of horrible drugs – a pretty crappy thing for a kid who just wants to study and hang out with her friends. It was really boring and uncomfortable but luckily my brother Sebastian helped me load heaps of great music onto my iPod so I could close my eyes and pretend I was somewhere else.

I used to feel OK on Saturday, but by Sunday morning I couldn't really get out of bed. Mondays were the worst – I felt sick and hated having to stay at home while the other kids were at school. Luckily I have a beautiful dog, Jessie Jane, who stayed in bed with me and looked after me all day long! Tuesdays were a bit better and by Wednesday I was ready to go back to school. So basically, I was only really experiencing 9 days out of every 2 weeks. I was very determined not to have to repeat year 11 though, so I worked really hard in those 9 days. I even took my homework in to chemo! I am proud to say, I finished year 12 in 2007 with an ENTER score of 98.5.

I am telling you all this because I'm here as a representative of everyone who has been affected by cancer. The reality is that everyone in this room is affected by cancer in some way. Tuxedo Junction, the brain-child of Kate Bonser, is a wonderful organisation because it is made of those people. Everyone on the board is to be congratulated on their efforts – my mother, Pamela Irving, included.

I had a bit of a scare recently when I found a lump under my chin. My oncologist, Dr Max Wolf, was reassuring and, as usual, wonderfully caring. Thank goodness, it turned out to be nothing sinister. But it was a reminder to me that cancer is an issue I will have to face for the rest of my life. Tuxedo Junction is important because all of your donations go directly to scientists who are working to develop treatments for cancer. The fact that people such as yourselves are donating towards the development of better treatments gives me, and others affected by the disease, hope for the future.

The most important thing I learnt from my experience in 2006 is the pure generosity of the human spirit. The worst situations really do bring out the best in people. My house looked a lot like a florist for months! Often we would come home and someone had left food they had cooked for us on the doorstep. I was blown away by the support and love of my friends and family. But equally as incredible was the support and generosity of spirit shown to me by complete strangers. I received cards from people I hardly knew. One friend of my uncle's even made me a box of soap! I only met her once, and have never seen her again, but each time I used her soap I thought of her and her generosity.

Whilst undergoing chemo, I organised Bandana Day at my school to raise money for CANTEEN – an organisation for kids with cancer. I contacted CANTEEN and they gave me 50 bandanas to sell at my school. After I announced it at assembly, the bandanas sold out within an hour! So I got my dad Benjamin to get another 100. And another 100! In the end, we sold more than 500 bandanas in two weeks! I remember looking out in assembly and seeing all of those kids and teachers wearing colourful bandanas – it was a beautiful and encouraging sight to behold! But the best part was bringing the Principal, Mr Renton – a 6-foot-something giant, who was very serious and proper – onto the stage in assembly to teach him how to tie his own bandana! I don't think too many kids could boast that they had dressed their school principal in assembly!

Thomas Hodgkin named the cancer I had in 1832. In the 1970's and 1980's the treatments were discovered that saved my life – they were discovered due to the generosity of people who contribute to medical research, people like you...

I know that just by being here tonight you are showing your support for me and all of those that join me in this fight against cancer. I'm sure that your generosity will be present in your hearts (and your wallets!) tonight! So, on behalf of all of us cancer patients, survivors, family and friends, thankyou!

Phoebe Lindner