

Minutes from Friends for Life of America General Meeting - October 5, 2000

I. Welcome

Steve: My name is Steven Cohen. I am a freshman finance major from Pembroke Pines, Florida. I started Friends for Life of America three-and-a-half years ago. Friends for Life is a national organization with several branches in South Florida and two in New York and New Jersey. A chapter may soon be starting at Boston University, and depending on where one of our executive board members transfer, another chapter may be formed at either Cornell or the University of Pennsylvania. Allow me to introduce Scott Gorran, our Vice President of Operations.

Scott: My name is Scott Gorran. I am a junior finance major from West Palm Beach, Florida. I really haven't been a part of Friends for Life much longer than any of you. I got involved for the same reasons you're all here tonight. We want to get involved and want to help make a difference. Well, how do we help make a difference? Literally, the mission statement reads, "Friends for Life of America supports programs that improve the lives of pediatric patients living with leukemia and its related cancers." Well, how do we do that? Through objectives... We educate the public about the latest developments in treatment and diagnosis. We provide programs and services for patients and their families. Finally, we raise funds to promote innovative community and research initiatives. Now, Steven is going to tell you about our organization's history.

II. Organization History

Steve: On December 27, 1996, a little six-year-old boy named Daniel Heidenberg from South Carolina lost his life to Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (ALL). Now I never met Daniel but when my aunt told me about this brave little boy, I wanted to do something to aid in the fight against leukemia and its related cancers. And so, I started Friends for Life at my high school. We've raised close to \$40,000 since our organization's inception in February 1997. We've given \$17,000 to the Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital to build a teen room for patients and their siblings, a little over \$5,000 to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society to fund a research grant, \$2,000 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation to fulfill a child's dream, and much more. One of our members has also experienced how leukemia changed your outlook on life. And so it's my pleasure to introduce our guest speaker, Mike Luceri.

III. Speaker

Mike: My name is Mike Luceri, and a few years ago, my sister was diagnosed with a very rare type of leukemia, one which had never been seen in South Florida. Growing up, my sister and I never got along – we fought like cats and dogs. My sister really clashed with everyone. Well, everyone except kids. When she was diagnosed, she went to a hospital in Maryland for treatment. She was one of the oldest in her ward at the hospital and took on a maternal role for the other children. She used to call me at night, and we would talk for hours into the early morning. She would tell me about the children at the hospital and the things they did together. She also told me that some of those with whom she became close would pass on. My sister and I were never close growing up, but this

strengthened our relationship. She went into remission and has been in that state since. The whole episode really affected my life.

IV. Past Projects

Steve: In addition to the projects already mentioned, we sent a girl with leukemia to a special Girl Scouts camp that she could have an exciting summer even though she was undergoing treatment. And we've decided to fund the Circle Art Studio through the Arts in Medicine program at Shands Hospital. We raised all this money through a diversity of fundraising activities. And now Scott is going to tell you about some of the projects that we are planning now.

V. Current/Future Programs and Services

Scott: One of the programs that we're going to be starting immediately is called Hearts for the Holidays. Students walking through Turlington or by the Reitz Union will design cards for pediatric leukemia patients across the state, perhaps even across the country if the project gets big enough. Now, how can you get involved? Well, we're going to be forming a committee of about ten people to work on this event. At the head of the committee will be a chair whose job it is to oversee the entire event. We're going to be delegating a lot of responsibility to the members in this organization and giving you several opportunities to take on responsibility. What will this committee do? Well, we're going to need one of two things. We're either going to need the supplies to be donated from local businesses, or we're going to need to raise funds and then buy the supplies. The committee will also work with other organizations on campus (clubs, fraternities, sororities), and their members will design cards at their meetings. Steven is going to tell you about some of our other programs.

Steve: Our monster project this year will be Friends for Life Bright Night, where we will light up UF campus at night and create a two mile route where students will walk in their friends in support of leukemia patients. More details will follow. We are constructing a website, and could use your support. This will provide an ideal forum for the online community to find out about our organization. And Scott is going to tell us about how you can volunteer at Shands Hospital.

Scott: What I'd first like to add to that is some stuff within the Arts in Medicine program that we are funding. Before treatment, the children generally take part in arts and crafts and stuff like that in order to relax them. They only have funding to that one day a week because of a lack of supplies, and we're going to be donating money to Shands so that the patients will be able to do arts and crafts every day for the rest of the year. That's just one of the things that we're going to be doing in the near future. Now, regarding volunteering at Shands, this is really an opportunity for direct service. All of the programs that we have are going to help patients, but through your volunteering, you will directly affect the patients. You will be able to spend time with the children and actually see them smile. Regrettably, the process is a bit complicated, and I wish it were easier. I really do think that it's of great benefit, and you should definitely take advantage of the opportunity if possible. First, you're going to need to sign up for one of the three Volunteer Orientations offered. They are held on October 12th, October 18th, and October 26th. If you would

like to volunteer at any time during the next semester, you're going to need to go to one of these sessions. You're also going to have to buy one of these handsome Shands polo shirts. It's part of the dress code; you must wear the shirt along with khaki pants. The last part involves completing this immunization form.

Steve: If you're a student at UF, you've probably already completed most of the immunizations. The only one you may need is the tuberculosis vaccine, which Shands will administer for free.

Scott: We're also going to table in Turlington during the next 2-3 weeks. Members are at the foundation of this organization, and we'd like to grow our member base as large as possible. Many of you are here because you happened to walk by one of us at the Reitz Union a few weeks ago and were interested in Friends for Life. Let me be honest with you: it is very easy to attract people to this organization. It practically sells itself. When you ask someone if they'd like to help a child living with leukemia, you'll most likely get that person's attention. We're a non-partisan organization that really exists only to serve others.

Steve: We were at the Reitz Union for three hours or so and had 150 people sign up. We sent out an e-mail reminder to almost 170 people about the meeting. Now, we're a little disappointed with the turnout tonight. We thought there very well might be people more people than could fit in this room, and in the future, we think we'll have a membership of that size.

Scott: Basically, if you're interested in helping recruit members, just sign-up after the meeting, and we'll be in touch with you. Steven is now going to talk about the organization's goals.

VI. Goals

Steve: Each year of Friends for Life's existence, we set higher and higher goals. Last year, we raised just over \$12,000. I would like our organizational goal for this year to be \$15,000. I think we can definitely reach the goal.

VII. Officer Applications

Steve: We would love many of you to become officers of our organization. If you support our mission and want to work hard to impact the lives of others, join us on the board. Applications are due at our next meeting – Thursday, October 19th.

Scott: Seeing as how I just went through the application, I can give you a pretty good idea of what it's like. The process really isn't that bad. You have to write two short essays, and then there's an interview. It wasn't really grueling or anything, and if you're looking to get involved, this is a great opportunity. Your application will be evaluated by an independent committee. All candidates are evaluated holistically, meaning that we take into account your entire application and interview. If you have little leadership experience but a 4.0 GPA, we take that into account. Similarly, if you have a 2.6 GPA but you were the president of this and you helped with that, we'll also look at that. There are

no minimum cut-offs. I think this is a great opportunity to get involved. If you were to join any other organization on campus right now, you wouldn't have the opportunity to immediately become an officer, but since we're in our formation stage, you can jump right into a leadership role here. Remember, however, that being an officer does require a serious time commitment, as I have found out recently.

Steve: Yes, remember that officers must be very dedicated. You will be doing a lot of work, so if you're not interested or don't have the time, please do not apply. We're also looking for a historian who will take pictures of Friends for Life events. Photography experience is preferred.

VIII. Proposals, Questions, Comments

Member: I'm not sure how Friends for Life is a national organization. Who else comprises the executive board?

Steve: Currently, it is just me.

Scott: Friends for Life is currently in a transition phase. Many of the members are now in their first semesters in college, and obviously, they're not sure how much time they'll have. Many haven't decided whether or not they would like to continue Friends for Life.

IX. Adjourn

Steve: I am now going to read a letter from George Bush. As you may or may not know, George and Barbara Bush lost a child to leukemia. We would like to thank you all for coming and look forward to seeing you again.