

inspired!

A PICTURE OF HOPE

Gratitude for life begins with giving back.

by Mary Beth Thomsen

Cancer is a scary word, but that diagnosis can also be a catalyst to discovering courage with a purpose.

In 2007, Lidia Grigorean learned she had stage 4 breast cancer. During gruesome months of chemotherapy, radiation and a double mastectomy, she developed a greater appreciation for life along with a new perspective.

She had always loved photography but had never attempted to pursue it professionally. That is, until death was knocking at her door. "When you have cancer, there is an unexplainable courage that comes to the surface," Lidia says. "I did not care about anything else but to follow my dream." She made a vow to help people if and when she got out of the hospital.

Once her cancer was in remission her lifelong passion turned into a pursuit of giving back. She volunteered to photograph Kate McCrae, a 5-year-old girl battling brain cancer.

It was Kate's photo session that inspired Lidia to create the nonprofit Tiny Sparrow Foundation. Her logo design is a tribute to Kate, and the organization's mission is to provide photography free of charge to families with children facing a terminal illness.

The foundation creates a custom-printed memory album for the family as well as donates a CD of images with full copyright permission. Thanks to a network of more than 400 professional photographers nationwide who donate their time and talent, Tiny Sparrow continues to grow and inspire year after year.

"You are not promised tomorrows with the people you love," says Lisa Routh, a Picture of Hope recipient. "Now, no matter how rocky this road gets, we always have these amazing photos as memories to hold onto." 

Angels Emma, Brice (inset left) and Kate McCrae (inset right)

