

Healing by Giving

By Kevin Fritz

After beating a mysterious illness, Leah Nash is living a life with no regrets.

It was supposed to be the happiest time of her life. But ten years ago, when then-24-year-old **Leah Nash** was planning her wedding, she developed a mysterious, life-threatening illness. The vivacious, young woman had become a shell of herself seemingly over night. It started with a simple cold, which progressed into pneumonia. Her autoimmune system was failing, and her body started attacking itself. She was sick for four months.

Then one day, she woke up and felt just fine.

“I used to be more afraid of trying new things, because I always thought I would have time later,” she says. “But after I got sick, I decided I didn’t want to live a life full of regrets.” Noting she always had an inner passion for helping others, instilled by her parent’s strong philosophy of community and family, Nash has not slowed down a bit in her quest to get the most out of life — and to help others along the way.

“I became very action-oriented after I got better,” says Nash, who earned a bachelor of arts in anthropology and communication from Rollins College and a master’s in communication from the University of Central Florida.

Her resume speaks volumes of her involvement in the community. She has been involved with Get Active Orlando — a volunteer fitness advisory board — for seven years, serving as chair in 2011. From 2008-09 she chaired the City of Orlando’s Families, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board and chaired the Orange County Neighborhood Grants Advisory Board from 2009-10. She also volunteers her time with Downtown South Residential, the Delaney Park Neighborhood Association and the Adult Literacy League (ALL).

“She exemplifies what being ‘active’ is all about,” says **Dean Grandin**, City of Orlando planning director. “Her creativity, energy, persistence and enthusiasm are infectious, and she is able to make things happen, whether big or small.”

Nash has taken a comedy class, a tap dancing class (complete with a recital), tried simulated sky diving, joined the handbell choir at her church,



COURTESY OF LEAH NASH

Leah Nash's serious illness drives her to get healthy and help others do the same.

and became a photographer, publishing photos in two City of Orlando historic calendars. Last spring, she agreed to form FemCity Orlando, an organization of professional women. She also opened her own boutique firm, Trusted Source Consulting. “I get an idea in my head now, and I want to do it,” she says.

In the midst of everything, not even another atypical setback would discourage Nash from moving forward. In 2008, she was diagnosed with myasthenia gravis (MG), a neuromuscular disorder involving the muscles and the nerves that control them. Because it is a type of autoimmune disorder, it may explain what she went through in 2002, but doctors are not certain it was associated with MG.

She responded to the diagnosis by becoming the top fundraiser for the annual Orlando MG Walk. It seems nothing will ever get in the way of Leah living life to its fullest and making sure others have that same chance. **L**

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