

Pass It On®...

It's Not Your Lifespan, it's Your Wingspan.

How one girl's 16 years of life impacts thousands.

Penny Doerge should have had a normal childhood, hanging out with friends and growing into adulthood before thinking about how she could change the world. But at an early age, Penny was diagnosed with neurofibromatosis, a condition that causes tumors and can lead to brain cancer.

The prognosis was not good. But Penny had a life to live and refused to live it in darkness. In fact, she chose to spread light to everyone around her.

During the pandemic, Penny created a series of small gatherings called adventure camps for the neighborhood kids. Each child had a COVID test at the door, and then the fun began. It was Penny's way of creating connections to overcome isolation. For those who couldn't attend, she made funny TikTok videos and shared her artwork for those who couldn't attend. She loved to use her creativity to make ordinary things beautiful.

When it was time for another surgery — she had 15 in all — Penny would go about it in a businesslike manner. No complaining, no crying, just get through it and get back to living. Her mother remembers, "Somebody said Penny was an actress and the world was her stage. She was joy personified."

Her teachers remember her as a hardworking girl everyone wanted to be around. She was happy and beautiful and artistically gifted. And she used those attributes to lift others. "She was a little angel," her grandfather remembers. "She was fun and happy. Penny taught us a lot." Her father adds, "She taught us how to treat other people."

Sometimes a very special person comes into this life to remind all those around her what we should really be about. We should make time to create beauty, and to share it. Penny's artwork made people happy. Her notes and videos made people forget about hard things and focus on good things. Her friendship brought a sense of hope to everyone who wanted to be close to her. Her pastor says, "Penny was and will continue to be a bright light for her family and friends."

Penny died at the age of 16. "She made a choice to live her life with joy and optimism," says her father.

That optimism continues to burn bright. Her family launched Penny's Flight, a foundation dedicated to inspiring others to live life as she did, according to the family's motto, "It's not your lifespan, it's your wingspan." The foundation raises money for cancer research and also celebrates life by sharing the message: Spread your wings. Shine your light.

Comedian Jimmy Fallon and former NFL quarterback Eli Manning have picked up the torch of Penny's cause. And so it glows. The brief life of a young girl touches thousands of lives and reminds us all that we can soar to new heights, no matter who we are.

Spread your Wings... [PassItOn.com](https://passiton.com)

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