

Good afternoon. My name is Kaitlynn Kline and I am currently Miss Laurel Highlands' Outstanding Teen 2011. When I first began entering pageants three years ago I was asked to select a platform or public issue that I was passionate about. Around the same time I began competing in pageants, my 26 year old cousin, Josh, was just beginning his radiation treatment for Stage III Malignant Melanoma. He had to endure many radiation treatments as well as reconstructive ear surgery. Because Josh and I were so close, I knew exactly what my platform was going to be, Skin Cancer Awareness. I wanted to share my stories and information about the effects of Skin Cancer. I have created an acronym, "A.W.A.R.E.", to help people protect themselves when outdoors enjoying the sun and how to recognize early warning signs that need to be discussed with your doctor.

I have seen first hand the devastating effects that this disease has had on my family. Later in that same year my Aunt was diagnosed with Malignant Melanoma. She then was checked for other cancerous moles. The doctors discovered several, which were then all removed. My grandma developed Basal Cell and Squamous Cell Skin Cancer. She, like my aunt, has had several spots removed over the course of the last two years.

Both my aunt and my grandmother were heavy tanners starting at an early age. My grandma loved tanning so much that she bought her own tanning bed. My grandma and aunt would tan everyday and even lay out in the sun in the summer when they weren't in the tanning bed. My grandma is very fortunate that she did not get melanoma; however, my aunt isn't so lucky. Both of them are very cautious when out in the sun. Unfortunately for Josh, my aunt and my grandmother they had to learn this lesson the hard way.

Skin Cancer is one of the most preventable types of cancers, yet it is the most common form of cancers. Skin cancer is a rising problem in the United States. If we don't promote proper skin protection soon, many may suffer because of lack of knowledge. This year alone the American Cancer Society estimates that more than 68,000 new cases of malignant melanoma and 2 million Basal Cell and Squamous Cell Skin Cancers will be diagnosed. Approximately 8,700 Americans will die of Melanoma and 2,000 will die from non-melanoma skin cancers. These numbers will continue to grow if we don't put a stop to them by getting the word out about the harms of tanning.

I am 17 years old and as I sit (stand) here in front of you I can not legally buy alcohol, cigarettes, or tobacco. These items are prohibited to be used by anyone under the age of 18 because of the possible consequences associated with their use. Tanning beds can have very serious repercussions as well. Where is it right that we let young adults or their legal guardian make a choice like this? As representatives of this Commonwealth it is your responsibility to protect our youth by passing House Bill 369. Thank you for the honor and great opportunity to speak on behalf of my platform and House Bill 369. Thank you for your time.