

## **This I believe**

**by Nancy Smith Worthen**

When my 22 year old daughter Margaret had a brain stem stroke in May of 2006, I did not ask the question, who will help me? Or, what help do I need? People stepped forward, in remarkable, often inspiring, ways. A friend created a “blog” so I could write about Margaret’s condition. People figured out that I needed food. Members of my spiritual circle came to stay with Margaret at night so that I could rest. Sometimes people came simply to sit by my side. Often, words weren’t necessary – a compassionate hug and a knowing glance at just the right moment meant more than words.

I was in shock, as any parent would be. I needed to make many complicated and agonizing decisions about my daughter’s care and was supported by a community of people – the hospital social worker, the nurses who cared for Margaret, close friends, family members, co-workers, a minister. Reflecting on the first six months of my daughter’s illness, I realize now that my friends kept a watchful eye on me, keeping me company and making sure that I ate and slept. I also know that by reading the daily “blog,” people were able to understand what was happening to both Margaret and me and were able to respond in meaningful ways. Somehow, people sensed what I needed without my asking. These friends made it possible for me to survive a challenge that seemed impossible to endure.

In January 2007, I decided that Margaret should be able to travel to places that she loved. For that dream to come true, I needed to raise funds to purchase a van to transport my daughter; I set a goal of raising \$35,000, which, at the time, seemed beyond reach. Finally I was ready to ask for help – and help is what I received, in great abundance. Friends were willing to run several fundraising events. Artists contributed work to silent auctions. Musicians and singers donated their performances. The local newspaper ran a story about Margaret and the help she needed. The list of contributors grew . . . and grew . . . and grew. Within six months, over 500 people had helped us reach our fundraising goal. Because of these people – these truly extraordinary people – once again Margaret can be in the world she loves.

And so I believe in community. I believe that if you ask for what you need, people will give it. And sometimes, even when you do not ask, people see what you need and come forward.