

Matthew Chen

Essay Contest

On July 28, 2017, Kathleen Peiling Chang, MD left this world. She was a doctor. She was also my mother. I remember my mom going to the hospital a lot and when I realized it was unusual for people to go to the hospital that often. We lost her a month after.

My mom was completely dedicated to her job. She was a pediatrician and an infectious disease specialist. As an infectious disease doctor, she treated patients with diseases like AIDS/HIV, pneumonia, and meningitis. When she was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2013, many people advised her to retire. But she wanted to help people, as she was trained to do. When her health improved, she went back to work, seeing patients and volunteering at school in between chemotherapy treatments and blood transfusions. While she was on leave, many of her patients waited for her to come back instead of finding another doctor. In addition to seeing patients, she led projects to educate people about vaccinations and immunizations, and helped another doctor with promoting Screen-Off Week. She even planned retirement parties for several doctors in her department.

I remember her coming to my class as one of the art docents, reading to the class for Project Cornerstone, doing traffic duty at school, and helping with school fundraisers. I remember her helping me with my homework, organizing my birthday parties, and taking my family to amusement parks.

As we face the terrifying possibility of a coronavirus pandemic, I think of my mom knowing that she would be at the forefront of the battle against this virus. I didn't get much time with her, but I hope that I can be as devoted, hardworking, and live up to the example she set for us.

