



by Jackie Perrone



Jenna Shevchik

Back in 2004, when newly-created Lexington Life Magazine began its series called Lexington Leaders, the intent was clear: tell the stories of the people who had a hand in making the community the family-friendly, progressive town it was and is.

Early on, those stories mostly focused on white-haired men looking back on long careers in business and local government. But as the 21st century moved along, lo, younger men and women showed up in these pages, leading in ever-widening arenas such as charitable service; times were a-changing. Now, in 2018, this Lexington Leader is a notable First: a high school student with a big heart and a smart brain who not only wants to spend her life helping people, she is already doing so in a big way.

Jenna Shevchik got an early start in reaching out to others. When she was in second grade at Lexington Elementary School, she was heartbroken at the death of her grandmother from cancer. Young Jenna learned of the nationwide campaign to diagnose, treat and cure this devastating disease, and all by herself, figured out a way to become part of it. Her artistic bent had already led her to fashioning earrings from beads and other assorted items; she built up an inventory to start selling them, with all the proceeds going to the cause of cancer-prevention and cure. And so, "Gigi's Jewelry" was born. She was called Gigi by her brother Joey when she was born and the name stuck. Now in high school, she is choosing to go by her birth name of Jenna.

"That was nine years ago," she says. "I'm still operating Gigi's Jewelry and selling the earrings along with some other items of jewelry. They're sold now in ten local stores and I make about 80 pieces a month to keep them in stock. We change the beneficiary at times. Recently the proceeds went to Lexington Medical Center and another time to the Palmetto Richland Children's Hospital. Other past beneficiaries include the Tatinis, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and SCOA.

"Sometimes I create them in team colors, for a sports theme. I estimate I probably have been able to donate close to \$8,000 to different organizations since I started Gigi's Jewelry." Jenna is a junior at Ben Lippen High School. Christian academies focus on service to others and mission trips. Jenna went to Haiti last January with a mission group, helping build houses and reading Bible stories to children there. The next trip is to Costa Rica in January 2019. The group of about 26 stays a week in local churches or mission homes.

Last summer Jenna held a three-week internship at Lexington Medical Center and this helped cement her ambition to serve in a medical field. "I hope to attend Wake Forest or Duke with a major in pre-med," she says. "I've always been fascinated with the structure of the human body, and I'd like to be a doctor - maybe a pediatrician or an anesthesiologist."

At 17 years old, Jenna can teach all of us a lot about service to others. Her proud parents, Todd and Donna Shevchik, support her dreams and look forward to a bright future for their daughter. ■

