



Impact Statement

Tina Chen, Grade 11

Hope Before Cure, 2026

Acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 x 1 inches

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Unsung Hero: Sidney Farber

My unsung hero is Sidney Farber, who changed the trajectory of childhood cancer treatment. Unlike many well-known figures, his work and constant efforts happened quietly in the hospitals and laboratories, and his discoveries have saved countless lives. I admire his persistence and hope, especially at a time when leukemia was almost always fatal. He refused to accept that nothing could be done and revolutionized how this disease could be treated.

Dr. Sidney Farber's impact derives from his pioneering work in chemotherapy. He was one of the first doctors to successfully treat children with leukemia using antifolate drugs, which temporarily put the disease into remission. Even though these early treatments were not permanent cures, they paved the pathway to further medical research, and most importantly, they proved something incredibly important: cancer can be fought. With this groundwork, medical research was redirected, leading to the development of more effective treatments over time. His work also contributed to the founding of what is now called the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, the leading center for cancer research. Dr. Sidney Farber's strenuous efforts and innumerable hours spent in the hospital gave families something they did not have before—hope.

During my research, I learned about both Farber's scientific contributions and the emotional weight of his work. His patients were young children, and despite his breakthroughs, not all the children were able to survive. This tragic reality made his determination fiercer. The research was not easy, but Dr. Sydney Farber never gave up and always had hope. He believed that every child in the future deserved a chance to live. A quote that really stood out to me is, "A man who predicts a date for discovery is no longer a scientist." This philosophy reflects his understanding that progress takes time and patience and that no discovery could be rushed. Even though Dr. Sidney Farber was talking about scientific discovery, it made me reflect and realize that his wisdom applies to everything: no progress can be made without time and effort, and all the challenges that we come across in this process are crucial to help us reach that final success.

After researching and learning about Dr. Farber, I started my creative art process. Ideas and pictures came across my mind. I wanted to emphasize time, past to present, seasons after seasons. I imagined myself in a room, full of medical books and research papers, yet it still feels warm and cozy. There is a snow globe and stethoscope on the desk, and inside the globe is young Dr. Farber holding a child who is dressed in hospital clothing. They were looking up and pointing towards the sky, with expressions that

demonstrate hope and the belief in a better future. I look around the room again and this time, I see Older Dr. Farber standing by the window. I followed his gaze out the window and saw children playing happily in the snow. Suddenly, the moment freezes, and I step out of this imaginary room, rushing to record what I saw on my canvas. The moment—the epiphany—shows the passage of time and the long-term impact of his work. The children outside are the best representation of Dr. Sidney’s effort and purpose, which is to make every child have a chance to live happily and freely. While the child in the snow globe suffered from a fatal disease—a cage—and must depend on Dr. Sidney’s shelter for survival in the past, Dr. Sidney has dedicated his whole life to breaking that cage and successfully returning the free world to this child (and so many more), even though his aging becomes his own cage in the end.

I chose acrylic paint as my medium because it allows for details and layering, which helped me build depth between the foreground and background. I used the snow to connect both scenes, symbolizing continuity of Dr. Sidney’s legacy. I also gave many different textures in this art, such as the snow, the glass of the snow globe, and the wooden table, because I wanted the viewers to engage to such an extent that they can “step into” this room just like I did. I focused on lighting to highlight the figures inside the globe, making them the emotional centers of the artwork. Lastly, I “engraved” the quote that inspired me on the snow globe. The quote carries the message that discovery is a process, not a fixed moment and can most showcase Dr. Sidney’s heroic traits.

This project has influenced how I see perseverance and impact. Dr. Sidney Farber’s story reminds me that meaningful changes do not happen quickly or can be recognized immediately. They require patience, sometimes failure or mistakes, but most importantly, continuous efforts. Learning about Dr. Farber’s life encourages me to stay committed to my goals, even during challenges. I hope to share this artwork with my classmates, friends, and family to appreciate Sidney Farber, whose contributions may not always be widely recognized but have shaped the world in incredible ways. Through this piece, I want to invite viewers to reflect on the idea that we should never lose hope, because even in the smallest form, hope can lead to lasting changes.