



Impact Statement

Jacob Gastner, Grade 10

***Through Hardship, Reaching a Greater Cause*, 2026**

Copper, brass, nickel sculpture, 16.5 x 2 x 0.25 inches

Harriton High School, Bryn Mawr, PA

Unsung Hero: Terry Fox

Terry Fox was born on July 28, 1958, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and grew up in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. As a kid and teenager, he developed a strong passion for sports, particularly basketball and running. At 18, while studying at Simon Fraser University, he was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, a form of bone cancer. As the disease got worse, doctors had to amputate his right leg above the knee. Despite this, Fox stayed determined and kept running during his recovery. By 1979, he had successfully completed a full marathon using a prosthetic leg. Being an athlete myself, I chose him as his feat of perseverance and commitment, which is inspiring to me and many others.

During his recovery, Fox met other cancer patients whose stories stuck with him. He also read about Dick Traum, an amputee who had run the New York City Marathon, and that pushed him even further. A few months after finishing his first marathon post-diagnosis, he decided he was going to run across Canada. His plan was to cover a full marathon distance of 42 kilometers every single day. He called it the Marathon of Hope, and his goal was to raise one dollar for every one of Canada's 24 million people. He started on April 20, 1980, waking up at 4:30 in the morning and running until around 7 at night. At first, people were skeptical, but as he kept going, more and more people started paying attention. By the time he reached Ontario, massive crowds were showing up to cheer him on. He stopped at over 400 schools, towns, and cities along the way to talk about his cause. Fox made it clear that the attention was never supposed to be about him. He said that being famous was not the idea of the run and was never what he was going for. After 143 days and 5,373 kilometers, cancer spread to his lungs and he was forced to stop. He had already raised over \$1.7 million by that point, and donations kept pouring in after he stopped. He lived to see his goal surpassed, with \$24.2 million raised for cancer research. Terry Fox passed away on June 28, 1981, at just 22 years old. But his cause did not stop there. The annual Terry Fox Run started in 1981 and has since grown into one of the largest cancer research fundraisers in the world, with millions of participants in over 30 countries. The Terry Fox Foundation has raised over \$900 million for cancer research, and the Terry Fox Research Institute, established in 2007, continues that work today.

To honor Fox, I created a necklace composed of multiple components attached together by chain including a leaf, bone, lung and two waves. The bronze chain running through the necklace represents Terry himself, and as it progresses, a copper chain is added alongside it to show how his movement began to grow and pull more people in. The copper chains represent the spread of his influence and the people who joined his cause. The chain links were counted

out to be formed of exactly 27 links, representing the 27 miles of a marathon, which was the distance Terry ran each day during the Marathon of Hope. The wave shapes nod to his goal of running coast to coast across Canada, while the decayed bone reflects his diagnosis of osteosarcoma, the bone cancer that set everything in motion. The maple leaf pendant with the word "hope" engraved on it ties back to both his Canadian roots and the name of his run. As the necklace reaches the lung charm, a small piece of decay marks the moment the cancer spreads there, forcing him to stop after 143 days and 5,373 kilometers. After the lung, the bronze chain is removed entirely, leaving only the copper chains to carry on, showing that while Terry passed away on June 28, 1981, the movement he started did not die with him but instead only grew.

My artwork shares the story of a man whose impact is astronomical and underappreciated. It brings attention to this story as a wakeup call to those who think they can't and that continue to make excuses for themselves. The story even relates back to my athletic challenges, as an athlete who has torn their anterior labrum and refused surgery to avoid missing my lacrosse and football seasons, I instead opted to play through the pain along with the instability brought by a lack of a labrum. I hope that this outreach through artwork will inspire at least one person to make a betterment in their life.