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# Fighting Cancer One Colon at a Time

BY JEANNETTE KETON

Colorado State University student Molly McMaster couldn't believe what she was hearing seven years ago when she learned she had stage 2 colorectal cancer. She was 23 years old, in great shape, and had her heart set on playing hockey in the Olympics.

After two surgeries and a year of chemotherapy, McMaster converted her anger and despair into positive action. She skated 2,000 miles during a 71-day period from her home in Glens Falls, New York, to Greeley, Colorado, raising \$60,000 along the way for cancer research, education, and patient support—and making friends via e-mail with another colon cancer patient, 25-year-old Amanda Sherwood of Little Rock, Arkansas.

The two eventually appeared together on the *Today* show, receiving an open invitation from Katie Couric to return if they came up with another “crazy” stunt to increase awareness of colorectal cancer.

In January 2002, Amanda died two days after McMaster carried the Olympic torch in her honor. Three months later, the Colossal Colon, a 40-foot-long, 4-foot-high crawl-through replica of a human colon, went on tour.

“People aren't very eager to talk about the colon and rectum,” says McMaster, who made a return visit to the *Today* show to promote the exhibit. “As a result, many people don't get tested. Enter the Colossal Colon—an educational tool like no other.”

Visitors can crawl through, walk around, and peer into windows in the colon to see cancerous and non-cancerous polyps, hemorrhoids, Crohn's disease, diverticulosis, and various stages of colon cancer. **The Colossal Colon** ([www.colossalcolon.com](http://www.colossalcolon.com)) has visited 35 communities and continues to be available for educational events.

Thirty-year-old McMaster, who now lives in Wilton, New York, and plays ice hockey in her spare time, teamed with Amanda's cousin Hannah Vogler to co-found The Colon Club, a non-profit organization that raises awareness of colorectal cancer in out-of-the-box ways. They are currently working on their third Colondar—a calendar featuring colorectal cancer survivors, all diagnosed under age 50, who bare their abdominal scars and share their stories.

**The Colon Club** ([www.colonclub.com](http://www.colonclub.com)) is also working with the United Hockey League on the UHL Cross-Checks Colon Cancer campaign. During March, each UHL player wore the blue star symbol for colorectal cancer on his home jersey, and McMaster skated with the home team in all 14 United Hockey League arenas,

becoming the first woman to play in the UHL and the first person ever to play for every team. “Coming up with crazy ideas to make young people aware of colorectal cancer is what I love to do.”