

Childhood cancer patient, now 47, writes book

■ Alesia Shute plans to donate 100 percent of the proceeds to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, where she spent so much of her youth.

By **ROB SPAHR**

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MULLICA TOWNSHIP — Alesia Shute laid on an ice bed in the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia a few days after the pediatric colon cancer patient had her large intestines removed.

The frail 10-year-old stared at the walls as doctors and nurses tried to bring down the 105-degree temperature that caused one of her lungs to collapse.

Get well cards covered the walls, and her room was filled with gifts, but she was too sick to care about their contents.

"I knew I was sick, but I wasn't told until years later how sick I was," Shute said.

Shute was diagnosed with cancer when she was 7 years old, and she spent more than two decades dealing with the disease and its side effects.

"My friends would spend their free time during the summer at the swimming pool. I would spend mine at the hospital," she said. "When you are that sick that young, you miss your childhood."

Now 47 and healthier than

she has been in her entire life, Shute has written a book titled "Everything's Okay" to share her story, a story that she hopes will raise money for CHOP, where she spent much of her childhood. She also hopes "Everything's Okay" will help people — from the parents of young cancer patients to her own children — understand what pediatric patients go through.

Shute said she always wanted to write a book, but her 18-year-old son, Johnathan, inspired her to follow through.

"He is everything I wasn't when I was a teenager. He plays soccer, baseball and runs around with his friends. At that age, I was taking 20 pills a day," Shute said. "I realized that he had no clue what some kids have to go through."

"I realized if my own son didn't know that there are children who deal with this, that there were so many other people who didn't know either," she said.

"Everything's Okay," which was published by the Illinois-based Escalation Press, chronicles Shute's ordeals — having to carry an ileostomy bag everywhere she went, having a room full of kids laugh at her for unexpected "accident" she had at camp, ending a family vacation in the hospital just for eating a plum and watching her classmates develop faster, because the cancer



Staff photo by Danny Drake

Sweetwater resident Alesia Shute, with her dog Ponch at her side, discusses her soon-to-be-released book, 'Everything's Okay,' about her lifelong battle with cancer.

slowed her maturation process.

"Getting a glimpse of what chronically ill children deal with would change anyone's perspective," Shute writes. "I don't think it will be possible for someone to read this book and not take something away from it."

Shute, who has owned several area restaurants and nightclubs with her husband, Cliff, will donate 100 percent

of proceeds to CHOP.

"People are always very puzzled when I tell them that I am not keeping any of the money," said Shute, adding her long-term goal is to get large companies to purchase copies in bulk and donate them to hospitals so parents of chronically ill patients can have them. "I've been very lucky in my life, very lucky. And now it's time for me to give back."

Shute will sign copies of "Everything's Okay" from noon to 4 p.m. Aug. 4 at Salon Frabrojae Madison Square in Vineland and from 6 to 9 p.m. Aug. 5 at Roccas Towne House in Hammonton.

For more details about Shute's story and the book signings, see:

www.everythingsokaybook.com

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