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Growing up my life was like everyone else's, I went to school, played sports, and spent time with family and friends. I never really worried about sun exposure or wearing sunscreen on a regular basis. I like many other teenage girls thought that I needed to go tanning and I need to have a sun kissed glow all year round. My thoughts started to change whenever my Aunt was diagnosed with Melanoma. Around this time was when I also found out that my Grandfather and Grandmother both had Melanoma. I began to be conscious of the time that I spent in the sun and wore more sunscreen. As well as picking a higher SPF sunscreen to wear. Even though I was being safe with everything, it wasn't enough. During the summer of 2009 I noticed that a spot appeared on my left forearm. I didn't think too much of it but over the next eight months the spot began to get bigger and bigger. In the month of March 2010, my doctor told me that it was a mole and with my family history it would be best if I had the mole removed. The mole was removed and I had to wait a week for the results. On April 6, 2010 my doctor's assistant called to tell me the results from the biopsy. The mole came back malignant for Melanoma, she finished the conversation telling me that the Dermatology and Skin Cancer center will be contacting me to set up an appointment. In that moment I was less emotional and more in shock that this had happened to me. I sat down in my dining room still in disbelief that this happened to me. I remember that I couldn't even tell my parents without crying. I was so scared of what was going to happen to me and I would see the worry in my parents eyes. The following day I visited the Dermatology and Skin Cancer center and met with Dr. Saban. She examined me and spoke to me about what was going to happen. Even though I was still scared, she gave me a small sense of relief. Within the next week I went to visit with the doctor who was to perform my surgery. At this appointment, I learned that my Melanoma was a level IV on the Clark's scale and measured a depth of 0.78 mm on a Breslow's scale. Because I was diagnosed at a high level as well as being young they wanted to attack the Melanoma very harshly. May 4, 2010 was the date of my surgery, I arrived early to the hospital with my mom being there throughout the whole process. On this day I had so many emotions going on, I was scared, mad, impatient, and happy that this day had finally come. I remember sitting in my room getting mad that I had to be there so early just to sit in a room and wait. During this entire time I remember my Mom telling me that my Dad kept calling from work to check on things. Before my surgery started, a radioactive dye was injected into the affected area on my left forearm. This dye then traveled up to the lymph nodes in my left armpit. Once my surgery had started, the doctor performed a sentinel lymph node biopsy from two of my lymph nodes. He also made a wide excision on the affected areas on my left forearm to make sure he removed everything. After the surgery was over I don't really remember much because of how drugged up I was. When I became awake enough, I remember trying my best to change into my clothes and get out of there. The doctor said that we should know that results to the biopsy within two weeks. Waiting for the results seemed like a life time and I just prayed that it would all be over. On May 11, 2010 I received news that the sentinel lymph node biopsy came back benign. So much relief had come over me that I became very emotional. I was happy that it caught early enough before anymore surgeries had to take

place. From that day on, I became super careful whenever I was outside. At first I was very insecure with the scares that I had on my body but now I embrace my scars. People asking about my scars is one way that I can educate them about the dangers of Melanoma and how it can affect them. It's been 2 and 1/2 years since my surgery and I'm still taking the time to not let it happen again. This experience has made me thankful for everything that I have and thankful for the people I have in my life. My parents, brother, family, and friends were the best support system and their still supporting me when it comes to my experience with Melanoma.