IT WAS A dark and stormy afternoon, and my PIDD kid, Molly, and I were roaming the crowded halls of our local shopping mall, hitting the sales of the impending holiday season. Folks were bustling to and fro with their bargains in hand, some dodging the Twitterers, Texters and Tweetsters, whose fingers seem to dance on their beloved cell phones. Navigating the throng, Molly and I dodged the random human bullets, avoiding collisions and potential “miscommunications.” Note to self: Next year, I’ll let my fingers do the walking and shop online!

Our family has been warned by several in the immune deficiency community to avoid public places like crowded shopping malls — a germ farm of sorts. Being females, however, Molly and I felt that would be missing a rite of passage between mother and daughter: to shop all day and all night until my credit cards screamed “uncle” and estrogen leaked from our ears.

The aroma of gingerbread latte and the addictive caffeine rush side-effect energized my senses and seemed to coat my tongue. I grabbed Molly’s delicate hand, one that had experienced the sting of repeated IVs, and gently led her to the coffee shop with its signature half-naked mermaid insignia that always entertains my sons’, Calvin’s and Caleb’s, pre-pubescent eyes. I took out a personal loan and paid for a grande, sugar-free, two Splenda, three pump, skinny, light-

By Cheryl L. Haggard

_**Shop ’til You Drop**_
whipped gingerbread latté, two freshly
defrosted, slightly warmed chocolate
chip cookies and a venti no-ice tap
water. I breathed in the luxurious
steam from my hot drink and felt
Molly and I were finally getting what
we dreamed of — a time when we
could forget needles, nursing and
nasty, never-ending infections. Just by
being in a “forbidden place,” we felt
normal and a bit naughty all at the
same time. Oh, what sweet bliss to be
with my Molly, healthy at the moment
and doing something so common!

That was until familiar screams
ruined my sick-day getaway — the
screams I hated more than anything:
a child in pain.

“Mom, let’s go see what’s goin’ on!”
Molly urged, her chocolaty breath
invading my air space. “Maybe we
can help!”

My PIDD kid’s request didn’t shock
me; Molly has a heart for and relates
to kids in desperate pain. In fact,
between her and her brothers’ chronic
illnesses, surgeries and immune
globulin infusions, Molly has a taste
for becoming a physician some day.
Molly started her career when she
brought a cryogenically frozen
grasshopper back to life last winter,
but that’s another story.

I entertained every idea that popped
into my head to relieve me of doing
the decent thing and going down the
stairs toward the wretched wailing.
Can’t I just have one day free from
human suffering? I begged, staring
heavenward.

When our eyes locked, I saw a sense
of urgency in my sweet daughter’s
soul. She wanted to help the hurting,
even on her day off. Who was I to
deny her?

“OK, let’s go, but first I want to
gather up…” Before I finished my
request to clean up our expensive
mess, Dr. Molly was already on her
way to the emergency.

Surveying the scene as I headed
down the escalator, hot toddy in
hand, I began to giggle. Two plump
security officers accompanied by a
housekeeper with a cart circled
around a whimpering boy as if they
were three Snoopy dogs looking
down at their empty dinner dish.
Molly, on her knees, had already
given aid and comfort by placing her
white sweater (read: “foolish pur-
chase”) under the poor boy’s head.

“Excuse me,” I said breaking up
the gawking trio, and entering the
circle where the victim lay.

“Oh my, what happened?” I asked
the boy’s mom, putting my arm
around her shoulder.

Shaking, she managed to tell me,
“As he was heading down the
escalator, fooling around backwards,
a hungry step took a bite out of
his knee.”

“See, I told you my mom’d come.
She’s a wonderful nurse,” Molly
interrupted and half lied to her patient.

“I’ve never had stitches before, have
you?” the freaked-out mom begged.

I didn’t have time to explain my true
identity. I suppose because I didn’t
puke or pass out after I began to
triage the poor kid’s bloodied and
exposed kneecap, I was granted a
temporary nursing degree.

Creating a mini trauma room on the
unsterile mall floor, I barked out orders
to the three Snoopys like a pro:

“Get me a first-aid kit.”

“Write down directions to the
nearest hospital.”

“Clean up the blood drippings so
no one slips.”

“Don’t touch my latté!”

All the while, Molly cooed and
comforted the frightened boy.

Later, feeling spent from the last
hour on the mall’s floor, Molly and I
settled into the car and headed for
home. We had no packages to jam
in the trunk or any bargains to be
proud of. The only thing we took
home from the mall that day was a
big life lesson: ‘Tis better to give
than to receive. But, being a good
receiver isn’t half bad either! And
what we received that day, especially
Molly, was a lesson that can’t be
wrapped in shiny holiday paper:
Molly’s immune globulin infusions
made it possible for her to help
another toward healing.

“So, did you gals have fun today?”
my husband, Mark, asked with a
cheeky smirk.

Molly looked at her daddy and said,
“Yup! I shopped ‘til I dropped!”

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