



## STEVI HILLMAN IS RUNNING FOR ARMY SGT. AMANDA OLDER DOWNING

Iraq veteran Downing fought hard against cancer  
Her patriotism spurred her to enlist in the Army.  
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Published 11:28 pm CST, Sunday, January 30, 2011

Amanda Older Downing was a high school student when the events of 9-11 occurred. Spurred by patriotism, Downing joined the ROTC at James Madison High School, and later the Army. At 19, she began a 15-month tour in Iraq.

Downing served with Charlie Company's 319th Military Intelligence Battalion, 525th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade. During her service, she earned three commendation medals.

After returning to the United States in 2009, Downing began experiencing health issues that prompted her to seek medical advice.

“She started gaining weight and her muscles began to weaken,” her husband, Andrew Downing, said Sunday. “She couldn't even do one sit-up, and she used to do 70.”

Doctors struggled to diagnose Downing for months. By the time the diagnosis of adrenal cancer was made, she was at stage four — the most advanced stage.

Downing died Jan. 22. She was 24.

In August, she underwent surgery to remove her adrenal glands and began intensive bouts of chemotherapy.

“She remained very positive and rarely complained,” her husband said. “She was a fighter, that's for sure.”

During her initial battle with cancer, Amanda and Andrew weren't married. In October 2009, he was working as a contractor in Iraq when Amanda received devastating news.

A CAT scan revealed her cancer had grown. Andrew immediately returned home and they married one month later.





“We knew we didn't have a whole lot of time left,” Andrew Downing said. “And I wanted to give her the wedding of her dreams.”

And he did. They said their vows at sunset, standing on a balcony overlooking palm trees at a Florida country club.

“Everything worked out perfectly for our wedding,” he said.

Her father, Wayne Older, walked her down the aisle. Downing was extremely close to her parents and that moment brought her great joy.

“She was best friends with her mom, Karen,” her husband said. “They were inseparable.”

Her mother, Karen Martin, took time off from work this past year to care for her.

Downing's generosity was apparent throughout her life, but especially at the end.

She requested that her wigs be donated to others in similar circumstances. And instead of flowers at her funeral, she asked that money be donated to St. Jude Children's Hospital.

“She was always thinking about other people,” her husband said. “Even when she was going through so much.”

