



Nichole Montero "Nikki" started playing for Cerritos Girls Softball in 1995 in the 8U division. She continued playing in the 10U division in 1996 and 1997, she was selected to the All-Star team both years. She played in the 12U division in 1998 and was again selected for the All-Star team. Nikki played many positions, mostly 2nd base and shortstop. She played catcher for two seasons in 96' and 98'. She even did a little pitching in 97'. Nikki earned the nickname "Speedy G" because she could steal bases like crazy. Nikki was little but mighty, she wasn't a hard hitter so they taught her to bunt and she became very good at it. Nikki's mom Alisa was also very involved with Cerritos Girls Softball as a coach and team mom throughout the seasons. Nikki played travel ball in 1999.

Nikki loved to play softball, in fact she had just finished playing softball when she complained about being exhausted and had bruises that wouldn't fade. Nikki was diagnosed with Leukemia in 1999 at the age of 12. She spent the next 6 months at Long Beach Memorial Hospital having chemotherapy and fighting the cancer.

Nikki made a lot of friends in the Cerritos Girls Softball league. A very dear person to Nikki and Alisa was Elliot Gray, past president of the league. He asked Nichole to participate in the Opening ceremony in Spring 2000, she caught the first pitch that Mo McCarthy threw out, at that time they both were in remission from cancer. Mo had a brain tumor removed and was able to start playing ball again very soon after. Nichole's wish was to be ready to play for the winter ball season, but she was never able to make it back to playing softball. Nichole had a relapse and underwent a Bone Marrow Transplant in October 2001. In 2002 Nichole again participated in Opening Ceremonies and pitched out the first ball to Softball Olympian Sheila Douty.



Nikki was able to graduate 8th grade from Our Lady of Fatima in Artesia in June 2002, and was attending summer school at St. Joseph's High School. She was never able to go completely in remission, and the Leukemia continued its brutal progression. Nikki lost her long fought battle on July 7th, 2002 at the age of 15. In 2003 the league asked Nichole's mother Alisa to come back for another Opening Ceremony, this time to join in for a moment of silence for her softball pro Nikki (Speedy G) Montero.

Nikki enjoyed softball so much, her goal was to become an Olympic Softball Player someday. The ultimate player she admired was Lisa Fernandez. Nichole had been fortunate to meet the Olympic softball team on two occasions. She even got surprised by her Aunt Vicki who knows the Fernandez family and took her to Lisa Fernandez's house for the "Welcome Home" party after the team won the Gold Medal in Australia in 2000. She dreamed to follow in Lisa's footsteps, attend St. Joseph and go on to UCLA. Nichole also thought of playing professional baseball, to break the mold of only guys playing professional ball.



Nichole's mother Alisa Montero would like to say "Thank You" to the Cerritos Girls Softball League for continuing to be so supportive to Nichole and her memory. The league changed the name of the "Association Academic Award" in 2003 to the "Nichole Montero Academic Award". Nichole put her heart into softball, her team mates looked up to her for energy during the tough games, she always gave the girls pep talks to never give up. Nichole never gave up, either on the field or with her fight against Leukemia.

To all the girls out there playing softball....never give up....continue to fight hard on the field and in school. Congratulations to those who earn the "Nichole Montero Academic Award".