

People in the News

“I’ve got this.”

MILFORD - That was almost Chris Brown's first reaction to finding out he has acute myeloid leukemia. Almost because, naturally, when anyone gets such a diagnosis, the initial reaction is something akin to shock.

“When anyone tells you you’ve got cancer, you’re floored,” Chris said in a telephone interview from his room at One West, the ward at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Norris Cotton Cancer Center, where he has been for more than a month.

“It’s not what I was expecting to hear,” he said. “You go through a couple of minutes of realizing it’s going to be a tough fight, but I knew my family would support me, my wife and two daughters. So there was no way I wasn’t going to fight this as hard as I could.”

Naturally the diagnosis, made in June, was bad news but recently, there has been good news, too, and it’s possible that soon he’ll be able to go home to Hollis for a few weeks and then, shortly after that, back to Dartmouth-Hitchcock for a bone marrow transplant. And perhaps the best news is that doctors have already found a match: his brother. That’s great news, yet the search for a donor continues through national and international blood marrow registries, just in case there is a better match.

All that, plus the support of his family and of his professional family at Hills Athletic Club in Milford, has helped him to maintain a positive attitude that comes through clearly on the telephone and that reinforces his determination: “I’ve got this.”

That’s what he said when friends and coworkers first expressed their concern.

And that will be the slogan that will banner Aug. 9 when Hampshire Hills, as part of its annual members’ barbecue, will raise funds for Chris who expects to be out of work for anywhere from a year to two years. It’s something his coworkers and associates want to do because they admire his ability as a personal

trainer, but also his incredibly positive outlook.

The fund raising event will be “really fun and low pressure,” said McKinley Curro of Hampshire Hills, who is organizing the event. “People won’t feel like they have to donate but we want it to be something fun for Chris. His attitude through this has been incredible.”

And Chris hopes to be there. That is his short-term goal: to get out of the hospital, albeit temporarily, so that he can be among his friends and supporters on Aug. 9.

“My goal is to attend the fund raiser,” he said, “but I’m not sure when I’ll be able to go home. My goal is to be out of here by the end of the month. I’m trying as hard as I can to be there.”

No one doubts that. “He has a beautiful family and I am certain that is what motivates him,” said Tom Sapienza, Hampshire Hills’ director of operations.

And Hampshire Hills is part of that, he said.

“(Chris) has a great support network. As awful as this is, it has brought a lot of people together with a common goal of doing whatever we can to help him get through this.”

That sentiment was echoed by Laurie and Rick Holder, the club’s owners, who said in an email:

“We are fortunate to have people like Chris supporting our team at Hampshire Hills and now is the time for our team to support Chris in his battle.”

The Hampshire Hills fundraiser will come one day after the Amherst Country Club holds a similar event for Chris, in that case a golf “scramble” with the majority of the proceeds going to Chris and his family, Curro, who is organizing the Hampshire Hills event, explained.

Then, starting at noon on the ninth and running until 4 p.m., the Hampshire Hills members’ barbecue takes center stage.

“We want all of our members to participate” in the barbecue, Curro said, and there will be no pressure

to donate funds for Chris. There will be donation locations around the barbecue site, however, so members and their guests can put in some money, if they wish, she said.

There will even be a dunk tank.

“You can pay to dunk somebody,” said Curro, “and those donations will go to Chris. If you don’t want to be dunked, you can match that donation to stay dry.”

Wendy Mace and her band, 13 Steps, will perform and Dave Alcox will be the disc jockey.

“It will really be fun and low-pressure,” Curro said.

Fun, yes, but serious, too, because the Hampshire Hills staff is concerned for the welfare of their friend.

In their email, the Holders said, “We find it it immensely unfair when people who selflessly give their time and caring to help others be well come down with life-threatening illnesses themselves. Chris Brown is one of those people.”

That was echoed by Sapienza, the Hampshire Hills director of operations.

“Chris is a wonderful trainer,” he said in an email. “He is very low key but professional and technically outstanding. He loves helping people, and now he is receiving the love right back.”

Chris quickly acknowledges that. “The amount of support I’ve gotten has been absolutely amazing,” he said.

When he was asked how he felt about Hampshire Hills using “I’ve got this” as the fund-raiser’s slogan, he was pleased.

“I think it’s pretty cool,” he said. “Coming into this, I knew I had to have a positive attitude. Yeah, it’s pretty cool.”

Those who don’t attend the Hampshire Hills event can still donate to Chris’s fund. He said there is a Go Fund Me site that a family friend set up and it includes a blog that updates people on his progress. The address is <http://www.gofundme.com/wx7f74s>.

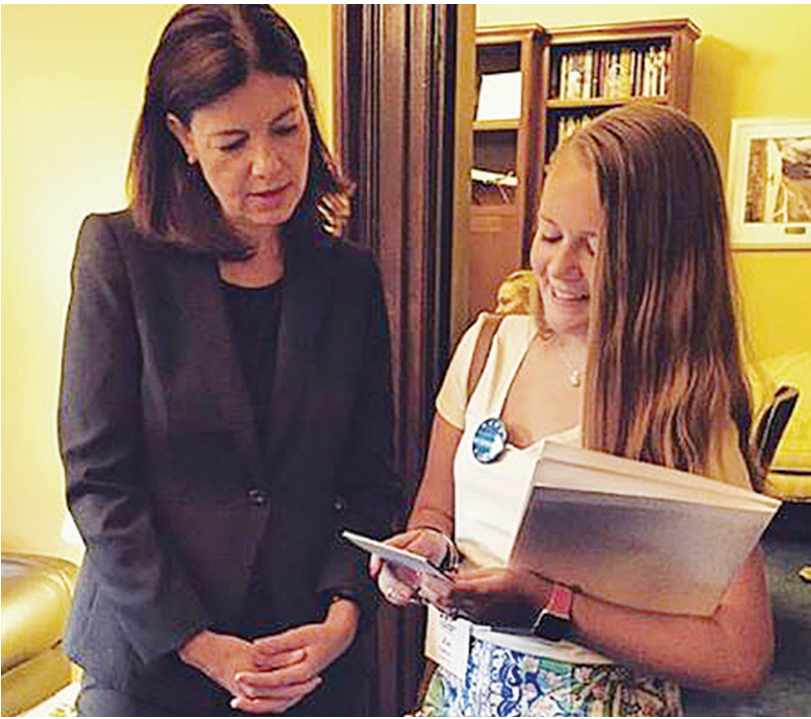
Amherst Teen Urges Congress to Join the Fight Against Cystic Fibrosis on Behalf of Her Sister

AMHERST – As part of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation’s annual Teen Advocacy Day, 14 year-old Zoë Garvey from Amherst joined more than 60 other teens from across the country in Washington, D.C. to meet with elected officials and request their support in the fight against cystic fibrosis.

Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening genetic disease that primarily affects the lungs and digestive system. An estimated 30,000 children and adults in the United States (70,000 worldwide) have CF.

During the event, Zoë met with senators, representatives and congressional staff to advocate for more CF research, treatment and care to help people with the disease live longer, healthier lives. The teens asked their members of Congress to increase funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and urged them to pass the Ensuring Access to Clinical Trials Act. This legislation would help more people with CF and other rare diseases participate in clinical trials without fear of losing important benefits or health coverage.

Zoë also shared her personal experiences of how CF has impacted her sister, Rosie, who has CF. Zoë participated in Teen Advocacy Day on behalf of Rosie, as people with CF are strongly advised to avoid being in close contact with one another, due to the risk of receiving or spreading dangerous germs that can lead to serious lung infections.



Zoë Garvey meets with U.S. Senator Kelly Ayotte in Washington.

“I was delighted to get the opportunity to travel to DC for Teen Advocacy Day and advocate for my sister and other people with this devastating disease,” said Zoë. “I know from Rosie how important it is that people with CF have access to new treatments and quality care, and our representatives in Washington need to understand that too.”

This year’s event, which was held on June 25, marked the Founda-

tion’s 7th Teen Advocacy Day. The number of participants has grown each year, and the event has played an important role in protecting funding for CF drug research and development as well as furthering progress toward the ultimate goal of one day finding a cure.

For more information on cystic fibrosis or to get involved, please visit cff.org to get in contact with your local CF Chapter.



For more information, contact McKinley Curro at 673-7123, Ext. 404

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