

My name is Tim, I am 21, and I was diagnosed with leukemia in March 2019. Before cancer, I was healthy, strong, and truly blessed. I used to be a great wrestler and was ranked in the top 5 of my state my senior year of high school. When I was at college my freshman year, I noticed things started to change. Walking to class became difficult, I got bloody noses daily, looked ghostly pale, and my energy level dropped. It was odd because I took very good care of my body by consistently exercising and eating healthier than most of my peers. So why was I feeling like I was dying all of a sudden? Soon, the fit kid everybody knew became a sick, weaker version of his former self. I went to the nurse at Kent one day and they sent me to an ER immediately where they took my blood and did a CAT scan. The nurses there told me that I shouldn't have been able to walk in that day, let alone be alive, I had $\frac{1}{4}$ the amount of blood a normal person should and my spleen was bigger than a football. So, I was sent to the Seidman Cancer in Cleveland and began my fight against cancer. I spent more than a month in the ICU unit of the hospital and watched as cancer and chemotherapy obliterated me. I lost all of my hair, my muscles faded away along with my immune system, my stomach acid felt like a volcano, I lost my mobility, and felt nauseous all of the time. My doctors told me that I couldn't work out anymore, that I was exercise intolerant, no public space with groups of people would be safe for me, and that I wouldn't return to school for at least two and half years.

So I watched as the world turned grey, and I said goodbye to so many things that I loved. But, I never pitied myself and only focused on the good and what I still had left to give. I never complained and smiled everyday that I woke up, just because I woke up! Because of my attitude, I am now doing better than my doctors could ever hope. Working out was extremely difficult and nauseating and when I first got home, and I could no longer do one push up. But everyone has to start somewhere, so I remained steadfast through my rough circumstances and worked as hard as I could through my suffering. I am now stronger than I was before cancer and have gained 25lbs of muscle back. By September 2019, five months after treatment began, I was running five ks to raise money and developed a habit of doing at least 100 push ups every morning. I even returned to school in January 2020, only ten months after being diagnosed. This semester, I received a 3.6 GPA and made the deans list, as well as making the deans list last semester.

Everything they said I couldn't do, I refused to believe. My doctors are amazed by me and they tell me that they have never had a patient like me. They are so impressed with my health, attitude, and progress that I will be *finishing my treatment a year early* this summer! The Leukemia Lymphoma Society chose me as their "honored hero" for 2021, and I helped them raise over \$900,000 in our campaign. Individually, I raised \$70,000 with my team and have raised thousands more by selling wristbands, running 5ks, and public speaking. I want to keep raising money for cancer research even after I'm cured, and I will have my own 5k every year to raise money starting this fall. Cancer picked a fight with the wrong person because no matter what problem it threw at me, I remained undefeated and took all the opportunities I could from it. I didn't care about how sick I felt or how much pain I was in, I always tried to improve. I stayed grateful and remembered things can always be worse. Because of my attitude and what I have accomplished during my treatment, I have found a new level of confidence and love for the life I have been given. These past two years have been full of suffering, but I like to think this has been a learning experience that has made me a better person. For afterall "a gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials". I am more motivated to pursue my

education and goals than ever before in my life and leukemia s only a small road bump I will leap over.