

Zippy Cimino's Story



In the middle of my senior year in high school at the age of 17, on February 27th of 2012 I was diagnosed with Stage 3a Hodgkin's lymphoma. The regions that were affected were my lymph nodes under my left armpit, chest, neck, liver and spleen. I did four-twenty one day cycles of the Chemotherapy regimen ABVD and seven weeks of radiation. Although the treatments were very hard on my body, I powered through never missing an appointment and stayed right on my schedule. It was a five month process concluding on July 27th 2012. I had my doctors condense my chemo regimen into 84 days so I could graduate high school on time and go to the college I so desired to attend, the College of Charleston.

I was living my dream of being in college for two years, giving back, and loving my life, family and friends. I was monitored closely and thankfully always kept up with my regular scheduled checkups. I was just shy of the two year mark of being out of treatment, in remission and cancer free when a routine chest X-RAY on July 16th showed six nodules on my right lung. A cat scan on July 18th confirmed they were present and were not shadows as we had hoped for. A biopsy took two of the six nodules out on August 1st and confirmed they were cancerous. I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Diffuse Large B Non Hodgkin Lymphoma, a different type of cancer than I was originally treated for. This diagnosis meant I would not be able to return to Charleston for my junior year in College, it was devastating to me. On August 13th a pet scan confirmed the tumors were growing and after a six

week process of second and third opinions at Sloan Kettering in New York City and New York Presbyterian-Columbia, I started the chemotherapy regimen of E-POCH-R at the Goryeb Children's Hospital in Morristown, New Jersey on The Valerie Fund pediatric cancer floor. I needed this regimen due to the fact that I have had all of these drugs before throughout my first diagnosis and treatment plan. I will be at my lifetime maximum for one of the chemo drugs which have long term effects on my heart. With each round of chemotherapy, I am hospitalized for six days and the chemo is slowly dripped through my broviac in-line for 96 hours straight. Upon being discharged a few bags of hydration arrive along with a nurse to our home because the last dose of chemo affects my bladder and kidneys. After I complete all six cycles, I will have a pet scan six weeks afterwards in hopes to hear once again, "there is no evidence of cancer". I was not looking forward to being in the hospital but it is a part of the cancer grind. Day by day I fight for my future health and will overcome this obstacle. It is about the process and not the end result, I am very confident I will one day be cured but for now I have to win each day by taking care of my body. All of these wins and daily battles will eventually lead to winning the war and that war is beating cancer for the second time. Cancer is a roller coaster ride of so many emotions and I'm lucky enough to have the wonderful family I do who have been with me every step of the way. Thank you to The Shannon Daley Memorial Fund for choosing our family to be the recipients this year as I know it will help with all the medical expenses that my parents have and will continue to incur.

ZIPPYSTRONG #ALLIN "Don't Give Up, Don't Ever Give Up"

