

# Cancer won't keep this 19-year-old down



Childhood cancer survivor Brianna Bove, 19, now a nursing major at Wagner College on Grymes Hill, says she plans to dedicate her life to helping others with the disease. Photos courtesy of the Bove family

## Brianna Bove has survived two bouts with cancer; now she wants to help others

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When Brianna Bove was 13 years old, she discovered bruises on her arms and legs.

One day, she woke up not feeling well, and was coughing up blood. A cheerleader for St. Patrick's R.C. School in Richmond, she chalked the ailments up to her rigorous cheer practices.

But soon after being admitted to the hospital on Oct. 31, 2012 — two days after Hurricane Sandy ravaged the borough's shoreline — Bove learned her ailment was far more serious.

"Being I was just 13, I wasn't scared going into the emergency room because I thought nothing serious would happen. My parents were always with me, and I knew they wouldn't let anything or anyone hurt me. I remember sitting in the hospital stretcher [at Staten Island University Hospital, Prince's Bay] getting told they were transferring hospitals due to Hurricane Sandy's effect on the machines and power being out," recalled Bove.

Once at the Ocean Breeze site, she was watching television in her hospital bed when she saw the doctor talking to her parents.

"I remember seeing my mom and dad in the corner crying while I was waiting for the doctor and watching TV. About 15 minutes later, I was told I had a common childhood cancer [acute lymphoblastic leukemia] and that I would have to fight my hardest to get better," recalled Bove.

"I was in shock. Everything happened so fast. They were taking blood out of me and trying to get new blood in me. ... The first question I could think of when I was told I had cancer was my hair, was I going to lose my hair? I remember the doctor, who is still my doctor today, saying to me, 'Hair grows back and you are beautiful regardless.' That's when it hit me that my life was about to change," she added.

Bove began chemotherapy.

"I was able to push past the chemo and was fine. But then in January, one



Brianna Bove, top, is carried by her sister, Caitlyn.

**"I want to become a nurse practitioner oncologist. I want to take my past and bring it into my future. I want to help people get through what this terrible disease does to people."** *Brianna Bove*

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Members of the Bove family, from left, Caitlyn, Taylor, Nunziato, Brianna, Karissa and Andrew. Family photo

## Bove

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of the chemos affected my organs, and they began to fail. ... Eventually I was able to push past that," she said of her first battle with the disease.

And she was determined to graduate eighth grade with her class at Barnes Intermediate School in Great Kills. She tutored with a hospital teacher who taught her throughout her treatment. Bove walked in 2013 with her class at graduation.

However, the remission was short-lived.

She was again diagnosed with cancer at the age of 16 while attending New Dorp High School. She was in need of a bone marrow transplant. One of five siblings, her older sister, Taylor, was a match. Without question, she bravely donated her bone marrow to her sister.

Although Taylor experienced some complications during the transplant, both women are well today. And Bove credits her sister with saving her life.

After three months in the hospital after the transplant, her blood cell counts were up and she again was cancer free.

"I was always determined to not let this stop me ... I needed to beat this so I would have a bright future. It was a bump in the road," she said.

### DEDICATING LIFE TO HELP OTHERS WITH CANCER

Turning 20 on Oct. 29, Bove celebrates life. As a nurs-

ing major at Wagner College she plans to dedicate her life to helping others with cancer.

"I want to become a nurse practitioner oncologist. I want to take my past and bring it into my future. I want to help people get through what this terrible disease does to people," said Bove.

### HELP FROM KIDS AGAINST CANCER

Along Bove's journey, she and her family were assisted by the Staten Island-based Kids Against Cancer.

"Kids Against Cancer helped my family with many services, including financial and emotional support. I remember Mark Russo [chairman of Kids Against Cancer] became like a family member to my family. He always checked up on us and was a friend to my dad," said Bove, noting she wanted to give thanks to both Russo and the group.

Said Russo: "When I first met Brianna and her family they were in a very bad place. ... It was obvious how scared they were, but it was also very evident how much they loved one another. ... I believe that love, hope and prayer is what helped them beat cancer."

"Even during her most difficult days in the hospital she [Bove] would always greet me with a smile and a quiet confidence. I remember she was always assuring anyone in the room that she was going to win this fight — and she did," he added.