

ONE CHILD'S AND FAMILY'S BATTLE WITH LEUKEMIA PART 2

BY: Keith S. Shikowitz, Editor in Chief/Investigative Reporter

Bryce's story has garnered a lot of community support. Even to the point of Norcina Restaurant in New City holding a golf tournament which raised just over \$14,000 in addition to the \$57,000 that the Penguin plunge raised for them.

This is part 2 of Bryce's story:

So, what's the long-term diagnosis?

"It goes for 2 – 3 years." Neil explained. "You have to do a lot of like chemo medicine and all that type of stuff. The long-term diagnosis. At this point, we have an end date which could change, but it's September of 2028. That will be in theory, we'll stop treatment, on or around September 2028 he was diagnosed in April 2025, that will be three and change. Altogether, of course, we know that the dates could always change, but at least that gives us now, since we've received this date in the weeks, a time frame for when it could all be done. we know now that we only go in once a month, we kind of have our short-term goal and our long-term goal."

What are, what are their short-term goals?

"Well, short term goals, Bryce has been able to resume camp at Deerkill Day Camp and, boxing lessons with his boxing instructor. That was, that was always Bryce's number one goal. He knew he had a missed Deerkill in 2025, and we kept telling him, Don't worry, you'll get back to it in 2026. Of course, we didn't know if he would, but things have worked out, and he's been able to be there for much of the summer and resume a lot of his other activities. In September he'll start seventh grade at Felix Festa Middle School."

He said that they are very excited for that short term goal is to enjoy ourselves at the Norcina charity golf outing, and after that, the second half of the summer, they have some house cleaning goals because they can't forget about the little things even when you're going through tough times, you've got to keep the house clean they're going to get a nice basement downstairs for the kids to be able to play in.

And what about the long-term goals?

Long-term goals, do you have any long-term goals?

Bryce answered, "Just to get better. I want to resume everything I used to do before the diagnosis.

Anyone with cancer is always looking for it at minimum to go into remission always looking for that cure. What do they say are the odds of remission or cure?

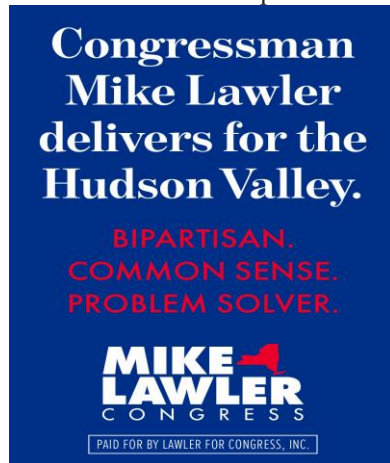
Neil responded. "So as far as, as remission for this type of leukemia, we've heard that success rates could be up to 90%. Of course, we're at Memorial Sloan Kettering and that actually increases the percentage, because I believe that 90% is a national average. We're in great hands."

We were told from the start that this type of leukemia has a high success rate as far as achieving remission. It's just the longest or one of the longer, 3+ years. Our short-term goals are in place, our long-term goals including, getting the, the kids ready for high school and college and maybe resuming trips because we haven't been able to travel."

With any disease, even when it is cured or goes into remission there is always the chance of a relapse. What are the odds of a relapse?

"I believe from what I know, after September 2028, which will be about 3 years, 3 and a quarter years since the diagnosis, that's when we could say that we've achieved remission, complete, and then from there they look at relapse for the next year or so, I believe. I don't know the exact numbers because, when you're in treatment, they usually try to tell you about the phase that you're in and maybe the next phase, but not try to get too far ahead, to give, you false hope. We'll go down that road in September 2028." Neil stated.

Is this phase the final phase or are there more phases between now and September 28th?



"That's a good question. Yes, so, This is the last phase. It usually lasts for like 2 years, so, yeah. I go to the hospital every month, so it'll be a couple of appointments

He's probably had a lot of blood drawn and needles that he's got to feel like a pin cushion.

Smiling, with a little giggle, Bryce said, "And I hate needles. When I go for my blood work every three months, like, I just say, OK, go ahead. I cringe, right and just let them do it and hope they hit it right the first time."

"With Bryce, even from the start, he's shown, he's mentally and physically tough, and he takes a lot of procedures, that most people couldn't handle, and he takes it without wincing. If he does have a bad time, then 10 minutes later, he's feeling better and he says, what can I have to eat? It's just amazing."

Were any sort of blood transfusions needed or anything?

Neil said that early on in maybe December of 2025, Bryce had some transfusions, red blood and also platelets.

"The red blood helped me be more like energized and the platelets when you get a cut you have to wait until the bleeding stops. If you don't have platelets, then the bleeding won't stop. That's really important for recovery because Leukemia like takes away all that stuff." Bryce explained.

"It was tough for him eating with the premedication and the icing. You want to talk about that?" Neil asked.

"Yeah, for the transfusions, the premedication would, I would take the anti - nausea medicine in case I get nauseous, it was for me. I know I'm not very afraid of needles, but for most people it was hard. You could do it by IV, but it kind of hurts with the red blood."

They said he would have to use ice packs while he was getting the transfusion, it would be very uncomfortable.

Luckily for them there haven't been any transfusions needed in 7 months.

They're asking that people donate blood in order to help people like Bryce who may be in need of a transfusion

How is Bryce feeling about all of this? What is he looking forward to more than anything else?

"I'm not sure, but I'm looking forward to going to school full time because I missed like a whole year of school, and most people would think that that's pretty cool, but, once you start missing your friends and stuff, you see, like, what the real meaning of school is to make friends, learn, and yeah, it was, it was tough back then, but my goal is to live a regular life after all of this.

How is Neil feeling about all of this from the parental point of view, I mean, your kid gets sick like that and you're like, know there's a feeling of helplessness because you can't do anything. You can't just rub his head and make it all better. What do you, how have you been feeling through all of this, and what are you looking forward to?

"That's a good question. When I first heard that something was wrong, I was working at a school in the Bronx and I was actually working with some pre-K students and when I heard the news

that something was going on with Bryce's blood, we kind of knew right away what was going on and I was with some students and I thought to myself, how am I going to do this? I work with young kids all day, which would be a constant reminder that my own child was going through such tough things and that I wouldn't be there for some of it. My wife and I from the start, made a plan to make sure that we stayed positive and we were able to get through that tough first period, phase one, when we were living in the hospital for about 24 days."

They took one phase at a time like you do in any stage of your child's life and knew that each one would have challenges and that they would have to learn how to deal with those challenges one at a time. As they got through and progressed, their biggest support was all the support that we had from family and the community.

"We call it a tireless band of communities because that's what it is. It's a bunch of communities that are not linked together but they're linked kind of through us as the center and with those tireless band of communities. "We just fight each phase and now that we're in a phase that's a little bit more relaxed we're getting a chance to thank some of those people who get Bryce out in public so people could see how hard he's working and then of course not forgetting about our son Kobe and making sure that he gets to do all the things that he wants to do math competitions, cubing, chess, flag football, whatever Kobe wants to do, we make sure it happens and we just divide and conquer." Neil said.

There's been times where the non-sick siblings end up being cast aside almost when something like this happens especially somebody as serious as Leukemia it's like the focus goes on the sick child and the, you know, the other child gets almost left out in the dust.

"It's absolutely the toughest thing to do. We've been able to ensure that that doesn't happen, and that Kobe and Bryce are still doing whatever they can do." Neil said.

Of all the challenges you had, what was the biggest one that you had to overcome? They said it is the DKA and also the steroids.

"DKA is when your blood is too high, your blood sugars, Blood sugars are too high, that's diabetic, almost diabetic. I guess the toughest routine has been when Bryce is on steroids, his glucose number rises. He has to monitor it with the Dexcom that you might even have on right now. Then of course it requires insulin. This phase that we're in now, he'll get 1 day of treatment per month, and then for 5 days he's on steroids. This morning was his last steroid, but then he feels the after effects from the steroids. It affects what he's able to eat."

"Unfortunately, one time we wound up in the hospital. Bryce's glucose was up to 650 and the Clarkstown Police Department responded and it was when a day earlier in this year where we had a very big snowstorm and the Clarkstown police had to carry him out of the house, because of the snow and bring him to New City Ambulance that was waiting with the ambulance that was a scary couple of days because he was unconscious for a lot of it, and, but as soon as the steroids were taken away, the diabetes goes away, and that's just, you know, so I guess the biggest, the, the biggest problem for us was that, that day when we had to go by ambulance to several hospitals and also the, now the monthly routine of him taking the steroids and getting the diabetes every month, which goes away in a few days, but it's still a lot to deal with for those 5 days." Neil explained.

With all of the community coming out to donate to the cause, Neil says they are going to be helping out with the Penguin Plunge and other organizations like Happy Jack, because now we know what it's like to be that family, and we want to put ourselves in positions where we can help other families as well and the Norcina Golf outing which as stated earlier raised an additional \$14,000. The following videos are some of the people who were at the golf event.

Brayden Mariconi

<https://youtu.be/M0PU0U2uavo>

Randy Perlmutter

<https://youtu.be/6B314kCJTv0>

Mike Moricco

<https://youtu.be/PByUUOK2LSQ>

Kobe Friedman

<https://youtu.be/ZqCqHpvhToI>

Mindy Aylward

<https://youtu.be/f7u3T-UTjfA>

Will "Scooby" Coholan

<https://youtu.be/-1BVIFyg7Zs>

Tyler Termini

<https://youtu.be/R3hXw164FbI>

Neil Friedman

<https://youtu.be/GFZn4tcKc8U>