

# BWE GIVES BACK

We work to change our communities and our world

## HARRY G & STEVEN G. AYA CANCER RESEARCH FUND

Every year, more than 100,000 children and young adults are diagnosed with cancer. Ten years ago, at the age of 18, Steven Giallourakis, son of Bellwether Enterprise Senior Vice President Harry Giallourakis, was diagnosed with the deadly disease for a second time.

Three years prior, doctors discovered a grapefruit-sized tumor on Steven's spine. The osteosarcoma, or bone cancer, had metastasized in his lungs, leading doctors to classify his cancer as stage 4, the most severe.

After what his oncologist classified as "the most rigorous forms of chemotherapy available," Steven was declared cancer-free after 10 months of treatment.

But about a year and a half later, Steven was diagnosed this time with Leukemia, likely caused by the countless rounds of chemotherapy radiation.



Harry Giallourakis, his wife Angie, and son Steven visit Arizona a week before Steven received a bone marrow transplant from an anonymous donor in 2008.

“ When it's all said and done, our goal is for our young people to live long healthy lives. Therefore - WE WILL NOT REST UNTIL THERE IS A CURE. ”

After their son's second bout with cancer began, Harry and his wife Angie decided to find ways to give back and contribute to the fight against cancer. A big contributor to that decision, they said, was the surprising lack of research available to help inform them of Steven's condition and to assist them in making a decision on treatment options.

It was then that the Giallourakis family established the Steven G. AYA Cancer Research Fund. Over the last decade, the foundation has raised more than \$350,000 for adolescents and young adults (AYA) fighting cancer.



After 10 months of treatment, and endless support from family, including brothers Phil (left) and Nick (right), Steven was declared cancer-free. However, the disease returned a year and a half later.

Steven was able to beat cancer a second time – thanks in large part to a bone marrow transplant from an anonymous donor. Both of Steven's brothers, Phil and Nick, wanted to serve as donors for the bone marrow transplant, but neither was a match. If it weren't for the donor being a part of the national Bone Marrow Registry, it is unknown whether Steven would have survived, his family said. The Giallourakis encourage everyone willing and able to sign up for the registry that saved their son's life.

According to the Institute for Justice, only 30 percent of patients needing a bone marrow transplant are able to find a match within their family. At any given time, about 7,500 Americans are actively searching the national registry for an unrelated donor, yet only 2 percent of the population is on the registry.

Steven remains in remission; however, the family hasn't slowed down their efforts to do their part in the battle for a cure.

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They host an annual fundraiser that raises roughly \$40,000 and will be held this month on Jan. 26 in Rocky River, Ohio. The foundation donates about half of those raised funds to University Hospitals Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio, where Steven received his treatment and care. The other half of the funds raised are dedicated to advocate and support AYA patients while they are in treatment through the foundation's Social Support and Wellness Programs.

One such program is the Be Calm and Stay Strong Wellness Program, where the Giallourakis family assembles wellness bags with a variety of items that they deliver to cancer patients at Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals. This outreach effort is also largely funded by a \$7,500 donation from the Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation.

And even though their son has been cancer-free for several years, Harry and Angie know that the fight is never over.

"Every day a child, teen and young adult will be diagnosed with cancer," Angie said. "Every day a parent will cry themselves to sleep knowing that their child may not live another day. Lives are interrupted and sometimes destroyed.

"We try to lift the spirits of patients and their families through our foundation's Wellness Program, and through advocacy work we hope to generate funding for cancer research and perhaps save a life."

And the reality is, even during remission, there is always the chance that cancer can reappear later in life – as can other effects from cancer, such as chronic pain, chronic fatigue, and PTSD.

"We have lost too many young friends with glowing futures to cancer," Angie added. "We find these statistics and realities completely unacceptable which is why we use our energies to advocate, generate hope, and educate others about the issues surrounding adolescent and young adult cancers."

This year's 10th Annual Take a Bite Out of Cancer fundraiser will be held Jan. 26, 2019 at the St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church Cultural Center in Rocky River (22909 Center Ridge Road.) The event will feature dinner, dancing, raffles and auctions. To purchase tickets or to make a donation, and for more information on the event and the Steven G. AYA Cancer Research Fund organization, visit **[fightconquercure.org](http://fightconquercure.org)**.

That web address is also their everlasting motto, to "Fight. Conquer. Cure."

"When it's all said and done," Harry said, "our goal is for our young people to live long healthy lives. Therefore - we will not rest until there is a cure."



*Steven reaches the top of Glacier Mountain in Montana one year after receiving his bone marrow transplant. In remission ever since, he and the Giallourakis family continue to fight for a cure and give back to others battling cancer.*