



FEATURE STORY

2/18/13

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Brain Cancer Survivor: Elijah Accola His Two Year Anniversary Is Fast Approaching

EDWARDSVILLE, Ill.— Elijah Accola, a student at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, has been through a lot in the past two years. In the spring 2011, Accola was diagnosed with a stage two brain tumor.

The journey began on March 16, 2011. Accola and his mother, Laura, went into St. Louis Children's Hospital to get an MRI. Accola had been complaining about a ringing noise in his ear for a couple of months and his family physician recommended that he get an MRI. They awoke that morning and headed to the hospital. Once the MRI was complete, Accola, was escorted into the office and was informed that there was a cyst growing on his brain. "At first I was scared," stated Accola, "but I now had the answer to why I was feeling so weird and the doctor said it was operable."

That next Monday, March 21, Accola was put under by doctors so that they could remove the cyst. When Accola awoke from the surgery, he was left without any short term memory. "He was out-of-it," stated Laura, "His father and I were taking 24-hour shifts to be by his side while he was at the hospital." After the surgery the family was informed that the cyst was in fact cancerous. It was contained, and the doctors felt that they had removed it all.

Since his surgery, Accola, has been taking the steps to move forward with his life. This past summer he embarked on a 51-day road trip to the West Coast to film a documentary with Evan Bartlett, a fellow survivor. The trip took them to California and back. While on the trip he was able to speak to more 25 cancer

survivors. “Talking to other cancer survivors has really helped me in my healing process, I am starting to come to terms with the fact that I have had cancer,” stated Accola, “Hearing how other people dealt with a similar experience also helped me deal with my own experience.”

The name of the project that chronicles Accola and Bartlett’s healing trip to the West Coast is titled “Discovering the Beating Path.” The footage captured is currently in the editing lab and Bartlett hopes to have the documentary completed by summer 2013. A specific release date has not yet been set.

After six months of treatment, Accola’s short term memory is slowly returning. His two year anniversary is quickly approaching next month. “I can’t believe March 21 will mark the two year anniversary of my surgery,” said Accola. “I am so grateful for my family and friends; without them I don’t know what I would have done.”

To learn more about Accola’s journey, check out his blog at wordpress.com/cancerdoesnotdefineme.

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