

MEET COREY:

A YOUNG ADULT WITH A PURPOSE

By Lynne Golodner

"Every day you wake up is a blessing," says Corey's mom Patrice. It's not a statement she makes lightly.

Now that her 17-year-old son is in remission, after a decade-long battle with leukemia, she can breathe more easily, and in a way, she feels more faithful and supported. That has a lot to do with Kids Kicking Cancer's (KKC) ongoing presence in the family's life.

It all began one day at Children's Hospital of Michigan. Corey was waiting to see the doctor, and he had such a bad headache that he needed the lights to be off and the room quiet. Sensei Michael happened to be there at the same time, and a nurse asked if he could come in and talk with Corey.

"He came in and started talking to me," recalls Corey. "I wouldn't let anyone turn on the lights. After we were done talking, I was like, 'I think we can turn the lights on now.' After that, I've always been part of KKC's Heroes Circle program."

Indeed, Corey's mom says, "Michael is really great with the kids. They really connect with him. He helped Corey through his pain with power breathing techniques."

"I'll never forget the day he was diagnosed," Patrice says. "I was devastated, terrified of losing my child. My strength was tested, my faith was tested, but I stayed strong, and it made me more faithful to God. I always tell people, 'I never prayed so much in my life.' But I believe that's what got us through and kept us together as a family."

Having gone through such a long and arduous journey, Corey volunteers at KKC events and especially looks to help out younger kids or new additions to the program. He remembers how kindly others welcomed him in.

"They'd tell us their stories, make you feel welcome and give you hope," he says.

Kids Kicking Cancer "allowed us to be around other families that were going through similar situations as us," says Patrice. "The activities allowed our son to take his mind off of being sick for a few hours and have fun. The KKC staff have always been very supportive and understanding. They actually get to know all the children and make them all feel special."



The whole experience taught Corey "to not take anything for granted, enjoy your life. KKC is a whole new family that I can lean on whenever I have issues that I'm going through."

These days, Corey is on an empowered path forward. He's finishing his last year of school in a virtual program through Henry Ford High School. Late last year, he launched his very own clothing brand – Rock Bottom Clothing Co.

"It's a resemblance of my life – when I was sick, everything I went through, and how I made it through," Corey says. "I made Rock Bottom so that other people who might be going through dark times can rely on my designs to let them know they can make it out."

Corey creates T-shirts and hoodies with inspirational messages. His first collection sold nearly 40 items that bore the message, "The only way is up." His newest collection of apparel is emblazoned with two messages: "Chase your dreams" and "Reach for the stars."

He created and produced the first collection entirely himself. This time around, Corey designed everything but is outsourcing the actual production so he can begin work on his next collection of clothing.

After he graduates high school, Corey would like to move out west. He dreams of living in Las Vegas



because he likes the national parks and the mountainous landscape, and also its proximity to Los Angeles, a haven for fashion leaders.

He'd like to travel, too, especially overseas to places like Dubai, London, Paris and beyond.

Patrice has seen her son blossom and grow. "He has courage, bravery and resilience," she says.

"He's been through so much and he never gave up, which helped us as parents to keep going, keeping our faith, and staying strong," she adds.

Now that he's in remission, Patrice, her husband, Corey and the whole family – which includes an older brother, two nieces and a nephew – feel grateful, humble, relieved and so appreciative.



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