

Danielle Didi Coertze



International Hero of Hope - 2012

Danielle Didi Coertze from George was also selected, but sadly passed away in April 2012 at the tender age of 18.

Danielle Didi Coertze – Our Youngest Hero of Hope

Despite being diagnosed with osteosarcoma (a type of bone cancer) in January 2011, Danielle made a conscious choice to live life to the fullest and reached one of her goals of attending her end-of-year school dance. Her motto used to be, “I deserve life, everyone in the world deserves the life they have and I will never let cancer take that away from me. I will be great in my life and I will never take my life or anything in it for granted.”

My Leg got Bitten off by Cancer

Starting her final year at High School was supposed to be the highlight of her life – and started off on a high note, being voted house captain of Windsor House. Athletics day came on the 31st January 2011. Having had some trouble with her ankle since November, she noticed that on this day her ankle was heavily swollen. As house captain she was required to take part in all the sports and was in the 1st aid tent every half hour getting deep heat rubs and ice packs for the pain in her ankle. But she carried on and jumped around singing and screaming to reach her goal – winning the Spirit Cup!

The following day she fainted in maths class and an emergency appointment was made at an orthopedic surgeon. He looked at her scans for about 30 seconds and said: “I’m 95% sure you have an osteosarcoma”. Not knowing what on earth he had just said she ignorantly asked what he planned to do, to which he replied: “You’ll have to start chemotherapy immediately”. The dots connected in her head rather quickly. “Chemotherapy = Cancer.” Silence.

I was only 17 years old, how could I have cancer?”

This marked the start of her cancer journey, with chemotherapy sessions – and then amputation on Tuesday, 31 May 2011. She was discharged on the Friday, her speedy adaption was unheard of amongst the doctors and physiotherapists – her life in remission had begun and she was grabbing it by the horns – she started to get her life back, go out with friends and smile again.

Then 6 weeks later after a routine CAT scan she was told that the cancer had spread to her lungs – she was 18 years old and in the 4th stage of an extremely aggressive cancer – Chondromyxoid Osteosarcome – ironically that was the same day she received her 1st prosthesis and started walking again.

“I took a low after that. I locked myself in my room and didn’t eat for days. I thought death was coming to get me, despite me fighting and losing my foot for my life.”

But then she decided she was going to live. “This was a conscious choice I made. I knew with everything in me that I wasn’t going to die. So I started my life again, for the second time. I started working on the goal I had from day 1: I will be at my school prom. And I started making it happen. And believe me – my entrance on the evening is going down in yearbook history!”

“I deserve life, everyone in the world deserves the life they have and I will never let cancer take that away from me. **I will be great in my life** and I will never take my life or anything in it for granted.“

My motto through my entire ordeal was: “**Giving up doesn’t mean you die**, if it was that easy a lot more people would be doing it, **so why give up?**”

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