

## 24-year-old Regan Murray stays strong in fight against cancer

Written by Darci Tomky

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Life has changed drastically for 24-year-old Regan Murray in the last four months, but if anyone has enough faith, perseverance and strength combined with a good attitude, it's Murray.

There's always a reason for people getting cancer, said Murray, who was diagnosed with stage three esophageal cancer, but there's also always been a reason for them surviving. "The prognosis isn't very optimistic, but I'm pretty certain I'll make it through."

Murray's story began last February when he was living in Holyoke, working in housing construction with Alan Goldenstein.

He began experiencing chest pain, complaining about acid reflux and heartburn so doctors gave him stomach medications like Pepto-Bismol.

Life was good for this 2005 HHS graduate. He loved his job, and in May, he even went on a trip to Florida where he proposed to his girlfriend Kara Dishman of Haxtun.

Not long after returning from Florida, Murray's condition worsened. He was extremely tired and had difficulty swallowing.

Murray scheduled an endoscopy, a procedure where a scope entered his mouth to examine the esophagus. This revealed a large tumor about 10 centimeters long near the opening of his stomach.

Murray and his family were relieved when the blood test came back negative for cancer.

He was ready to have the tumor removed during surgery, but luckily another surgeon was present, who, in his concern of the size of the tumor, recommended another biopsy be done.

Results of that test were received, and on June 25, Murray's 24th birthday, he was told he had cancer.

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“My lifestyle did a 180 change overnight,” said Murray.

A week after hearing the news, Murray moved to Greeley where he lives with Dishman.

The 24-year-old began radiation treatments every day at the North Colorado Medical Center there. Murray also had a chemo pump for four days at a time, with the chemo staying in his body for about a month.

Every day Murray went in to receive fluids to keep him hydrated as well as provide him with steroids and pain killers.

Supporting Murray through all this has been his fiancé, his parents Richard and Jodi of Holyoke and his brothers Eric and Ryan.

“Support from my family has been unreal,” said Murray.

“I want to be very thankful to those who have reached out. It’s really cool to see the community reach out.”

Family, friends and even people he doesn’t know have encouraged and prayed for Murray in his fight against cancer.

“I’ve found strength in prayer,” said Murray.

Estimated new cases of esophageal cancer in the United States this year is 16,640 with 14,500 deaths.

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Murray said this disease is basically found in older men. “I’m pretty young to get this, but that’s also a strength for me.”

Since he is so young, his good health and strong body will help him fight the cancer.

His brothers said he is determined to fight and to win through prayer, faith, discipline, good diet and exercise.

With his chemotherapy and radiation now done, Murray had a PET scan Friday, Sept. 24 to see if the cancer was still growing. His doctor was ecstatic about the excellent results that assured them the tumor was shrinking. The treatments had done their job.

After hearing such great results, Murray and his family prepared to travel to Pittsburgh, Pa. Saturday, Oct. 2.

Next Monday, Oct. 11 he is scheduled for an esophagectomy—a minimally evasive surgery (MIS) to remove part of his esophagus. With the MIS, surgeons hope there are reduced infections, lower mortality rates and overall higher success.

Two of the nation’s leading surgeons, Dr. Jobe and Dr. Awais, along with a great team of medical professionals will perform the surgery in Pittsburgh.

If they don’t get all the cancer, Murray will go through two more rounds of chemo.

“God’s laid out a red carpet for me,” said Murray. Everything has fallen into place from the treatments to support to the upcoming surgery.

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“I’m excited to see everyone again and to get back to life. I’m excited to get married and see you all at the wedding. I’m excited to build a home. I’m excited to give back.”

Keep updated with Murray’s progress or leave him a note online at [www.caringbridge.org/visit/reganmurray](http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/reganmurray).

Donations can be sent to Zion Lutheran Church, Regan Murray Medical Fund, 240 S. High School Ave., Holyoke, CO 80734. They can also be taken to First Pioneer National Bank in Holyoke.

A community fundraiser benefit dinner will be held for Murray Saturday, Oct. 16 from 5-7 p.m. at the Phillips County Event Center.