

Following up with

Addison Marshall

Sugar Land Magazine catches up with local leukemia survivor two years after we first shared his story

Written by Jennifer Heath

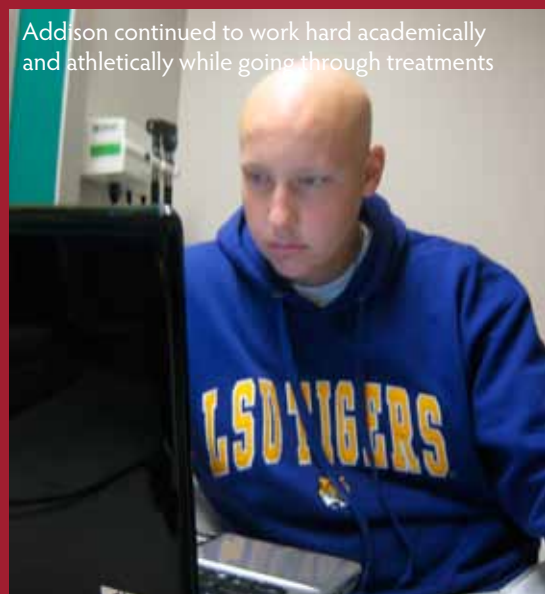
After battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia Addison Marshall is now leading a normal life as a freshman at A&M University



Addison became good friends with hospital staff while being treated



Addison was able to meet NFL player Tim Tebow and other Denver Bronco players, courtesy of the Make-a-Wish Foundation



Addison continued to work hard academically and athletically while going through treatments

Valerie Marshall first introduced *Sugar Land Magazine* readers to her Football Fighter in our winter 2011 issue. During spring football her son Addison began having sharp pains in his ribcage. The family first chalked it up to rough football, but the pain didn't subside. After an initial X-ray and blood work, doctors at MD Anderson Cancer Center learned that Addison had three broken ribs, but he didn't get injured from playing sports.

They diagnosed him with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and found that his spleen was 93% full of cancerous cells, which had become swollen and broken his ribs. "I was just in disbelief at first," Addison recalls. "You think it can't happen to you. You think the doctors are all wrong, it's just disbelief."

A Fighting Chance

The family began sessions of chemotherapy, hospital stays, and trying to find normalcy in a chaotic routine. Doctors told the family Addison had an 80% chance of making a full recovery. However, if he relapsed, his chances dropped to 50-50. "Addison relapsed within nine months," shares Valerie. "It was then in his brain and spine."

The Foster High School student began fighting for his life. He refused to give up, he refused to feel sorry for himself, and he refused to sit back and not take control of his situation. Addison continued his intense workout routines. He became a stickler for healthy eating, and he vowed to return to the football field before the end of his high school career.

His senior year, Addison asked his doctors to remove his port, the vital tubing that brought the powerful chemotherapy drugs to his body. He knew he wouldn't be able to get back on the football field with the apparatus still connected to his body. The last half of the last football game of his senior year, Addison was finally able to run onto the field to play on special teams for the Foster Falcons. "I will never forget being in the stands and praying," Valerie recalls. "I was so worried."

Valerie knows that Addison's dedication to healthy eating and strong exercise played a vital role in his comeback. "The chemotherapy and radiation saved his life, but his coaches

and friends allowed him to be normal," she says. "Not all schools would be that supportive of him. I'll go to my grave with gratitude."

Inspiring Others

His senior year, the football team and coaches nominated Addison for the High School Football Rudy Award. The prestigious award is given to one inspirational high school football player in America. The honor, now renamed the Inspireum Award, awards a \$7,500 scholarship check to the recipient. "My mom told me my coach nominated me for some award, and I didn't think much of it at first," Addison shares. "It was an honor just to be nominated, but once I won, I was just in disbelief. I read some of the other stories and all the kids' stories just break your heart."

Addison continued to work hard academically and athletically. He graduated in the top 10% of Foster High. He continued having a good outlook, no matter what obstacles continued to come up. "I kept thinking that other people were going through

things a lot worse than what I was dealing with," he says. "I just kept staying positive and finding the good in whatever I could. It's never as bad as you think."

Future Success

Addison is now studying kinesiology at A&M and wants to become a physical therapist after college. He continues having monthly tests to ensure his body remains cancer-free. As for Valerie, she continues to fight for pediatric cancer patients. She travels to Washington, D.C., at least once a year to talk with congressmen about ways to help drug companies put more research dollars toward finding a cancer cure.

"The silver lining in all of this is that his strength has given me strength," Valerie says. "It would be rather unproductive of me to sit around and worry and do nothing. I don't want there to be a next generation of kids with cancer, so I feel it's my duty to step up and help out where I can." SLM



JENNIFER HEATH is the mother to two boys, Landry and Ryan.

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- Addison Marshall



FOLLOW UP STORY

Addison's battle against ALL was first profiled in *Sugar Land Magazine's* winter 2011 issue.