Ironically our slogan when I played football at St. John's was
**"With God All Things Are Possible".**
It is amazing how life comes full circle.



Jay Holdgreve: "I have Testicular Cancer"

Never in my life did I think I would make that statement or ever think about what if I "get" cancer, let alone Testicular. Actually, I spent most of my life ignoring it because it scared the "doo-doo" out of me. Most of my experience with cancer has been worse case scenario. Luckily my Aunt and Uncle both recently beat Colon Cancer, so my outlook was changing.

Here I am diagnosed with [Seminoma Stage 1 or 2 Testicular Cancer](http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/treatment/testicular/Patient/page2) ( I will explain that later), been through an [Orchiectomy](http://www.webmd.com/prostate-cancer/orchiectomy), and currently under a rigorous surveillance program consisting of [CT Scans](http://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info.cfm?pg=abdominct) and blood work every three months for a minimum of five years. Why? How? Those are the two questions that have not been answered and they are the central focus of my plight. I want to help find those answers so others don't have to go through this unknown.

**My Background**I am just a regular guy, born and raised in [Delphos](http://www.cityofdelphos.com/), graduate of Ohio State (Exercise Science,99) and Cleveland State (Sports Marketing,01), married (2001), three kids (1 girl, 2 boys), a good job ([OrthoNeuro](http://www.orthoneuro.com/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)), and live in a quaint [Dublin](http://www.dublin.oh.us/) neighborhood. As an athletic trainer I have worked with thousands of athletes, coaches, physicians, etc and traveled the country to some of the greatest venues ([Rose Bowl](http://www.rosebowlhistory.org/rose-bowl-1997.php)) and competitions. I spent time working with the San Francisco 49ers (98) and the Cleveland Browns (99-01). I must admit that I am one lucky guy to have had these opportunities and experiences.

I have known my "inner circle" of friends for thirty+ years; we have been through a lot together. I could have a website dedicated to all of our adventures over the years: the Lake Baby, B5's and the houseboat on Cumberland. They, along with our other friends, have played a bigger part of my journey than they probably realize- Thank you!!

I can't say enough about how much my family means to me, I will never be able to express how appreciative I am for all of their support. You know your family loves and cares for you, but I never understood the level until now. It brings a tear to my eye every time I think of how much they care for me and my family- I am truly blessed.

Of course my life is not perfect, but I can't complain,

The following is a synopsis of what I have gone through. I have found sharing my experience therapeutic and I am grateful that by sharing my story others will or have arranged a doctor visit or annual exam.

**Late May-Early June 2010**
We were putting the final plans together for a couples whitewater rafting trip to West Virginia when I started having rather significant right low back pain and right quad/hip flexor tightness. I have always dealt with low back pain and a hip issue so I didn’t really think anything more of it; my main concern was "how I was going to sit in a raft for over four hours."

We made the trek to West Virginia and had a fantastic time with our friends. Luckily my wife is not fond of water or drowning, so I stayed with her and did not raft so I avoided the extended sitting situation.

With lots of stretching and ice I was making it through. I assume this is the time I actually started having symptoms but there is no way to know.

**July 13, 2010**
The low back pain and hip tightness continued. I went to see my Family Physician, Dr. Pongonis, to get an adjustment. I explained to him that I was having right low back pain, right hip tightness and a dull ache in my groin. He went through the exam and adjusted my back and hips and I left feeling better. The next week or so I felt better, but the ache in my groin continued while sitting in certain positions. Looking back I should have put a bigger emphasis on my testicular pain, but like most guys I was in denial. "I am sure it is not Testicular Cancer, it is probably a cyst"

 **August 8th, 2010**
My parents were in town for the Dublin Irish Festival and my dad was telling me how a family friend (Mike) had a couple of accidents and it was discovered that his cancer had spread; he had not reported his new symptoms. The diagnosis was bleak. I had known Mike a long time, his son Nick and I are the same age and his other son Tony is married to my cousin. On top of knowing him through his sons I also golfed with him regularly in the late 90's and early 2000's.

That evening I was reading books to my daughter and she rested her head on my chest and it felt like glass was poking my right nipple. Tears instantly filled my eyes. I have never felt anything like it. I barely slept that night thinking about the horrible nipple pain.

 **August 9th, 2010**
That morning at work I had an uneasy feeling. I was sitting at my desk and the groin pain seemed more intense. I googled testicle and nipple pain and the search results came back Testicular Cancer. I went to WebMD and put in the same symptoms- Testicular Cancer. I was also suffering from a summer cold that I could not shake, so I added those symptoms. The results were even worse- Testicular Cancer with possible spread to the lungs. I immediately went into the work laundry room (sound proof and my part-time office) and called Dr. Pongonis' office. I explained my symptoms and informed the scheduler that I must be seen immediately. My appointment was scheduled for the next day.

The rest of that day was a blur. I had to tell my manager that I was going to the doctor and that it may be serious. She was the first person I told, it felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. I had been afraid to tell my wife because I didn't want her to worry or Google what I already knew.

I went home and informed Brooke what was going on and immediately she became my teammate in this battle, we would go through this together and she was okay with my demand, no one can know. I swore her to secrecy until I had an official diagnosis. I could not handle people feeling sorry for me, fearing the worse or asking a million questions that I did not have answers for.

 **August 10, 2010**I returned to the OSU Sports Medicine Center to see Dr. Pongonis. I explained to him my other symptoms, my own research and then he performed his exam. He noticed a difference between the two testicles but not a lump; the cough was also a little concerning but seemed to be a cold, probably due to stress. He immediately ordered blood work and an Ultrasound that needed to be performed immediately. I got my blood drawn and the Ultrasound was set up for the next day at the OSU Carepoint in Gahanna. I have known Dr. Pongonis for a long time and I could see the concern in his face as he talked with me that day. It confirmed what I already knew- it was cancer.

 **August 11, 2010**

I arrived for the Ultrasound and I was very impressed with the facility and the staff. I was directed to the procedure room and it had to be the coldest room I have ever been in. Not a good condition for below the belt testing. I will spare you all the details but the kicker of exam was that the individuals performing the test were attractive young women. All I could think about was the Seinfeld episode when George and Jerry wondered aloud "Do women know about shrinkage?" It took the edge off. They were professional and thankfully the gel was very warm!! Now we wait.

 **August 12, 2010**
Happy Birthday to me!!! I received a phone call that night from Dr. Pongonis about my blood work. One tumor marker, HCG, was elevated so that increased my probability of having testicular cancer, so now we had to wait for the Ultrasound results. I quickly googled HCG and noticed that it is a pregnancy hormone so I thought I heard him wrong, but with more

research I learned that HCG levels is tumor marker for testicular cancer. It causes nipple pain and breast enlargement and at that time I was borderline needing to wear a bro. The wait continues.

**Seinfeld- "The Doorman"**



"You want me to wear a bra?" Kramer
"No, no, a bra is for ladies. Meet the Bro!" Frank Costanza
"Bro's no good. Too ethnic." Kramer
"You got something better?" Frank Costanza
"How about the Mansiere?" Kramer
"Mansiere." Frank Costanza
                                          "That's right. A brassiere for a man." Kramer

**August 14, 2010**Happy Birthday Brooke- I have Testicular Cancer!!! What a birthday present to give your wife.

Weeks before, my friends had planned a weekend trip to our buddy Dean's river place. Brooke and the kids were going to stay at her parents and I was going to spend the weekend with the guys. I was packing my in-laws fantastic Lumina (Hancock Hooptie) when I received a phone call from Dr. Pongonis; it was 8:30 am on a Saturday. He said the Ultrasound came back positive, it was not a cyst and it seemed to be Testicular Cancer. He assured me to go about my business over the weekend and that he would call a colleague at The James and set me up with the best possible care. He would contact me Monday with a referral.

I asked Brooke to come outside and I told her what he had to say. I once again swore her to secrecy and that I would be fine and told her not worry (she admitted she didn't listen to that advice) luckily she had told her mom so she had someone to comfort her and help her stay strong that day.

I needed to go to the river for a day of fun, with the goal of keeping my mind right. I do not regret that decision one bit. I wanted normalcy so I didn't tell them a thing. The day started off overcast but quickly turned very sunny and it was a perfect day to grill on a pontoon, play cards in the water and throw peanut shells and onions in the river and watch the reactions of others as they floated by. I did take a jet ski back to the cottage, around five, as the others
continued to hang out at the sandbar. I had a horrible head ache so I took a nap, a big mistake when on a guy’s trip. I was startled awake by a bull shark attack. Not a real bull shark of course, but one filled with ice cold cooler water and shot directly in my face- thanks Dan!! After the shock of the coldest water on earth smacking me square in the face I rallied. I joined the guys at the Five Span Inn for the greatest night of karaoke that there has ever been or will be. The D.I.C.K.S. dominated the evening.

**August 23, 2010**
This was my first trip of many to The James Cancer Hospital. My initial consult was with Dr. Ahmad Shabsigh. I was very nervous going into The James, I had no idea what to expect. I was pleasantly surprised. From those working registration, the aides (Michelle), nurses (Jackie & Jenny) and Nurse Practioner (Kellie), everyone was exceptionally nice and professional. My nerves started to ease. Once Dr. Shabsigh entered the room I was sold on everything he told me. He was confident but down to earth, funny, but professional; he was the perfect doctor for me. Plus Brooke loved his suit and shoes! He laid it all out on the table. I had Testicular Cancer, it was over 95% curable, he was very confident that I had non-seminoma (the worst) and he would work me in for surgery by the end of the week (Friday). My right testicle had to be removed. I still am in shock that the standard of care is testicle removal and he talked like it was no big deal. He scheduled me for a CT scan for my chest and abdomen. The cough was still hanging around, but not as bad. It would be the next day.

 **August 24, 2010**
I arrived for the CT scan and was given 2 giant cups of yummyness to drink. I actually didn't mind it, it tasted like mint Mylanta. I was on my second cup when a lady in the waiting room asked if this was my first scan. I said yes and then asked what it was like, I had no clue. She said that I will lie on a table that slides in and out of an "O". Before the exam they will inject the medicine into the IV and you will taste metal and it will make you feel like you "pooped your pants". She must have seen the shock on my face because she assured me that you

don't but it gets really warm down there. I thanked her for the information. I went back and holy cow she was right!! I am very thankful for her letting me in on the secret. I was shocked that the scan was less than 2 minutes.

I got a call from Dr. Shabsigh and the surgery was scheduled for 4 pm on Friday. No food or drink after midnight Thursday. The surgery was not freaking me out but not eating for that long was!! I am a big man, I need food, plus I get very moody when hungry!

 **August 24, 2010- Breaking the Silence**
The moment I was dreading the most was now here, I had to tell my parents. I would start with my dad, because I knew mom would freak out. My dad and his boss (Mark) were in Florida installing cabinets so this is one reason why I couldn't do it in person, the other was time. Mark's sister lost her battle to breast cancer a few months ago so the thought of the two of them driving back to Ohio after this news was not what I wanted, but I had to. I gave him a call and he was in the middle of installation, he would call me back when he was done.
I had to tell someone so I called my best friend Dusty, he was working in Utah. He was in shock and scared. I spent more time making sure he was okay, assuring him that I would be fine. That wasn't so bad.

I called my sister and let her know. She is a nurse so she had lots of questions and since I waited I had answers. Of course she asked how mom and dad took the news; I told her I hadn't told them yet. Her response: mom is going to flip out.
I then got the call from dad; they were in the van heading to get something to eat. I told him the news and I could almost feel the life get sucked out of him. I assured him that I was going to be alright and let him know all of the facts. He would do everything he could to make sure he was there for the surgery (he got back at 4:30 am Friday). "Have you told your mom, she is going to flip out"- do you see the pattern.

After I hung up I cried for the first time, all the emotions that I wasn't noticing came pouring out. I was dreading telling my mom because she would flip out and she was alone. After I composed myself I gave her a call. I told her the news-silence- then calm questions and statements followed. No flipping out!!! I could tell she was about to break down but she held it together for me and that meant a lot. She would for sure be down on Friday to watch the kids and help around the house, luckily dad made it to. I was completely exhausted after the

 phone calls, but at peace, I slept great that night.

 **August 27, 2010**
The day has finally arrived. My prayers were answered the day before when The James called and moved up my surgery to 11:30am, I could handle not eating until that time!!! My parents arrived around 8 (yes my dad made it back) and then Brooke and I headed down to The James. Together we researched Orchiectomy so we understood the process but still there were some unknowns. I was still amazed how they perform the procedure and then an hour later you go home. A big elephant in the room was that the results of the CT scan were not known.

I arrived at The James, had a short wait and then headed up for surgery. I was in an outpatient surgical prep room and Brooke was by my side. Dr. Shabsigh and Kellie both came in to check on me and answer any questions. Kellie was able to print off the CT results and they were negative- **The Cancer Had Not Spread to the Lungs or Abdomen!!!!** What a relief!!

Immediately after the CT results I was wheeled back to the surgery and then woke up around 1.5 hours later in the recovery room. I came out of the anesthetic fine and I actually felt really good. I checked out the incision, 3 inch cut in right lower abdomen, it was glued together. I got up and walked around and then they released me. I was ordered to go out in a wheelchair but the male volunteer who was supposed to help me tried to talk me into walking out on my own. The nurse set him straight and he silently wheeled me to the front entrance and parked me in the bright, hot sun as we waited for Brooke. I hate being hot and I was sweating

profusely!! I got in the car and about a mile down the road the most extreme case of nausea I have ever experienced hit me. Fortunately everything stayed down and once I got a hamburger in me I felt great. I got home and we gave the kids the lecture that Daddy loves them very much but I can't lift them and they can't jump on me!

I am very grateful to Ryan (& Lauren) from Jet's for sending pizza and breadsticks so we didn't have to worry about getting everyone fed. My parents still rave about the BBQ Chicken Pizza!!!

 **The Recovery**
Shockingly, the recovery was rather pain less. I only took 3 prescription pain pills. Ice was definitely my friend!!!! The swelling and the bruising was out of control! Also a good pair of supportive draws was a big help. I started walking the neighborhood immediately; I believe that was the key to my speedy recovery. I was under doctor orders to not drive (7-10 days) and return to work using the same time-table. I took four days off and then drove myself to work on the fifth. I made sure I didn't do anything crazy- lifting, pushing, pulling, etc. I was glad to get back to my "normal" routine. My only regret is passing on going to the Ohio State vs. Miami football game. By the way the glue worked great and pulled off as the incision healed.

 **September 20, 2010**
Time has come for the post-surgical follow-up. Dr. Shabsigh had told Brooke that he did not see any signs that the cancer had spread while performing the surgery so we were confident going in to the appointment. Dr. Shabsigh came into the room and was impressed on how well I was doing. He then gave us the great news that he was wrong, I had Seminoma (most curable, the good type), not Non-Seminoma. Of course with the good comes the bad. There was a lymph node (stage 2) on the CT scan that was of concern. He suggested Radiation Therapy but I could do a Surveillance Program. Punch to the gut!!! I was due a CT scan (Sept.22) so we agreed that I would get it and if the lymph node was the same size or larger Radiation would be my treatment. We walked out in shock and confused, Google here we come. There was a ton of information I needed to help make this decision.

 **September 27, 2010**

Dr. Shabsigh entered with the results and the lymph node stayed the same size. I decided before the appointment that I was going to follow his suggestion, he was the expert. His recommendation was get Radiation Therapy and knock it out so there was nothing to worry about. He was contacting [Dr. Douglas Martin](http://radmed.osu.edu/10581.cfm), Radiation Oncologist, and setting up a consult ASAP. He would work me in on the 29th.

 **September 29, 2010**
This is the point of the journey where it became "real". The basement of The James was an eye-opening experience. The waiting room was full of patients that were in a lot worse shape than I. I felt so guilty sitting there. This is the point when it hit me that I was truly blessed and I needed to Pay It Forward.

We were brought back through a lead door, down an empty hall, and into a room. The nurse handed me a Radiation Therapy guide and answered some of our questions. Unfortunately I can not remember her name but she was very kind. She informed us that Dr. Martin was still performing a procedure and would be with us as soon as he could. Luckily we both had something to read.

Our appointment was at 4 and at about 5:15 there was a knock on the door and a sound of keys. My first thought was that a janitor was locking the room as we were there after hours and alone in this hallway. I jumped out of the chair and did a Dukes of Hazard slide across the table and started pounding on the door stating we were inside. I then realized that I could open the door and as I swung the door open there was Dr. Martin holding his keys. He was just trying to get in. That definitely broke the ice!!!

He immediately started my head spinning by announcing he didn't think the lymph node (stage 1) was enlarged, it was within normal parameters. In his expert opinion he did not think the risks of Radiation Therapy were worth it. There was an 85% chance that the lymph node was not cancerous. It was still my choice on what treatment plan I wanted to follow. He was going to converse with Dr. Shabsigh and other colleagues and he would get back to me.

We left The James that day even more confused and I felt like all of the energy had been sucked out of me. Back to the internet for more research.

 **October 11, 2010**I returned for a consult with Dr. Shabsigh. Brooke and I had researched tirelessly all of the pros and cons of surveillance and radiation. I had made up my mind after lots of inner battles and prayer- Surveillance. Dr. Shabsigh informed me that he had consulted with some colleagues, Dr. Martin and the head of the Chemotherapy Oncology department and they all agreed that a surveillance program would be fine. Even if the lymph node enlarged or spread it would be caught early enough. That cemented my decision for surveillance. I have so much respect for Dr. Shabsigh, Dr. Martin and the rest of the staff at The James and their opinion holds a lot of weight, they are the best for a reason. Every 3 months I will be getting a chest x-ray, CT scan (abdomen & pelvis) and blood work.

 **October 12, 2010**
My mom called and informed me that our friend, Mike, passed away this morning. I was sitting in my basement, I hung up the phone, prayed, cried and then I prayed some more. I felt an extreme guilt build inside me, I was going to be okay because of Mike, and now he was gone.

 **October 14, 2010**
I left work and drove the two hours to the visitation. I was alone so numerous thoughts were racing through my mind, the biggest being don't cry. I have a real hard time not crying when I see others doing so and I wanted to be strong for his family. I arrived around 5:30 and I took numerous deep breaths, wiped off my sweaty palms, prayed for strength and walked in. Worse case scenario unfolded, there was a line. I stood there and I watched the family receive condolences from friends, spoke with Mike's granddaughter and observed the photos, flowers and cards. I could feel myself losing control of my emotions, my mind was racing. For the first time during this whole process I started thinking that I could be the one who died. If I did not hear about Mike's situation I very well could have ignored my symptoms; allowing the cancer to spread and at a minimum destroyed my quality of life.

It seemed like hours as I waited and with each tick of the clock my emotions became more unstable; more deep breaths. I said a prayer at the casket, said my condolences to his daughter and to his wife, no tears. Then I went to speak with Nick (the son my age), totally lost it. I wanted to let him know what an important role his dad has played in my life, but I could not get it out. Now here he was consoling me. Now it was time to talk with his other son, Tony, and his wife Tricia (my cousin). Once again I could not talk with out a waterfall of tears, once again they were consoling me. They knew how I felt about Mike and it was okay that I could not say a word.

I left the funeral home and drove the two hours back home, tears rolling down my face the whole way. That was by far the roughest night of this journey, but it was a very important step in me coping with all that had gone on and what was in my future. Mike saved me and I vowed that I will do my part to "save" others. This is where "Pay It Forward" came into focus.

 **December 13, 2010**
The first 3 month exam has arrived. I went for the CT scan a week earlier, today is the results. Once again the staff at The James was fantastic. Dr. Shabsigh reported the lymph node was the same size!!! See you in three months.

Before I left I clued in Dr. Shabsigh on my website and formation of The Jay Holdgreve Endowment for Testicular Cancer Research. The look on his face was thank you enough! He had just returned from the NCI conference and starting a registry for rare Urological Cancers was on the agenda and he thought we could team up and make it happen.

 **"You can never pay back, but you can always pay forward."**

 **March 14, 2011**

Another 3 months have passed and today the results are in from another round of testing. I did the CT Scan, Chest X-ray and blood draw the Thursday before so I should be in and out.

I arrive at The James for my 1:30 pm appointment and I check out the monitor and it states that Dr. Shabsigh is one hour behind schedule. I start reading the USA Today NCAA Tourney special section to pass the time. As I start reading a James worker wheels up a cart with drinks and snacks and explains that Dr. Shabsigh was running late and I could have a complimentary snack. I noticed everyone in the waiting room was there for Dr. Shabsigh, this could be awhile. I open the paper and I hear my name, it is Kellie (Dr. Shabsigh's Nurse Practioner). She tells me to come on back and so I head to the room after waiting 5 minutes!!

Dr. Novak was the first in the room. He went over my history and changes in the last three months. Nothing to report on my end, I have been feeling great. I did have one question- What am I considered- in remission? survivor? cancer patient? His answer was that I have a history of cancer and in 3 three years I will be a survivor. I thought that was an interesting answer.

Dr. Shabsigh entered the room a few minutes later and as usual he is all smiles. We talked about tcare.org, the Endowment, Bowling for the Boyz and the pending Testicular Cancer Awareness promotions and he is so excited about all that I am doing. It cements the fact that I am Paying It Forward!!

He does his exam and announces that my tests were all negative and he had a surprise for me. The lymph node has shrunk!!! All of the prayers are being answered!!! He announces he will see me in 3 months for the same routine. Great day!!

 **April 16, 2011**

Ohio State vs. Michigan State baseball teams wore my Testicular Cancer Awareness decals on their batting helmets for today's game on the Big 10 Network. I greatly appreciate Coach Beals and the OSU promotions department for allowing me the opportunity to raise awareness for Testicular Cancer. I had a booth at the front gate with informative cards and tcare.org t-shirts. I also had the opportunity to throw out the first pitch and was accompanied by Dr. Shabsigh. We made our way to the mound and then what seemed like hours they introduced us and the cause. It was cold, damp and windy so the crowd was just under a thousand people but it seemed like a million people just quietly staring. I wound up and uncorked the pitch, as soon as it left my hand I knew I was in trouble. Thankfully the OSU catcher (Steele) slid sideways and scooped it off the dirt. I must say that nerves got the best of me along with my lack of baseball talent. Of course my buddies (Dan, Mike, Dean and Luke) boo'd me as I walked off but the rest of crowd cheered and the OSU baseball team wished me luck. The day was a big success and hopefully next year we will do it again and the weather will be better.

Channel 10 was at the game and I did an interview for the six o'clock news, that was a big help in getting the word out.

It was great to have Brooke, my kids, sister and her kids, my mom, The McDaniels, Dr. Shabsigh, Dr. Sharp, Mike (Testicular Cancer Society) and my buddies from Delphos in attendance. Also it was great to meet some other men who have battled Testicular Cancer. Also a special thanks to OSU student athletic trainers, Melissa & Kandis, for helping me at my informational booth.

 **April 30, 2011**

Bowling for the Boyz has arrived. After 24 hours of panic and last minute preparation everything was ready to go.

My Uncle Al and Aunt Chris brought an SUV full of goodies for the event. Over 20 silent auction items and over 25 raffle items line the bowling alley. Mark Wurst set up his karaoke unit and Jeff Davis brought the guitar to entertain the crowd.

I rolled the first ball to kick off the event and I immediately put it in the gutter!! Around 4 o'clock the people started streaming in and by 7 close to 150 people were in the place!!! Family, friends, neighbors, classmates, and people that I have never met were all together to support the cause. WLIO out of Lima came to shoot some live shots and do an interview for the 11pm news. After 3 takes the interview was finally acceptable and then he taped Jeff Davis singing AC/DC's classic song "Big Balls"!! After Jeff did a fantastic job singing and entertaining the crowd, the karaoke machine got fired up. Brandon Hoehn showed his range with his renditions of Brittany Spears songs.

The lanes were all full and pins were falling. 12 cans of turkey were given out as rewards to those bowlers who rolled the proverbial "Turkey". Numerous adults and kids won door prizes donated by individuals and businesses. The night ended at 9 pm with winners being announced.

Fun was had by all and the plans for next year began that evening. Bruce (owner of bowling alley) and I agreed that next year we will do it bigger and better. Thank you to everyone who attended, supported or passed the word about bowling for the boyz!!

 **August 14, 2011**

Wow!! It has been one year since the fatefull phone call. There has been lots of ups and downs and thankfully more ups than downs. The support I have received from family, friends and strangers has been mind blowing. I am most proud of the success of this website and the Jay Holdgreve Endowment for Testicular Cancer Research at The James. In a little over 8 months over $12,700 has been raised, AMAZING!! Even better is that men are talking about Testicular Cancer and society is listening.

Bob Capace and Worthington Jewelers have been instrumental in what I have accomplished. Without them agreeing to meet with me and introducing me to Gary (the greatest graphic artist in Columbus and beyond) I don't know if my ideas would have ever came to fruition. The battle still continues and I promise bigger and better promotions and awareness programs in the future.

**August 15, 2011**

One year follow-up with Dr. Shabsigh, blood work looks fine and no TC symptoms. I do report that I am having increased signs of low testosterone, normal side effect of TC. Dr. Shabsigh orders more blood work and another CT Scan just to make sure.

**August 22, 2011**

Great news- CT Scan clean, but blood work does show low testosterone levels. Prescribed Androgel (the clear that Barry Bonds used, I will now be a MLB power hitter) and will put on daily. Informed Dr. Shabsigh of possible family history so more blood work and MRI of brain ordered. Need to rule out pituitary tumor. Can't wait to lay inside tube for 40 minutes, I am
already freaking out, requested medication and thankfully obliged

**August 24, 2011**

Waited all day for 3:15 brain MRI. I have to admit that my nerves were getting the best of me. An hour before the procedure I took the medicine (ADHD drug) to take the edge off and about 20 minutes in I could feel the effects. Of course they were running behind so I waited impatiently, but remaining calm. I am called back to get the IV started and the first comment from the Rad. Tech was "wow, you have broad shoulders. I am not sure you will fit in the tube." I explained that I am not fond of enclosed spaces and that I was medicated and that I wanted to give it a try. She also explained that a "helmet" would be put around my head and it would be snug. She suggested a towel over my eyes immediately so I would not see the contraption- I agreed. I was finally up and I got up on the table and they went to work to prepare me for the MRI. Ear plugs, towel over eyes, lots of clicking of "helmet", giant pads between the "helmet" and my ears, and then they shoved me into the MRI tube and stuck. They inform me to keep my arms straight and cross them over my body, "make yourself skinny". The "skinny" position was not for me!!! I attempted it and they shoved me in and kept saying get "skinny". I announced that I wanted out and there was no way I could do this. I could feel my chest cramping and I was only half way in the tube and then have to hold it for 40 minutes, No Way!! They pulled me out, undid all of the contraptions, unhooked the IV and I was out the door, doing the walk of shame to the car.

I call Kellie at Dr. Shabsigh's office and explained what happened and she ordered the MRI at OSU hospital, in a bigger, open unit. She also agrees to up the meds to Valium, I needed more of the edge taken off.

**August 26, 2011**

I arrive at OSU hospital at 7 am for the MRI. I took the Valium 30 minutes earlier and was feeling the effects, calm and sleepy. The check in process and workers were super nice and helped keep my nerves low, they were very understanding about my fears. I am taken back and the unit is visibly wider and shorter and everyone in the room is super nice. I get on the table and the process begins- ear plugs, towel for eyes, "helmet" assembled, padding between ears and helmet and then they push me in. I am not touching the sides and I feel no increase in my pulse rate- the Valium was working!! The "knocking" began and half way through I am pulled out and the IV is started, meds injected and then back into the tube. 20 minutes later I am pulled out and everything is dis-assembled and I am sent on my way. I never fell asleep and felt normal when walking out, just extra calm. Now the wait begins.

**September 15, 2011**

The MRI confirmed that I have a 2mm tumor on my pituitary gland (not the brain). So today I am being seen by Dr. Daniel Prevedello, NeuroSurgeon @ The Ohio State University. I arrive on the 10th floor of OSU Hospital's Doan Hall and I start wandering around. All I could see and find were patient rooms and offices. I went to a nurse station and stood patiently as 10 nurses ignored my presence. After a couple of minutes a Rehab Aide asked if I needed help and thankfully she directed me to the right area. There was no patient area, I was meeting Dr. Prevedello in his office.

I sit down and explain what all is going on with me. He uploads my brain MRI on his computer and he takes a look. I can confirm that there was a brain on the screen and it looked of normal size. He clicked through the frames and stated " I hate when they do this shit". I started chuckling, because my NeuroSurgeon talked like me. He was ticked about them marking the area where the tumor was located, it obstructed the view. The 2mm size is not of major concern and the lab results at this time do not show that it is active. He ordered more tests and I am to visit Dr. Ali (Endocrinologist) in a week to go over the results. If it shows the tumor is "juicing" (more chuckling) he will remove it, if not they will just watch it.

1 out of 5 people have pituitary tumors and greater than 99% are benign. To remove it they go through your nostrils, fun stuff!!! The good news is that we have a game plan, the bad news is I still don't have the answer to what is causing my low testosterone levels. Hopefully Dr. Ali will have the answer.

**September 26, 2011**

My visit to the Endocrinologist left me with more questions than answers. It was a very confusing appointment. I was expecting to walk out of the office with a better understanding of what was going on and a plan to deal with it. Unfortunately that was not the case. My lab work was not done on the same day or right time so I have to redo all of the blood tests, and wait 2 weeks to do so, as I need to be off the Androgel for an extended period of time. I did have some blood work done at the office which called for 5 vials of blood, a shot, 2 more vials 30 minutes later, and then wait another 30 minutes and 2 more vials taken. It is a very good thing that I don't mind needles or losing blood! My elbow looks like a heroin addict though. I am sure Dr. Ali is a fantastic doctor but I am left here to debate that maybe our personalities

are not a good match. We will have to wait and see as he told me he would see me back in 6 months for a follow-up??????

**December 19,2011**

My last visit of 2011 with Dr. Shabsigh was today. Once again all clear!! Even better news was given as I will be down to 3 CT Scans this year and chest x-ray every 6 months. Original plan was this schedule to start after 3 years. Dr. Shabsigh has been spreading the word to his patients and physicians nationwide about tcare.org and the Endowment. His plans and ideas even exceed mine. Dr. Shabsigh is the man!

**December 23, 2011**

Met with Dr. Khwaja (OSU Endocrinologist) for a second opinion. First impression was very good. She is very thorough and even drew pictures to help me understand everything that is going on. She did order more blood work as she wants to see my numbers with Androgel. She cannot rule out that the pituitary tumor is active. The good news is that there is a medication to shrink it and with elimination my issues could resolve without daily medication. I left the office feeling confident that she understood my concerns and that there is a plan in place.

**January 17, 2012**

I had not heard from Dr. Khwaja since my December 23rd appointment, other than a letter with my test results and very little explanation of what it meant. So I called the office and was told that the letter explained everything and that more tests would be done when I saw her for my follow up, April 26th. Once again I was not happy because she told me with each test result I received a new test would be ordered. At the appointment I explained that I did not want to wait 3-4 months between test and she agreed to not put me through that. I hung up very confused and angry with how my treatment was going.

I waited a couple of weeks, debating with myself about seeking another opinion. Brooke thought I should stick it out but I had to do what makes me happy. So I called upon my good friend Jeff Sczpanski to ask his wife, Dr. Amanda Gordon, for a referral to an Endocrinologist, she suggested Dr. Paes. I needed to go outside OSU and see if I was just crazy or if there was a better way to treat my condition.

**February 23, 2012**

I had my appointment today with Dr. Paes and he spent 40 minutes with me and a majority of the time was him just listening. He went over all of my test results and answered all of my questions. This was the first appointment I had with an Endocrinologist where I felt like I was being listened to and he understood where I was coming from. He did a great job of explaining to me all of the previous results and what they were actually showing, not just numbers in a range. I explained my angst of being told by two other doctors that my testosterone level was normal even if it was at the very low end of the range and I still had symptoms. He agreed that "normal" is when you are not having any other symptoms and confirmed that I was not crazy for not settling with the other's answers.

The last issue we discussed was the pituitary tumor. He confirmed what I have been told by the other doctors, it could have been a "lucky" catch. I told him I would like him to break the tie, is my condition primary or secondary? His answer was, it doesn't matter we will treat it the same way and wait for all the test results to give us the answer. He explained that low T is very complicated and regular testing and appointments will be the first part of the plan. As the test results come back other areas may need to be looked at; sleep apnea, nutrition, etc. This is exactly what I was looking for. I was not a fan of an appointment every 3 to 4 months and no real plan. I walked out satisfied that I finally found the right doctor, just like Dr. Pongonis and Dr. Shabsigh.

**March 31, 2012**

Bowling for the Boyz 2 was a HUGE success!!! More silent auction items, More raffle items, More people, More fun and More money donated to the Jay Holdgreve Endowment for Testicular Cancer Research!!! $8,850 to be exact. WOW! Thank you to all who supported the event!! See you next year.

**April 12, 2012**

Today was my follow up with Dr. Paes and I was excited to see what the results were from my blood test. I have been feeling much better and a lot more energy. My testosterone levels are up to 791!!! The 2 OSU Endocrinologist told me that 232 might be normal for me and basically that I was chasing a "ghost". Well thankfully I followed my "gut" and did not settle. With the advice from good friends, Jeff and Amanda, I ended up under the care of a physician who listened and thought outside the box. So a minor increase in my Androgel and a super dose of Vitamin D daily, equals a significant increase in my quality of life. Thank you Dr. Paes for listening and to all of you do not settle!!

**April 15, 2012**

The 2nd Annual Testicular Cancer Awareness Day was held at the Ohio State vs. Nebraska baseball game. Each team wore my TC Awareness decals and I got to redeem myself and throw out the first pitch. I was accompanied to the mound by the James Cancer Hospital's Dr. Paul Monk. Dr. Monk is taking care of those men who need more intense treatment and he is a great Testicular Cancer Awareness promoter.

There were over 1500 people in attendance and this year i threw it over the plate. OSU student athletic trainers, Melissa and Kandis, helped out again this year and I am very thankful for their support. It was also great to have Brooke and the kids, my parents, Addi, Garret, Avery, Gene & Marlene, Lindsey & Kyra, Ryan, Emerson, Grace and Ryan, Keri, Kylie and Reed. It was also great to see Randy, Amy and Gavin Holdgreve. Your support meant a lot.

**April 23, 2012**

Today is an appointment with Dr. Shabsigh, part of my surveilance program. They updated the office since my last visit, all of the construction is mind boggling. The medical campus is going to be magnificent. I must say that I miss Dr. Shabsigh's original team as the new bunch is not up to par in my opinion. Very slow and disorganized, you can tell the doctors and staff are frustrated.

It was great seeing my friend, Dr. Shabsigh, and he announced that everything came back clean. I will be going to a 6 month program once I hit the 2 year mark this August. We discussed the Endowment and he has big ideas on how to utilize the funds. He was heading to a conference to speak on men's health and tcare.org and the Endowment were to be topics. I know a big break will happen soon.

**June, 2012**

**$25,000 Milestone Is Reached in 18 Months!!!**

WOW!!! Some said I couldn't do it, others said it would take years. Well we are half way to Endowing the Research Fund in 18 months. There is still a lot more work to do to reach the $50,000 goal but I am very proud of the start!! Thank you all for your support and generousity!!

**June 21, 2012**

Cancer took another great man as Dan Hoehn passed away today. His fight was inspirational and his spirit will live on. I am so grateful that Dan attended Bowling for the Boyz 2, wearing his protect your nuts t shirt, Words will never be able to express how much his attendance meant to me. Rene, Chanda, Brandon and Edana, I hope you find peace in all of the wonderful memories you made with Dan.



**July 30, 2012**

Can you believe I had my 2 year check up today?? Actually 23 month check up, but that is a technicality. It seems just like yesterday that I received that fateful call. What a journey since.

My appointment with my friend Dr. Shabsigh was at his new office located in OSU's Eye and Ear Institute. That was not a typo, they moved the urology department to this building. I just hope those getting there eyes or ears checked don't go to the wrong floor, that would be a "shocker"!!

The office was very nice, great staff and organized for being "opening day". I even got to see Kelli and catch up with her, it had been a year since she was involved with my appointments. I had a great visit with Dr. Shabsigh and all is well!! I will now be stretching out appointments to every 6 months. Dr. Shabsigh continues to fight for more Testicular Cancer Research Funds and Awareness from The James and Nationally, he is making head way. Next appointment will be in Movember!!

**August 14, 2012**

Happy Birthday Brooke!! 2 years ago on this day I received that call that changed our lives forever.

**The Announcement**

Two years ago on this date I was told that I have cancer and today I get to report that I am entering a 5K. Yes, Jay Holdgreve, the man who is overweight, hates running and makes fun of those who do, is running a 5K.

As many of you know one of my best friends, Ryan (Ike) Eickholt started the 31 Initiative ([**http://the31initiative.blogspot.com**/](http://the31initiative.blogspot.com/)) this year. He is running 31 straight weeks of 3.1 mile (5k) races. Months ago he said in passing that it would be great if I would run one with him. Well I accepted the invitation (challenge) and bought a pair of running shoes, downloaded the Couch to 5k running program on the ipod and started the journey.

It has definitely been a journey as my body has let me know that it was not built for running, but I refuse to give up. I can even go so far as saying I enjoy it when I feel good, but my back, lower legs and hip have kept those days few and far between. 3.1 miles is a lot further when you are trying to jog it, much shorter in a car or on a bike. I have dropped 2 pant sizes but the weight loss has not been as significant as I had hoped. I am striving to lose 10-15 pounds before I enter my first official 5k and that should help the joints.
 **So what 5K am I entering??**

I will be running with my guy Ike (actually we will be at the start line together and he will finish 15-20 minutes before me) in Delphos, Ohio during Canal Days!! Yes, four weeks from now I will be running (i use that term loosely) in support of Ike. Hopefully I can get a group together to enter (maybe 31 people) in support of Ike as a way to show my appreciation. By "Paying It Forward" he has raised TC Awareness and donations for the Endowment, and I am forever grateful.

Hopefully my body will hold up but no matter what I will start and finish, I am not ashamed to crawl!!! Let me know if you are on board.

**August 25, 2012**

At just after 1 A.M. this morning my friend Gary "gary b da man" Burch was killed in a motorcycle accident. Many of you do not know Gary but you know his work. Gary was the graphic artist who took my sketches, cut out pictures and ideas and turned them into masterpieces. His work includes my Testicular Cancer Ribbons, TCARE.org logo, Bowling for the Boyz poster and my Testicular Cancer Awareness Educational Cards. He also advised me on my websites and my master plan.

I originally knew Gary as the black guy with the crazy hair but he became one of my biggest supporters and a true friend. We had many talks on how I wanted to raise TC Awareness locally and he was supportive but he wanted it to be bigger-national, even global. As we talked about a couple of months ago, I voiced my frustration on not "catching a break" here in Columbus. He told me to keep grinding and advised that you never know who will decide that this cause is right for them to back- "patience buddy". What I have been able to do with TCARE.org and the Endowment is remarkable and I only regret that Gary will not be here to see it through.

Unfortunately I did not know much about Gary's home life but I do know how much he cared about his profession and being the best at what he did. There are many companies in the Columbus area whose business will struggle without his insight and design skills to help with their marketing. Gary I know you grinded everyday to make a living and I am proud to call you a friend. Rest In Peace friend as I am sure you are enjoying an unlimited supply of Jack Daniels.

**August 28, 2012**

I had my one year follow up with Dr. Prevedello for the small pituitary "tumor" that was found last year. The visit starts with a brain MRI and of course there has to be a story, nothing can be easy.

Last week I called Dr. Prevedello requesting Valium for the MRI. I spoke with his secretary and I explained that last year I was told to call a week ahead of time to get the prescription filled and I was doing just that. She said she would call me back and she did. She stated that I just need to go to the MRI location (OSU Hospital) and tell them that I need Valium and they would dispense it to me. I questioned this answer and she said that this is typical protocol. I explained that this is different than previous experiences and I know that a doctor needs to call in the narcotic not the receptionist at the facility. I played the role of the good patient and said okay after her assuring me that this is typical.

I arrived at OSU early, went to check in, told them I need Valium and they looked at me like I was two headed. They explained that they can't call in prescriptions only a doctor. My response " I know that but my doctor's secretary said you did, it is the protocol". I gave them her number and thankfully she answered and admitted to telling me what I just stated. After some stern conversation between the two she found a physician to order the Valium. I walked down stairs to the Walgreens and met a great pharmist who filled the order. She stated it was 5 mg (not near enough for my size) and then she instructed me to take it an hour before the scan. I informed her that they were waiting on me upstairs and that I will be in the contraption within 5 minutes. She just shook her head, we both knew that this was not enough time to kick in and work.

Thankfully Greg, Theresa and Bree were very understanding and let me take my time to get on the bed and were super kind as they secured my head and put on the face cage. After some deep breathing they pushed me in the tube and less than 20 minutes later I was pulled out. I am definitely getting better with the MRI tubes.

I walked straight to Dr. Prevedello's office for the results. Ironically he moved into Dr. Shabsigh's previous office at The James. After an extended wait I spoke with his Nurse-Brian, a great down to earth guy. Dr. Prevedello then entered, apologized about the Valium error (new secretary) and went over the MRI with me. He looked and looked, then brought up last year's scan and then proclaimed- "It is gone!" It is now just a shadow and the diagnosis has changed from tumor to pituitary abnormality. He shook my hand and said see you in 3 years!! What a relief!

**September 16, 2012**

**Delphos Canal Days 5K**

The day has finally arrived, it is time to run my first 5K. I never thought this day would come.
My Couch to 5K training had been an adventure, but I completed it. It was supposed to last 9 weeks (27 sessions) but a back and hamstring injury, plus dead legs prolonged it. I had many times that I thought there was no way I was going to be able to do this without walking or stopping, but then one evening I had a breakthrough and got over the hump. I had many successful 30-35 minute runs but my first shot at 3 miles I felt like I was going to die and I needed to stop and stretch, but next time out I felt great. Thursday night before the race I was going for my last practice run but I barely made it 15 minutes, my legs felt like concrete and both shins were screaming. I sat in an ice tub for 2 nights, stretched like crazy and prayed that my legs would hold up.

The Lima News ran a great article featuring Ike and the 31 Initiative and WLIO interviewed us at the event. The Delphos Herald will be running a story on Monday after the race. The weather was brisk but sunny and actually warmed up nicely by race time. It was great seeing so many friends and family sign up for the event or there to cheer us on. The kids kicked off the morning with a 2K fun run. It was awesome seeing Elyse and Emerson (Ryan's daughter) finish the race together. As the race time neared I got to catch up with St. John's classmates, friends and family. It is always a humbling experience when so many people come out to support the cause. It felt great knowing that Ike was getting the recognition he deserved.

At 10 the bullhorn blared and we were off. After one block I remembered to start my timer on my watch-rookie mistake. I started at the back because I wanted my own pace. I ran a few blocks with my buddy B-Man and then I went into the zone. I turned up the MP3 player and focused on my pace and breathing. The first mile went very smoothly and I ran it in 9:30, one minute faster than I had ever done. A little panic set in as everyone I talked to said make sure you don't go out too fast, did I do that?? As I turned the corner and headed for the loop I was passed by the eventual winner and then was high fived and given words of encouragement by a large group of avid runners who would place in the top 10, I really appreciated their support.

As I entered the loop I passed my mother-in-law and sister-in-law, that was a big accomplishment, as they both have run 5K's in the past. Once out of the loop I was past the half way point and heading back. I passed the walking group and I got to high five my mom and friends (many pushing babies). I hit the 2 mile mark and I started to get the dreaded pain in the side, but after some breathing drills it went away. The last turn brought me to the .6 of a mile straight away that lead to the finish line. I started to debate with myself if I should pick up the pace now or wait a few blocks. I didn't want to "fizzle" out too early, so I kept my current pace. Then out of nowhere my Cousin's wife, Karissa, comes up beside me, gives some encouragement and then passes me. I notice her slow down and we then were jogging side by side, and then with a block or two to go she picked up the pace and the race was on to the finish line. My plan was to salute Ike as I passed but I was completely focused on beating Karissa and not falling down as my legs were weak!

We cross the line and all I hear is the MC state "Jay you just got beat by a girl!!" True story, but her pushing me got me to meet my goal of running the race in 31 minutes (in honor of the 31 Initiative). **I completed my first 5K in 31:45, not bad for a fat guy!!!** Thank you Karissa!!! I got a big hug from Brooke and many congratulations from family, friends and strangers...what an amazing feeling. It was fantastic having so many people there and having my neighbors from Dublin make the trip up, Amy to run and Joyce and Sophie to cheer us on.
The post-race party took place at The Rustic. A jumbo Tenderloin and numerous Bud Lights were the perfect finish to the day. Thank you to Dean, Joy, Chanda, Brandon, Jessica and Rene for joining in the fun.

What a fantastic day and I plan on keeping up the running. I have lost 20 pounds and I have actually enjoyed running, I may need a mental health check after that statement. Thank you to everyone who wore 31 Initiative stickers, Protect Your Nuts shirts and those who ran or cheered us on!! It was awesome seeing Ike get the recognition he deserves and money was raised for the Endowment.

**October 2012**

The first week of October I decided that I wanted to do a TCARE.org Movember promotion in Columbus.  I figured it would be an easy sell to bars, a mustache and ugly sweater party to promote men's health.  I emailed 25 bars, a majority in the Arena District, a central location.  I also thought Arena District bars would be very interested in bringing in business since the NHL is on strike and the area is a ghost town.  After one week of zero responses I called a couple of the bars to make sure they received the email.  I got the run around and the standard line " i will check with my manager and call you back".  Which is code for "stop bothering us and your business means nothing to me".

As I was sitting in the Franklin County Courthouse, enjoying jury duty, I decided to email 2 more bars.  First was the Tilted Kilt since 75% of their business is from men.  I couldn't believe I had not thought of them earlier.  I also emailed BBR after hearing their commercial on the radio.  The Comman Man and Torg did their Buckeye football post game show from their.  I checked my email a couple hours later and both said YES!!!!

I met with Shannon and John at the Tilted Kilt and not only did they want to host a Men's Health Social they wanted to do something for the whole month.  They brought up selling moustaches for $5 a piece with all proceeds benefitting TCARE.org.  I went into the meeting wanting a moustache/ugly sweater night and I ended up with a huge month long promotion and Men's Health Social during their anniversary week.  Needless to say the ugly sweater party was sacrificed without any complaints from me.  I walked away extremely excited about the possibilities of the Tilted Kilt partnership and their enthusiasm to help.

I met with Sabrina at BBR and they agreed to host an event on a Thursday evening at the end of November.  I did not get the weekend date I was hoping for but Sabrina and BBR were very excited to help and we agreed to hold a silent auction with them helping line up items.  I walked out of the meeting with a giant smile on my face, knowing that TCARE.org and Testicular Cancer Awareness took a huge step forward!

**November 20, 2012**