

Cancer and Amputation Doesn't Stop Carolinas College Student from Graduating and Landing Dream Job

In March, **Isabelle Hanvey**, 24, threw a big party. The party was a celebration that she'd survived cancer a second time. It was also the birthday of "Billie," her phantom leg, which she'd lost a year earlier during surgery to treat the cancer that had plagued her for years.

Despite all this, Hanvey pursued her dream job – medical laboratory science – and will graduate from Carolinas College School of Health Sciences in April.

Unfortunately, this wasn't Hanvey's first bout with cancer. When Hanvey was 5 years old, she was diagnosed with Wilms tumor, a rare kidney cancer that affects children. She lost a kidney and underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatment until she finally became cancer-free at 8 years old.

Years later in college, Hanvey began getting tingling in her foot and experiencing excruciating pain in her right hip and leg.

This didn't stop her, however, from pursuing her dreams. In August 2014, Hanvey started the year-long Medical Laboratory Science program at Carolinas College.

"Becoming a medical laboratory scientist was my dream job," says Hanvey. "I love that I will get to help diagnose diseases for patients."

In December 2014, Hanvey learned she had a different kind of cancer – spindle cell sarcoma – as a result of her childhood radiation treatment. She learned she had a 15-centimeter tumor that was woven through her leg muscles and hip joint.

"No one thought the cancer would have reoccurred, much less a different one," says Hanvey.

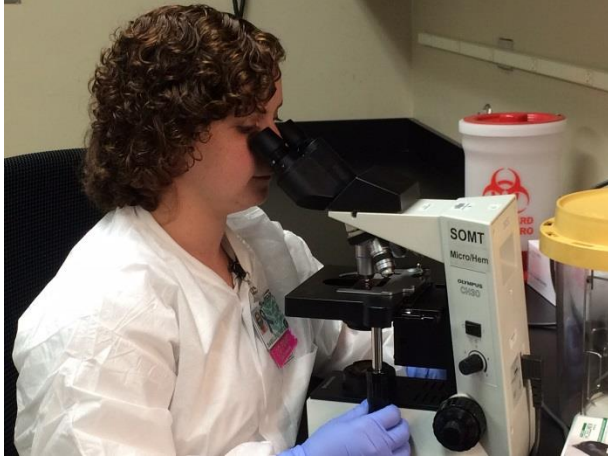
Hanvey put school on hold and started chemotherapy New Year's Eve 2014. She met with a surgeon who explained that her leg, hip and part of her pelvis would need to be amputated.

For Isabelle, losing her limb wasn't a shock. "I'd joked as a kid that I wanted to be part robot, and now I am," she says.

When Hanvey returned home in April 2015, she didn't realize how hard it was going to be. She had the phantom limb – she feels the missing limb all the time – and had pain for the first four months. That's when she named her phantom limb "Billie." "It's a love/hate relationship because he hurts me sometimes," she says. "My brain just had to learn to rewire."



"It's my way of paying it forward," says Hanvey. "I know what the patients are going through and how they feel. I can show life after diagnosis. It's not just cancer all the time."



Hanvey, however, was still determined to finish school. “Nothing was going to stop me, not even cancer,” she says.

Despite being out of school for months, she only had to repeat one class and finish three more. She is currently in her rotations and will graduate April 29. She will walk with the rest of her MLS classmates in August 2016.

She even got her dream job working for Levine Cancer Institute-SouthPark. “It’s fantastic to be working for a cancer center,” says Hanvey. “It’s my

way of paying it forward. I know what the patients are going through and how they feel. I can show life after diagnosis. It’s not just cancer all the time.”

Hanvey has already paid it forward. She was doing clinical rounds at the hospital when a mother approached her asking if she would go talk to her daughter who just had an amputation. They talk all the time now.

“It’s important to have a support group, especially being able to talk to other amputees,” says Hanvey. “They understand what you’re going through and the phantom limb. They’ve been so supportive and helpful.”