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# Gardner-Webb Volleyball's Heather Feldman Rises Above in Battle With Cancer

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Office of University  
Communications

September 22, 2017

*Team, Community Raise Over \$5,000 for Leukemia and Lymphoma Society*

## GWU Sports Information

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The word has long been one of the most feared and devastating the English language has produced. Cancer. It is a diagnosis that is capable of breaking the strongest of us all. Sometimes the disease meets someone who is stronger. Someone who has a determination steeled by faith, family and friends who will beat the odds—beat the disease.



Heather Feldman, center, was a two-time CoSIDA Academic All-District III selection during her playing career at Gardner-Webb.

Gardner-Webb alum and current graduate assistant volleyball coach Heather Feldman faced cancer with courage, strength and determination. Today, she is cancer free, and is just as determined to raise awareness—and funding—to help others win their battle.

The GWU volleyball team sponsored a “Dig Lime” match on Sept. 22, wearing lime green jerseys to raise awareness for lymphoma research. Fans were also invited to wear lime green in support. In the weeks leading up to the match, the team had raised money in Feldman’s honor for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS), and additional donations were taken during the 10-minute intermission. Following the match, it was announced that a total of over \$5,000 had been raised for the LLS.

Feldman was diagnosed with Stage 3 Non-Hodgkins lymphoma on Nov. 17, 2016—not long after her 23rd birthday. “I had a lot of symptoms, but at age 23 you don’t jump to that crazy of a conclusion. It turns out I had all the symptoms of Non-Hodgkins lymphoma.”

A two-time CoSIDA Academic All-District III selection during her volleyball playing career at Gardner-Webb, Feldman was accustomed to peak physical conditioning and performance. She finished her career with the Runnin’



Photo courtesy Tim Cowie

Bulldogs as one of the program’s all-time greats, dishing off 4,545 career assists and picking up 1,112 career digs. “I spent about two weeks in the hospital in North Carolina. I was transferred to Charlotte to begin treatment as soon as possible, because the main mass was around my heart,” Feldman said. “I went home to Buffalo to continue treatment and had a six-hour round about every three weeks.”

After enduring a very difficult time in her life, which saw lymphoma present in many areas of her body, Feldman began to receive what would be a progressive series of good news. “When I went in for my PET [positron emission tomography] scan and checkup to see how the treatment was working, the mass by my heart had shrunk and really the only other place the cancer was showing up was in my spleen. The other places throughout my body weren’t showing up. They were gone.”

Feldman made her way back to Boiling Springs in March, where she rejoined the Runnin’ Bulldogs for spring drills—which served as a very positive distraction as she waited the 8-10 weeks before undergoing more tests to see if the cancer was gone. Then, as spring came to a close, she returned home for more tests and received the best news. “On May 18, I found out I was in complete remission,” she shared. “It was an amazing feeling. We went and celebrated after the visit to the doctor and it really was a perfect day.”

When asked how she was able to get through the ordeal, Feldman pointed to assists from many others—from her faith, to family and her extended family at Gardner-Webb. “My faith was tested in the beginning, but He got me through,” she said. “I was in fight mode the whole time. There never really was a point where I thought that I wasn’t going to beat this.



Photo courtesy Tim Cowie

“The support system I had was incredible,” Feldman added. “My parents flew down quickly and were with me the entire time I was in the hospital. My mom was my rock. My boyfriend supported me a lot. The people at Gardner-Webb were wonderful. Chuck [Burch] allowed me to take a leave to get well. Leo [Sayles] was amazing. He contacted former teammates and got the word out, as well as being very supportive throughout. By the time I got back to Buffalo in December, I had something in the mail—a package, a card — every day.”

Those who couldn’t attend the match can donate online through Sept. 30 at <http://events.lls.org/pages/nc/Gardner-Webb-University-Women-s-Volleyball-2018>.

Donations can also be made directly to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society at <https://www.lls.org/>.

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*