

Spotlight

Yale
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Hospital

YOU gave Caitlin her life back

Running for her life

Thanks to you, just one month after a liver transplant, Caitlin (above right) took her first walk outside. Daughter Reagan and canine cheerleader Charley are so grateful.

FOR 21 YEARS, Caitlin managed to keep her liver disease from hijacking her life. But in August 2020, her doctors told her she had run out of time.

Today, thanks to your generosity, she has a new liver and is training to run the Boston Marathon.

Caitlin has been an outstanding athlete all her life. Soccer was her sport in high school, but after her liver disease diagnosis her senior year, her doctor said she had to give up contact sports.

Still, she didn't let that stop her. In college, she took

up cross-country. Her first year as a runner, she was #1 on her team, #2 in New England, and qualified for Nationals.

With the excellent care she received from Yale New Haven Hospital, Caitlin kept symptoms at bay, racking up more athletic and life achievements than most of us could dream of.

Caitlin competed in dozens of races. She ran the Boston Marathon to raise funds for the American Liver Foundation. She had a demanding career as a

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▲ ABOVE Cait with husband, Dave. "I can't imagine going through this journey without him," says Cait. "He was my everything."

▼ LEFT Caitlin and Sophie in the hospital, just four days post-op. "Sophie and I plan to do the Boston Marathon in 2022 — together," says Caitlin. "We'll be raising funds for the American Liver Foundation."

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registered nurse. She married and became a mom to her daughter, Reagan. And last spring, she completed her studies to become a nurse practitioner.

"But deep down, I always knew I'd end up with a transplant," she says. By the summer of last year, her symptoms had become unmanageable — excruciating cramping, debilitating swelling in her legs, and overwhelming fatigue. Caitlin's doctors told her she was in end-stage liver failure.

Her only chance of survival would be a brand-new liver.

The search for a living liver donor

Caitlin's best option was a living donor transplant. It's almost always quicker to identify a living donor than to wait on the list for a deceased individual's liver. And a living donor's liver would most likely be much healthier.

Living liver donation is possible because the liver is the only organ that can miraculously regenerate itself. A donor gives a portion of her liver to a recipient, and both regrow full livers in a matter of months.

Caitlin and her husband, Dave, put out the call on a Facebook page dedicated to the search for a donor. When 25-year-old Sophie Long, also a passionate long-distance runner, saw the post, she immediately felt a deep connection to Caitlin — even though the two had never met.

"She was so determined," says Caitlin. "It felt like it was meant to be." A demanding series of physical and psychological evaluations at YNHH showed that Sophie was Caitlin's perfect match.

The two women met in person for the first time just before the 10-hour surgery on February 2. Caitlin's surgeons removed her liver — it was so shrunken they were amazed she was able to function at all — and replaced it with a portion of Sophie's healthy liver.

Believe it or not, just three months later both women were back out on the track, testing out their legs and their regenerated livers! They're eager to train and get back in shape because they plan to run a lot of races over the coming years — together.

For the rest of their lives, Caitlin and Sophie will share a special bond. "She gave me a new life," Caitlin says. "She is probably the most selfless, courageous person I know."

Thank you, donors, for your support of the Yale New Haven Transplantation Center. You helped Caitlin get her life back! ♥

YOU too can help save someone with life-threatening liver disease

Your generous donation today to the Center for Living Transplant Donors Fund will help another patient like Cait get a new liver and a new lease on life.

Or, if you'd like to consider becoming a living liver donor like Sophie, you can learn more about it at:

ynhh.org/services/transplantation.



Teen turns tragedy into treasure

Matthew's journey from raising funds for cancer research to fighting his own cancer battle — and back again

EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD MATTHEW SCOTELLA was just 11 when he learned that his beloved fourth-grade teacher had passed away from pancreatic cancer. Matthew was devastated. She had been one of those rare, life-changing teachers — the kind you always remember.

"He couldn't understand," says Jennifer Curley, Matthew's mom. "She was such a good person — how could this happen? Why is this such a terrible disease? He asked all the questions any fifth grader would ask."

Jennifer couldn't answer his questions, but she wanted Matthew to know that tragedy could be counterbalanced by something good. She glanced around their kitchen and noticed a bag full of bottles and cans waiting to be redeemed at the supermarket — and she had a great idea.

"I suggested that we collect and redeem bottles and cans and donate the money to Smilow Cancer Hospital for research to honor his wonderful teacher," Jennifer says.

Matthew loved the idea and created a motto for the effort: "*Bottle It Up!* — Let's put a cap on cancer, and find a cure!"

He started collecting bottles and cans from friends and relatives. When he brought his idea to his school, students and their families began bringing in their bottles, cans, and redemption coupons.

Matthew's dad, Peter, and younger brothers Andrew and James joined in, and over the next couple of years, *Bottle It Up!* took off. The family redeemed thousands of bottles and cans, and all the proceeds were donated to Smilow.

The fight turns personal

And then, there was an almost unbelievable coincidence.

After working so hard to come to terms with the tragedy of his teacher's cancer, Matthew, only 13 years old, was diagnosed with brain cancer.

A terrible 10 months followed. Matthew had major

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The Scotella family, showing how they feel about this year's bottle and can haul. LEFT TO RIGHT: Jennifer, Andrew, Matthew (*Bottle It Up!*'s mastermind), James, and Peter.



From Keith B. Churchwell
President,
Yale New Haven Hospital

Thanks to you, countless lives were saved

Dear Donors,

We simply couldn't have gotten through the last year and a half without you. The worst health crisis in modern memory — with all its associated shock, loss, and isolation — surely tested us.

It's still testing us today.

But it won't beat us. Thanks to you.

Your compassion during this incredibly difficult time makes all the difference.

Our physicians, nurses, and caregivers may be the ones on the front line, but their lifesaving work is rooted in your generosity.

You will always have my profound gratitude. ♦

Keith B. Churchwell, MD



Keep an eye out for this year's YNHCH Wish Book...

arriving in your mailbox this fall. It's a catalog of items that help our pediatric patients and their families get through the toughest times of their lives. It's a wonderful way to make our youngest patients feel a little bit better.

Or donate to the Wish Book online at ynhhwishbook.org.

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brain surgery at YNHCH, six courses of chemotherapy, and radiation therapy. "He came out the other side free of cancer cells," Jennifer says. "But he still has symptoms most days — nausea and dizziness. It stinks!"

Matthew's brush with a life-threatening cancer and its lasting effects brought new urgency to *Bottle It Up!* "It's always been about all cancers, all people suffering," says Jennifer. "When Matthew was diagnosed, it just amplified the need."

So the Scotellas decided to amplify the impact of *Bottle It Up!* In 2017, they added an intensive, week-long community bottle drive in Westbrook to their ongoing year-round collection efforts.

A local cleaning company donated a dumpster, and the Town Hall allowed it to be placed in its parking lot. The Scotella family created brochures, sponsorships, and t-shirts. And the word spread.

Annual Westbrook Tradition

That first drive was an amazing success. Family, friends, and supporters helped sort, bag, and redeem just over 30,300 donated bottles and cans, one by one.

The bottle drive has become an annual community event, growing each year. Last spring, hundreds of supporters donated a record-breaking 69,000+ bottles and cans.

Since Matthew and Jennifer dreamed up *Bottle It Up!*, they've raised more than \$77,000 (and still counting) for cancer research. "It gives us an opportunity to express how deeply we care about Smilow Cancer Hospital and curing cancer," he says.

And to turn a tragedy into a triumph. **Thank you, Matthew!** ♦



Bottle It Up! with Matthew—and put a cap on cancer!

Put your used bottles and cans to work fighting cancer. You can help find a cure without spending a penny!

Visit bottleitup.org for all the details.