

Jenny's Bio

2122 days ago I was diagnosed with a grade 3 anaplastic astrocytoma. In that time, I have had 3 craniotomies, Gamma knife radiosurgery, I have lost the majority of vision in my left eye from where the tumor was located, 6 weeks of radiation, 50 months of various chemotherapy regimens and clinical trials, 5 PET scans, 44 MRI's, I have developed approximately 68 new grey hairs and the hours of lost sleep are unthinkable.

BUT.....

Also in that time, I have successfully trained, ran and completed 5 marathons while on chemo, I have been featured in and Energizer Bunny TV commercial for my Keep Going Spirit, I was named Saucony Footwear Woman of the Year to which I received my award at a black tie gala at the Endurance Sports Awards in San Diego. There, I was among some of the top athletes of our day, I was also the 2006 recipient of the Tim and Tom Gullikson Spirit Award. I have been a guest on the Today Show after I completed the New York City Marathon with TEAM MCGRAW, I am part of TEAM MCGRAW and the Tug McGraw Foundation, I am a wife of 6 years, a mom for 5, a daughter, sister, daughter in law, an aunt, a niece, a friend and to many I am an inspiration.

If you haven't calculated it fast enough, my diagnosis was on September 15, 2003-eight weeks after my son, Jack, was born. That was the day my unwanted house guest arrived. It was also the day that I had to establish some new house rules for it. First on the agenda "You are not welcome here." Second, I will never give up trying to get rid of you. Third and most important "You messed with the wrong girl." My decision to run a marathon came to me one day when I believe that I had too much radiation in me. I admit

I was a bit delusional but I was determined to run this thing out anyway I could. What better way to get rid of something than to run it out.

I signed up for the marathon in Feb. 2004 and began training in April. Extremely hard considering chemo, stress, new mommy hood, home life and work responsibilities were priorities. When I was training, I remember setting little goals for myself. For instance, if I made it to the end of the street my tumor would not come back or if I do not stop running for 20 minutes my MRI was going to be clear. Silly but until you are in the situation, you do not appreciate the deals you will make with anyone. Getting to mile 17 is not easy and the first time I did it I thought... okay... I have not hit the wall I am still running and I going to do this. I am going to do one thing that I have always wanted to do. I chalk up most of my endurance to my motivation and my will to survive. It was also fabulous training for a one year old just learning how to walk.

My passion for running now has turned into a mission. That mission is that I will continue to run marathons for as long as my brain and my feet allow me to. And while I am doing that, telling people that there are brain cancer survivors. This passion also confirms that I am still alive. When people say you are a cancer survivor, they are absolutely right. But what I like to do is to turn that phrase around a bit and say the cancer cannot survive me. To me it is a lot more empowering. 2122 days ago is when my body became a lean, mean, brain tumor fighting machine and nothing was going to mess with it. Certainly not some ugly tumor that was trying to take over my life. That is what makes me a true survivor; I have not allowed this disease call the shots. I control it, not it controlling me. Every time I cross the finish line at a marathon I cry, sob actually. And after the medics realize that I am just being emotional and after I find my family and I thank God for keeping me safe, I think to myself "I got a bum deal with this but look at

what I have done.....26.2 miles and I enjoyed every minute of it.”
And I’m doing it again next year.

My second and third marathons were equally amazing. I became a Saucony 26 and the first mile of the marathon was in my name. Outfitted from head to toe in Saucony, I ran to start raising brain cancer awareness. My husband and my brother even decided to jump on the marathon wagon. Saucony 26 was created to highlight 26 individuals all who have stories of inspiration, triumph and courage. They each represent one mile of the marathon. Saucony participated in all of the major marathons across the country. Being named Women of the Year was truly an honor.

In 2007, I found a new phrase that has now become something I say to myself at least 100 times a day. It is ‘Ya Gotta Believe. Tug McGraw coined that phrase and it will forever serve as my mantra. I got a phone call from my doctor’s office at Duke University asking if I would be interested in participating in the New York City Marathon with the Tug McGraw Foundation. It took me one blink of the eye to answer. I am now totally dedicated to the Tug McGraw Foundation, their mission and the drive that they have to help others like myself.

When Lance Armstrong crossed the finish line of the New York City Marathon in 2006, the first words he managed to utter was that that was single-handedly the most difficult thing he had ever done in his entire life. Think of what Lance Armstrong has done. I distinctly remember this because I was on a doctor’s trip with my mom at Duke and I said to her “I have done it three times....on chemo. Well guess what.. eat your heart out Lance here I come!! My mom’s nickname for me is her little lancette!

In reality, I do allow myself at least 2 pity days a year. I swear I’m not always this happy go lucky optimistic but really what good does feeling sorry for yourself do? It certainly doesn’t make my

cancer go away. The only thing it really does is waste Kleenex and then I just wind up feeling bad about that because I just end up killing more trees. So I get up, get going and get on with it.

Laughter has been a huge part of this recovery. Since I have lost my vision and have a large portion of brain surgically removed, I have acquired a few nicknames. To name a few “Magoo” and B3 for blind, brainless and blonde.

One thing that I remind myself everyday is that I may have had a brain tumor but I still have a strong mind and with a strong mind I can do anything. That is why I run ...because I not only want to but because I can. I forget how sick I am. I think that has been a huge part of my recovery.

I have a few goals as I go into fifth year of “Cancer Killing” as I like to put it. First, for personal reasons, I kind of would like to stop having surgery and chemo because it is getting a bit redundant, but like one of my favorite people, Mr. Forrest Gump has said, “Life is like a box of chocolates...you never know what you are going to get. Second, I now realize that we need to do as a group is to put a face to brain cancer. With all of my heart I know we will find a cure for this disease and I now know that so many people are living long lives with this diagnosis. Five years ago, long term survival was far fetched. Think of the advances that have been made in such a short time.

AND SO IT BEGINS.....

JOGGIN FOR THE NOGGIN.....I can't wait to see what the next 5 years are going to bring me. Thank you for your support.