

Learn how a teen bone cancer survivor matures into mid-20s cancer advocate.



He was a baseball player, a football player, a 1999 graduate of Manning, South Carolina's Manning High School, and he was about to be a freshman at SC State University. The future was bright for 17-year-old Craig King. Then one day, while making his bed, he bumped his knee.

For several months prior, Craig had been aware of a lump below his left knee. It hadn't been painful and since he was so active, he assumed it was just a sports injury of some kind and ignored it. Bumping it on the bed finally got his attention; the pain was shocking. "At that point, I was scared," Craig says.

The diagnosis – a bone tumor called osteosarcoma – and the recommended treatment were even more frightening, though, especially for someone so young. Craig was even told that he might lose his leg. "It didn't hit me initially," he remembers. "When I got home, I realized the impact. I wanted my leg!"

Craig's treatment wasn't easy. Surgeons replaced his left tibia with a healthy one from a bone bank. His left kneecap was removed and reconstructed. And then came the chemotherapy – the treatments lasted nearly a full year. It then took months of physical therapy for him to learn to walk again. "I was bedridden for a while after surgery, and then had a wheelchair," he recalls. "I went from the wheelchair to a brace, to crutches, to a walker, and then walking alone." But, in the end, Craig kept his leg.

It was during this time that he learned about the American Cancer Society's many programs. He already had a passing acquaintance with the signature Society event Relay For Life®, having walked the track a few times for his local Relay. But, as Craig recalls, "I never knew the true meaning."

Then he learned of a Society program that was made-to-order for him: a scholarship program to help young cancer survivors pursue higher education. Through the Society's South Atlantic Division, Craig received scholarships that helped him pay for each of his four years of college. And in 2004, he graduated with a degree in elementary education – amazingly, only one year later than he expected to graduate before getting cancer.

Craig's involvement with the American Cancer Society didn't end at graduation, however. He and his family now field their own Relay team – raising more than \$5,000 in 2006 – and his college fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, continues the Relay tradition that Craig began during his sophomore year. Last fall, he served as an Ambassador for Celebration on the Hill™, a Society event held in Washington, D.C., to

encourage lawmakers to support greater cancer research funding.

He supports other cancer-related causes, too. Each summer, he works as a counselor at Camp Kemo, a summer camp for kids with cancer and their siblings, which he attended during his own treatment. He also spends time at the children's cancer center in Columbia, South Carolina, cheering up the children in treatment.

Craig has been teaching third grade for three years and loves it. The passion that drove him to work with young children combined with his own cancer experience is leading him in a slightly different professional direction. He is finishing his last semester of coursework to earn a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. His goal: to work as a counselor for children with cancer.

As Craig now says, "Cancer could have taken my life, but it didn't. God spared me and I have a purpose."

**For more cancer information, call 1-800-ACS-2345
or visit www.cancer.org, anytime, day or night.**

[Contact Us](#) | [New Connections Home Page](#) | [Legal & Privacy Information](#)

This information is for informational purposes only. This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease without consulting a qualified healthcare provider. Please consult your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns you may have regarding your condition. Use of this online service is subject to the disclaimer and the terms and conditions.

Copyright 2007 © American Cancer Society
National Home Office, 1599 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30329