

Very tomorrow COUNTS

Latona • Photographs by Matthew Scott

to. If he wants me to do more in my life, I guess he'll make it happen somehow."

"I was scared; I didn't know what was going on," Brian recalled of the night he underwent emergency brain surgery at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital.

Brian, 17, had undergone testing for severe headaches over a two-month period. One evening last April, a doctor called him at home and told him to get to the hospital immediately.

Two surgeries revealed that Brian had a tumor the size of a golf ball. Brian and his family endured some tense moments during the operations because the tumor was in the center of his brain.

Fortunately, the tumor was benign and not life-threatening. It was shrunk considerably through a series of radiation treatments after the exploratory surgeries, and Brian's prognosis is now excellent.

After surviving this harrowing experience, Brian said he became motivated to help other severely ill children. So, for his Eagle Scout project, he conducted a book drive last summer to benefit the Children's Hospital at Strong. Brian's efforts netted more than 3,800 books along with a number of videotapes and cassettes.

Hospital officials, Brian

recalled, "didn't know what to do with them all. I filled up a whole room with boxes."

Brian, a parishioner at St. Margaret Mary Church in Irondequoit, said he'll never forget the other sick children he got to know at the hospital.

"There were little kids who had been home maybe a week in their whole life," Brian said. "When I was done with my surgery, I was a lot better than they ever were — or ever will be."

This awareness has left Brian with a new-found appreciation for his own good health.

"I've gained a lot more respect for life, and for myself. It shows how short life can be," he said. "I can run, swim, go out with my



Brian Quinn has collected nearly 4,000 books for the children at Strong Memorial Hospital.



Sheila Hayes, with the support of her family and brother Shamus, survived leukemia.

Sheila noted that she enjoys a special relationship with her brother Shamus, 17.

"I think this changed him to be a sensitive person — a more aware, caring kid," Sheila remarked.

That sensitivity began at a young age. Shamus recalled having to defend Sheila's appearance to schoolmates following her chemotherapy treatments.

"It made me feel sad when people made fun of my sister because she had no hair," Shamus said.

In recent years, Shamus has given several testimonies about his sister's illness at diocesan retreats and conventions. His main thrust, he said, centers on the value of perseverance.

"Sheila has lived out her own message of never giving up. There's a chance for everyone, but people tend to give up easily," said Shamus, a member of the Diocesan Youth Committee.

Because she has successfully fended off a severe form of cancer, Sheila said she maintains a day-in, day-out appreciation for her good fortune.

"I will never, ever take anything — or anyone — for granted," Sheila concluded.

friends — it's incredible."

"Not a day goes by that I don't think about it," Sheila said of her bout with leukemia that began 11 years ago, at the age of 13.

Sheila spent the better part of two years at Strong Memorial Hospital undergoing treatments.

"I used to cry at night, thinking I'd never see myself grown up," said Sheila, from St. Theodore's Church in Gates. "It was a nightmare. I wouldn't wish it upon my worst enemy."

However, Sheila's cancer cells disappeared while she was still a teenager, even though her disease has a high death rate.

"The doctors are calling it a miracle, because ever since then I've never had a relapse," Sheila said.

Sheila's ordeal has sparked a tight bond within her family. She pointed out that family members often used to greet each other with a casual "What's up" — but now they offer frequent exchanges of hugs, kisses and "I love you."

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