

MEET THE 2019 SURVIVOR GAME PLAYERS



Spencer Allen

Spencer was diagnosed with an oligodendroglioma brain tumor when he was 15 years old. After his fourth surgery in October, two rounds of chemo and radiation, and clinical trial, he is loving life at 35. He worked as a ski patroller and whitewater raft guide in the mountains for many years, before graduating from DU law school in 2015. He currently works as an environmental and natural resources lawyer in Denver. Although he loves all things outdoors, playing hockey twice a week keeps him sane.



Jacob Bailey

I have been playing hockey since I was 10. I was diagnosed in June 2009 at the age of 23 with Multiple Sclerosis. The disease became progressive and left me sidelined from hockey for 6 years. In 2013, the doctors at the University of Colorado Hospital put me on a trial that has given me the mobility to keep going for eight months of the year. I am truly grateful for my family because they have all supported me through times in a wheelchair, a cane, eye sight lost and much more. Never giving up, I have always found new ways to continue the activities that I love. I am now working towards my Addiction Counseling Certification and Equine Animal Assisted Therapy. Thank you Dawg Nation for allowing me to be a part of this inspiring cause!!!



Timothy Bennett

Tim was diagnosed with testicular cancer in December 2010 and underwent surgery the same. The first question Tim asked the doctors after his surgery was how soon he could play hockey again. Shortly thereafter, Tim was back at it and enjoying life again, which of course included hockey. Unfortunately, since then he has had three recurrences, most recently in December 2016. Throughout these years, Tim has undergone numerous surgeries and chemotherapy. Tim is still an active duty officer in the Army and is grateful for everyday he continues to serve his country. As with any team, Tim continues to win with a great team of doctors, surgeons, and most importantly his wife Ashley, who has gotten Tim back in hockey-shape after each procedure. Tim is excited to participate in the Dawg Nation Survivor Game and is grateful for the opportunity. **Motto/Advice:** When nothing goes right, go left.



Dan Bitondo

Dan is a 10 year survivor of Hodgkin's Lymphoma. He went through six months of Chemo and has been cancer free ever since! The **FIRST** thing he did when the doctor cleared him was to get back on the ice. Says he was 40 lbs overweight and out of shape after his treatment. "Hockey got me back into shape and I continue to skate every week!" **Motto/Advice:** If you are diagnosed with cancer, try to keep a positive outlook, have faith in your doctors and modern medicine and you can win!



Greg Bronson

Growing up in Canada, Greg has been playing hockey since he was a toddler. He says you can't tell by the way he skates, but he really enjoys it. Greg feels very blessed to have recovered from prostate cancer ten years ago. He looks forward to playing in the Survivor's Game and Dawg Nation tournament every year, but mostly the camaraderie with a bunch of great people.

Albuquerque is currently home for Greg, where he plays in Joe Hanson's NM Hockey League once a week. As Captain of the New Mexico Moose, Greg is excited to bring a team each year and play in one of the best organized hockey tournaments around. Go Moose Go!



Shelly Ceurvorst

After years of watching my husband and son play hockey I put on the skates and picked up a stick and began playing hockey in my late 40's. I am so sorry it did not happen sooner as the game is so much fun and the learning curve is a big one! In May of 2018, at age 53, a diagnosis of breast cancer changed my life. My hockey team showed tremendous support for the cause, dedicating one game as a big surprise. Hot pink socks, tape, jerseys and signs that said

"Puck Cancer!" were so motivational to me as the recipient of their efforts. One last surgery in early June of 2019 shows the light at the end of the tunnel and the chance to get back to life and playing hockey full time.



David Chamberlin

David was diagnosed with prostate cancer in January 2008 and underwent radical prostatectomy in March of that year. With the support and encouragement of the Dawg Nation, he recovered in time to climb a 18,600-foot mountain in Russia four months later in July 2008. Cancer scans since surgery have all been clean! **Motto/Advice:** Always think positively. If you think you can't, you won't; if you think you can, you will.



Tristan Close

Tristan is a survivor of a germinoma brain tumor at the age of 15/16 and is now 10 years clear from surgery and treatment. He has graduated from Colorado Mesa University where he was able to play for the club hockey team. He has since been working with doctors to manage the lack of a pituitary gland from the tumor and has enjoyed being able to play hockey all these years post cancer.



Don Coombes

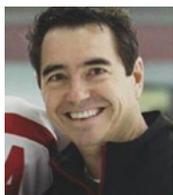
Don's been playing since high school, through college and all his adult life. Diagnosed with cancer of the tongue in 2003, his battle has been long, with the disease returning in 2007 and despite strenuous radiation and chemo, again in 2010, when he underwent a major 11-hour long surgery... and he's been cancer free ever since. Through it all, he's played and coached the game he loves. **Motto/Advice:** NEVER GIVE UP! If you want something bad enough, like having more time with your family, you NEVER QUIT FIGHTING!



Jerry DeVaul

My name is Jerry DeVaul, I am 33 years old and I live in Colorado Springs, Colorado with my wife and two kids. My oldest daughter is 12 years old and our youngest son is 19 months old. I served 8 years in the United States Army as a Recovery Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic. While serving, I completed 3 one-year tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. After getting out of the service I was working in a coal mine when a co-worker struck me from behind with a machine amputating both of my legs above the knee. After my accident, I found the sport of sled hockey. During my first year of sled hockey I became

the President of my club and I wanted to help Veterans with Disabilities overcome barriers mentally and physically. Therefore, I started working with my wife to rebuild our program, so we could help as many Veterans with Disabilities overcome these barriers and get back into the community. My team is a non-profit organization and we travel throughout the US playing other sled hockey teams.



Taylor Erickson

Taylor experienced a traumatic brain injury in December 2017. Days later, waking up in the hospital unable to speak, move his right leg, and partial loss of arm movement -he experienced the love and happiness of family, close friends, and the support & inspiration of DAWG Nation hockey community. That foundation of love & support began a process of healing and recovery that exceeded all expectations. It is with utmost gratitude and blessings that he will enjoy his second Survivor game.



Richard Forman

Richard has been a youth hockey coach for 30 years at Arvada Hockey Association. He is a survivor of Prostate cancer. Following external beam radiation therapy, visits to his acupuncturist, Chinese medicine, and redesigning his diet, he remains cancer free today. He says that he couldn't have done it without the help of his wonderful wife Carol. **Motto/Advice:** Battling cancer or adversity in life is by no means a death sentence. With a positive attitude and a good support system, anyone can beat it.



Andy Gerrie

Diagnosed with colon cancer in April of 2007, Andy had surgery and six months of chemotherapy to fight it. Despite this he had a recurrence in his lung in December of 2010. He had surgery to remove the tumor and six more months of chemotherapy. His family and teammates are celebrating that he's had no visible signs of recurrence since then, though still checking every six months. **Motto/Advice:** Happiness is a choice. We all get to make that choice every day, every hour, every minute.



Duane Helderlein

Duane was diagnosed with a rare cancer, rhabdomyosarcoma, in December, 2010. Since obtaining clean margins from surgical removal, all follow-up tests to-date have been negative for recurrence. Two months after surgery, he was back playing the sport that he's passionate about and hasn't looked back. **Motto/Advice:** When life throws unexpected challenges your direction, believe in conquering those challenges and stay on course in what drives your passion in life. Never give up!



Dan Hohenstein

In addition to five surgeries for skin cancer, in 2011 Dan was hit and crushed by an SUV while standing beside his mail truck. The collision snapped his femur in half, shattered his lower leg, and crushed his knee, in addition to major internal injuries. Still, he says it was the luckiest day of his life in that he is grateful to have a second chance. **Motto/Advice:** Just remember that there is always somebody that is in a worse situation than you. Never give up! Whenever you have a chance to help somebody else less fortunate, make sure you help them.



Steve Jouflas

19 years out from his initial treatment for Leukemia, Steve says it's been an interesting experience, including a couple of recurrence scares. But he comes from a family of survivors, including his wife who has beat breast cancer and his father who also has been treated for Leukemia. The good news . . . they're all beating it! Steve considers himself blessed from it all and aware of the gift that life truly is. **Motto/advice:** This quoted from Victor Frakl sums it up beautifully "Everything can be taken from a man or woman but one thing, the last of human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."



Guy Kennedy

Guy grew up in Michigan, playing youth and adult league hockey. He has played hockey with the Dawgs and other teams in the Denver area over the years. He has coached his 3 sons in youth hockey for the past 14 years. Guy was diagnosed with stage IV tonsillar cancer just before Christmas 2014. He underwent aggressive chemo/radiation treatment and continues to be cancer free. Guy and his family are very grateful for the generous financial assistance and support from DNHF. Without the support of my hockey family/friends and amazing wife, I am not sure how I would have managed to achieve "survival status". The 2016 Survivor Game was Guy's first time to suit up since his cancer diagnosis. Although I do believe that cancer changes people, I like to think I lived my life before cancer, the same way I do after cancer.



Aiden Kirby

I grew up on Arizona ice. I moved to CO in 2010 and continued to play competitive hockey. After sustaining a back injury playing hockey, MRIs and CTs led doctors to find 3 fractured vertebrae and to everyone's surprise a tumor. I couldn't have gotten through it all without the unconditional love and support from hockey friends and family!



Alan Manning

New Year's Eve 2001 Alan was diagnosed with stage 3 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. With a newborn and a wife he did whatever he had to do to get better for them. After rounds of chemo and radiation, we are happy to say that he is still cancer free. Unfortunately, in the wake of all this, his wife was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumor. She fought hard, but lost her battle in 2004. He continues with support any way he can, including volunteering for the 3 day walk and race for the cure. **Motto/Advice:** Life is short, don't forget the little things in life. You never know who will be affected by you.



Jim Maroney

In 2009 Jim was diagnosed with three forms of cancer... a softball size lymphoma next to his heart, some “anomalies” in his spinal fluid and some opportunistic basil cell skin cancers. In the hospital for three months plus going through two different chemo treatments at the same time left him weak and only a fraction of his normal weight. Beating the odds, he did survive and the treatment worked well. **Motto/Advice:** Hang in there and just try to make it through one day at a time. It is easy to be impatient with a recovery process. Obviously it helps to have a strong support system in place. Friends and family were critical to my recovery.



Ray Martin

In late 2015 I discovered a small lump in my limp node in my neck. I “luckily” saw that it should not be there and had it checked as soon as I could. I was diagnosed with Squamous cell carcinoma in my right tonsil area and limp-node in the right neck area. I have been blessed to have a great medical crew to take care of me. I decided to have the areas operated on instead of radiation/chemo. I had a right radical tonsillectomy and right neck dissection. My ENT surgeon was able to eradicate all of the cancer so I did not have to undergo either radiation/chemo. Update: Sometimes cancer has a mind of its own. One year and ten months later the cancer came back. Chemo/radiation was the only option available. I would not wish that on my worst enemy. Needless to say it kicked my butt. A year out from treatments I finally feel I am getting back to normal. I am so thankful to my family and friends for all of the support they gave me. It is a lot easier to have the strength and courage to overcome these treatments if one has a great support system.



John Matthew III

John started playing hockey as an adult. Two and a half years ago he went bicycling on a paved path. He caught a crack and flipped over landing on his head and breaking his neck. This paralyzed him from the neck down. Five days in the ICU, surgery, and almost two weeks in Acute Rehab got him back on his feet along with the support from his mother and countless friends. Sporting a new neck and chest brace for over two months, he worked on walking and recovery. Rapidly, recovery was displaying gains each week. Four and a half months later he skated again. John is very thankful for all the help and support he has had that made it possible to recover so well.



Richard McAllister

Richard is a survivor of thyroid cancer, detected while he was in graduate school. One of his professors, Dr. Arnie Moses, directed clinical research center studies at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, New York. Richard often volunteered as a guinea pig in those studies because they were paying gigs (and he was a starving graduate student!). During the physical exam prior to one of those studies, Dr. Moses detected a thyroid nodule. Richard had a thyroidectomy in July 1987, and he has been cancer-free for more than 30 years. **Inspirational quote:** “Be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.” Good words for all, not just cancer patients (and survivors).



Dustin McGuinness

In February 2009, at the age of 15, Dustin sustained a Severe Traumatic Brain Injury while playing in a Midget playoff hockey game in Durango. He was transported by life-flight to St. Mary's hospital with a subdural hematoma, midline shift of the brain and diffuse brain swelling. Dustin underwent an emergency craniotomy and spent the next four months slowly waking up from a deep coma. He re-learned how to swallow, walk, talk, read... in essence, everything. Now, in true survivor form, Dustin continues to recover. Thanks to DNHF, Dustin earned an Intermediate MIG welding certificate in 2018 and is living a life of gratitude and joy.



Bill Miller

Bill was diagnosed with prostate cancer in July, 2014 and elected to have a radical prostatectomy the following September. All of his post-surgery PSA tests have since come back zero and after almost 5 years he remains cancer free. After years as a Dawg Nation supporter Bill found himself going from being a spectator to a participant in the Survivor game which is special to him as his wife is also a cancer survivor. Bill is currently a board member of Dawg Nation.



Christina Montoya

Christina was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 27 and from treatments developed skin cancer. During her treatments for these cancers, she also discovered she had stage 4 endometriosis as well as cervical cancer which forced her to have a partial hysterectomy in 2010 and a cervicectomy in 2011. During 2013 she was diagnosed with Hashimoto's and in the spring of 2014, she was diagnosed with liver tumors and had to have two more surgeries. 2016 brought two additional surgeries, and in March of 2017, she was diagnosed with liver tumors for the second time in three years, as well as a metabolic syndrome that is affecting her ability to break down and use fats correctly, causing fat infiltration of her liver. Early in 2017 she also added 2 more notches to her surgery belt for a grand total of 19. But the rough news of 2017 came late in October when she was diagnosed with Stage 3 Nonalcoholic Steatohepatitis (NASH), a morbid liver disease. **Motto/Advice:** Don't ever think you are defeated or have become less of who you are because of something that's happened to you. Take your experiences as lessons and see what you were learning during both your struggles and times of joy. Remember to do things in your life that come from your heart, for you will be overwhelmed with what comes back to you. And always be kinder than necessary to others... for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.



Danny Packard

After graduating from CSU, Danny was diagnosed with advance stage thyroid cancer. Four surgeries and multiple rounds of radiation did little to diminish his drive to be back in the game through, as he continued to show up as often as possible to cheer on his teammates, or on good days, play a bit on his line. He's quick to say that he's had amazing support all the way and that along with his wife and family, Dawg Nation has played a huge role in his recovery. Almost five years later now, and his cancer markers are the lowest over! **Motto/Advice:** It's all about the people you surround yourself with. There's no better people that those you'll find in Dawg Nation!



Torin Perret

Torin was diagnosed with a grade 3 Anaplastic Astrocytoma Brain Cancer in December of 2015. In January of 2016 I underwent my first surgery and shortly thereafter started radiation and 14 months of chemo, all with some hockey mixed in of course! I am proud to say that in May of 2018 I graduated from Colorado State University, with endless support from friends, family, and understanding professors! In February of this year I underwent my second brain surgery to permanently install a catheter into my brain. This game provides me with so much strength and hope, so thank you to everyone who makes this event so special!



Andrew "Cookie" Pfankuch

Andrew was excited as he began his freshman year of college, but his goals were interrupted when diagnosed with Leukemia. His normally active lifestyle, which included snow-boarding, camping, fishing, working on cars and of course, hockey, was brought to a halt with the reality of his diagnosis on Christmas Day. After a long road and many rounds of chemo, as of 4/1/12 he is no longer undergoing treatments and is enjoying being back on the ice. **Motto/Advice:** Stay strong and fight.



SGT. John "J.P." Plover Ret.

In 2008 I was badly wounded in a suicide car bomb attack in Mosul, Iraq. As a result I suffered a broken neck, dislocated shoulder, and head trauma. Fast forward 10 yrs. and I am still standing, sometimes barely it feels like. During those years were some dark times, HOCKEY, this game of ours kept me in its embrace and constantly showed me that I had much more to do. Numerous surgeries and countless hours of rehab helped keep me where I belong, on the ice. During my 2 tours to Iraq, I received 2 Purple Heart Medals, for wounded in combat, and 2 Army Commendation Medals with Valor device, for actions while wounded in combat. Thank you for taking the time to read me.



Dave Repsher

Dave is well known to all of Dawg Nation. His remarkable story of survival and recovery from burns over 90% of his body suffered in the 2015 helicopter crash was featured in the 2017 Dawg Bowl program, and the 2017 Survivor Game was dedicated to Dave. A goal of his throughout his long recovery was to play in the Survivor Game, a goal he accomplished in the 2018 Survivor Game! We are thrilled to have the "ultimate survivor" back on the ice again with his fellow survivors in the 2019 Survivor Game.



Tony Salazar

I began playing hockey when I was 4 years old and have made it my life ever since. I grew up playing high levels of hockey including Triple A, Juniors, and College Hockey. At 18 years old I suffered a massive heart attack during my first college hockey game. I was air lifted from a nearby hospital to University Hospital where I was placed on life support and resided for over a month. Since then, I've been told my numerous doctors that my hockey career is over, yet I stay faithful that someday I'll return to competitive hockey.



Jason Shepperly

Jason served in the Army as a Combat Medic for the 4th Infantry Division and served multiple one-year combat tours in Iraq. During one tour his patrol was struck by an IED, and while applying first aid to his comrades he himself was seriously injured during a second attack. After applying aid to himself he continued to treat his comrades and his actions earned him the Bronze

Star with Valor and a Purple Heart. He began playing sled hockey during his recovery and is now the Assistant Captain of the Warrior Avalance sled hockey team, and he has also helped other Veterans discover the sport of sled hockey. Jason joins Jerry DeVaul as the first sled hockey players to participate in the Survivor Game.



Thompson Smith

Thompson was diagnosed in 2013 with a rare autoimmune disease that attacks the body's organs and caused his lungs to bleed and paralyzed the left side of his diaphragm. He spent 85 days in the hospital the following year and the next 2 ½ years on 24/7 oxygen supply and a vast assortment of medications and treatments including chemotherapy. A change to a holistic approach of a difficult diet plan and fitness regimen resulted in his condition

improving, but in 2017 he suffered 2 strokes. He has fought back hard to the point where he is skating again and he is looking forward to playing in the Survivor Game at this year's Dawg Bowl.



Sid Souleret

I was diagnosed with melanoma on my back which then progressed to my lymph nodes. I went on an aggressive bio-chemotherapy treatment – every day for a week followed by three weeks recoup time for the next six months. This was in addition to surgery to remove the lymph nodes in my right arm.

With the help and support of my wife Katie and my two daughters, I'm getting better every day. It has been five years since my last treatment. I've had CT

scans every three months since and the last one was clean.



Brad Strosahl

At age 44, during a routine annual physical, my PSA (prostate-specific antigen) count was elevated over the previous year. Tests found that

I had stage 4 aggressive prostate cancer. My doctor told me that even though someone my age usually doesn't get prostate cancer, and it was an aggressive cancer, it was not a death sentence and he felt that since we caught it fairly early, I would have a high chance of full recovery. During this

time I certainly had some level of fear, but with the doctor's confidence, prayer and faith in God, I felt that I was going to come through this cancer free. After a monthly check-up for a year, and then quarterly for the next year, I am happy to say that over five years later I am officially cancer free. I share this story to encourage everyone, particularly men, to make sure you have regularly scheduled physicals to hopefully catch any issues early on.



Dave Topping

In February of 2014, I was being treated for vertigo and inner ear problems and an MRI found a tumor on the right side of my brain. My whole world changed. My friends, family, clients, and fellow officials were all that knew. They all had my back and gave me support. Before I knew it the tumor was out and I was recovering from surgery. I have always said "hockey cures everything". I was hoping that included brain tumors. It's been a couple of years now and no bad MRIs. Life is Good. The most generous and helpful thing that has ever happened to me occurred when the Dawg Nation and my officiating organization CHIRA, game me a check at the 2014 Dawg Bowl. It was a life preserver when I was drowning. Love and good health to everybody.



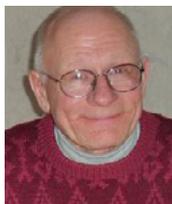
Opie Wassberg

Opie has played goalie since 1973 at multiple levels, LHA, Arapahoe High School, Total Travel Junior, Men's Adult Check League, Organized Invitational Drop Ins, and CEO and Edge Over 40 League (since inception). His youngest son was getting married in 2009 and he noticed this large bean-shaped lump on his calf. "You should get that checked Dad!" Our primary physician thought it was a sebaceous cyst, she took a biopsy of it, and that is when our journey really began. In order to have surgery to remove the leiomyosarcoma, other tests were needed. The doctors found an irregular heart beat, trigeminy, coronary artery blocked, requiring a stent, type 2 diabetes and high cholesterol. This was all followed up with double knee replacement, due to arthritis, with the finale of the flu, type 1 ketoacidosis without coma, pleural effusion, and necrotizing pneumonia. Opie says when you are really sick, you find out how good your support system is! He truly thanks his wife, Lori, Dawg Nation, EDOHL, and the rest of his Hockey family for all their support to make it to the "new normal" and allow him to continue to play the game he loves!



Dori Webb

At 36, Dori learned she carried the BRCA gene mutation which is linked to an extremely high risk of breast and ovarian cancer. At 37, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Following surgery, she quickly got back to all the sports she loved and even added some new ones like kayaking and surfing. She is now cancer free since 2008. **Motto/Advice:** A fortune cookie summed it up best for me... **Motto/Advice:** A fortune cookie summed it up best for me... "When life gives you waves, learn to surf." (so I did!)



Phil Zietlow

Phil is a survivor of Lymphoma for over 11 years. Last year he was fortunate to discover early that he had lung cancer even though he has never smoked. So with part of his lung removed he can still play hockey 2-3 times per week in Minnesota, (with shorter shifts) as well as several tournaments around the country in the 70+ years bracket. He has three hockey player kids, including two right here in Colorado. **Motto/Advice:** Yesterday is history, tomorrow a mystery, today is a gift, so make the most of it!
