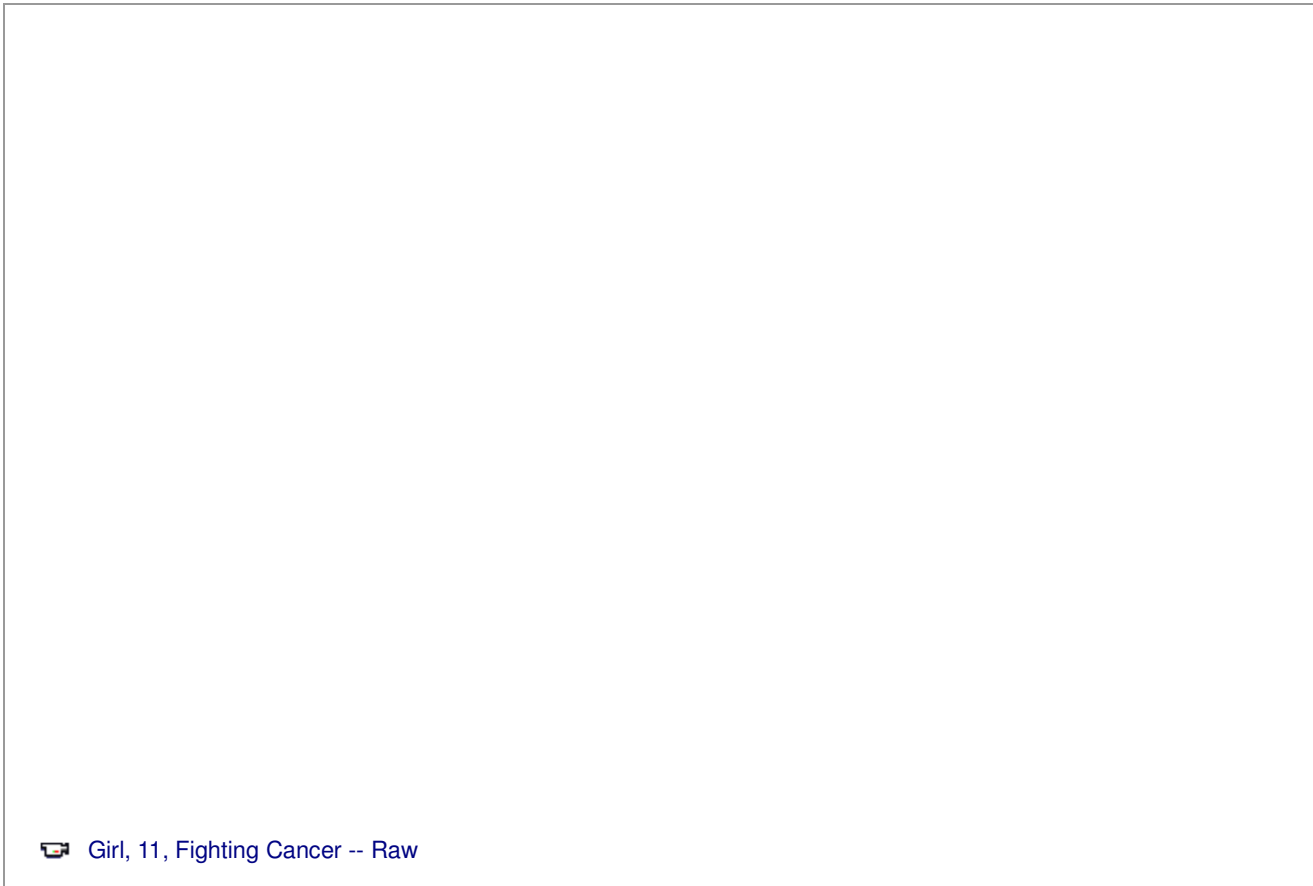


## Student, 11, Has Community's Support in Cancer Fight



Revised by 5/02/12 Kpsinski - Web Producer

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*To watch raw video of interviews with Cassidy, her mom and her principal, click on the video above.*

Like most fifth-graders, Cassidy Brozovich wants to be around her friends.

That is why she returned to North Road Intermediate School in Howland last week despite being diagnosed with a rare childhood ovarian cancer on March 6.

She has no hair and sports a green bandanna. It's her favorite color.

She has been through six weeks of chemotherapy, which she will finish this weekend.

It's a lot for an 11-year-old to deal with, but her principal said you would never know it.

"She has been very brave. When a lot of kids would have given up, she stepped up and made things happen. She goes down the hall skipping and smiling every morning. Some of us come to work with a lot less issues and not quite so happy," said North Road Intermediate principal Carl Clark.

He said because of her missing six weeks of school, Cassidy could have opted out of taking the state achievement tests last week. Instead, she insisted on taking all three parts.

"Very brave young lady," Clark said.

Her mother, Michele Bolchalk, said Cassidy's teacher, Diane Taylor, has been coming to the house to tutor Cassidy so she did not fall behind in her classes.

Clark said the staff and students have been rallying around Cassidy and have planned several events in her honor.

He said the week of May 14 is traditionally set aside for "Pennies for Pasta," a fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. He said one day of that week, probably Monday, will be hat and bandanna day in honor of Cassidy. Clark said students will pay \$1 to wear a hat or bandanna and all proceeds will go to Cassidy's family.

Then, on May 20, there will be a bowling event fundraiser at Echo Lanes in Warren.

"It has been amazing," Clark said of the support Cassidy and her family have received.

Cassidy said it was "kind of a shocker" when the doctor told her she had cancer. Bolchalk said her daughter complained of a stomach ache that morning, but wanted to go to school because she was doing a presentation and there were school pictures scheduled.

When her stomach ache got worse and she developed a low-grade fever, Bolchalk, a nurse, thought Cassidy was having an appendicitis attack and took her to her pediatrician, who also thought it was her appendix. From there, she went to Akron Children's Hospital in Boardman, where a CT Scan revealed a mass the size of a baseball on her right ovary.

"Our whole world fell apart," Bolchalk said.

Cassidy underwent emergency surgery that night. Bolchalk said the tumor was so large it was sitting on Cassidy's bladder. She was diagnosed with a rare childhood ovarian cancer that affects 2 in one million children.

Cassidy said she hasn't let the disease get her down and said the support she has received from family and friends has made it easy.

She said after six weeks at home, she got bored and wanted to go back to school to see her friends. Her mom worried about how the students would react and also about infection and if Cassidy was strong enough to handle it.

"I knew with her personality, it was important for her to get back around her friends and get back to a normal routine," Bolchalk said.

"I knew I would figure out who my true friends were," Cassidy said of her nervousness about how the other students would treat her.

She said her fears were unfounded and the students have acted like nothing happened. One even brought her roses to welcome her back to school.

She said the best part of this school year has been "just how amazing it's been with all the people that actually care."

In addition to the support at school, the family also has received support from the community. Their church, St. James in Warren, held a pancake breakfast and got Cassidy a laptop computer.

"We didn't realize how wonderful this community was," Bolchalk said.

Tickets for the May 20 fundraiser at Echo Lanes can be purchased at all four Howland elementary schools. The event will take place 1 to 4 p.m. and the community is invited.

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