



“I believe I’m here for a reason. I’m not sure what my purpose is yet, but I know I’m not here for nothing.”

- Luke Garver

After a car accident left him paralyzed, Luke Garver believes that he will walk again someday



Surviving the IMPOSSIBLE

These brave Katy survivors prove that even after tragedy, with the support of faith, family, and friends, life goes on

Written by Tassie Hewitt | Select photography by Sara Isola

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All around us are people who are fighting heroic personal battles, day by day. Some survivors are able to use their struggles to reach out and encourage others. These Katyites refuse to allow illness, injury, and unimaginable loss to destroy them. Instead, they are examples of the power of the human spirit to overcome any adversity.

LUKE GARVER | Car Accident Survivor

Luke Garver, a graduate of Taylor High School, was unsure about his plans for the future. He played high school football for the Mustangs and worked for his brother as a mechanical bull operator, when one night changed his life forever.

“I was driving home, and I looked down to change the radio,” says Garver. He swerved to the right to avoid hitting the car in front of him. He avoided hitting the other vehicle, but ended up swerving across five lanes at IH-10 and Barker Cypress, and collided with the median.

The seatbelt broke his back, paralyzing him from the waist down, but Garver knew he couldn't let it keep him down. “I didn't want to be a couch potato,” says Garver. “I finally started getting used to the wheelchair. I wanted to get out and show people that I'm still a person, too. Everyone in a wheelchair is still here. We're just a little different.”

Through it all, Garver has had the support he needed. “My mom was there for me through everything. I couldn't have done it without her,” he says.

“*I never felt like the carcinoma or vocal chord cancer was something I couldn't handle with the help of God and support of my family.*”

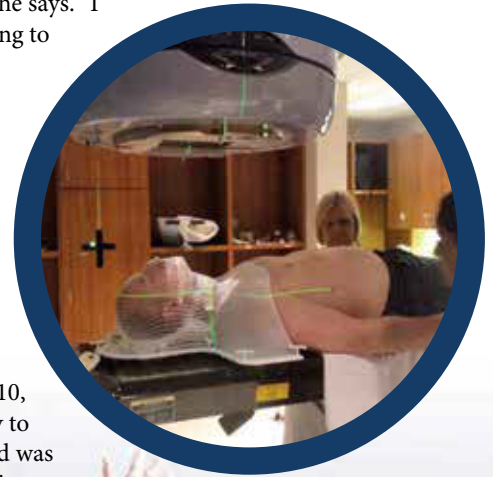
- Randall Wallace

After the accident, Garver sees life through a new set of eyes. “I thought I was better than everyone, and that everyone was supposed to look up to me because I was so cool. [The accident] made me realize that everyone is equal and that the way someone looks doesn't mean anything.”

He attends Houston Community College and plans to become an occupational therapist. “I believe in Jesus. I believe I'm here for a reason. I'm not sure what my purpose is yet, but I know I'm not here for nothing.” Four years after his accident, Garver strives to maintain a positive attitude. “I'm still recovering,” he says. “I still have faith I'm going to walk. I really do.”

RANDALL WALLACE
Two-time Cancer Survivor

Randall Wallace thought the bump on his nose was just a pimple. When doctors told him he had skin cancer in 2010, he underwent surgery to remove the cancer and was vigilant about protecting himself from the sun.



Wallace was diagnosed with cancer twice, and underwent 35 rounds of radiation therapy, but always felt hope for the future



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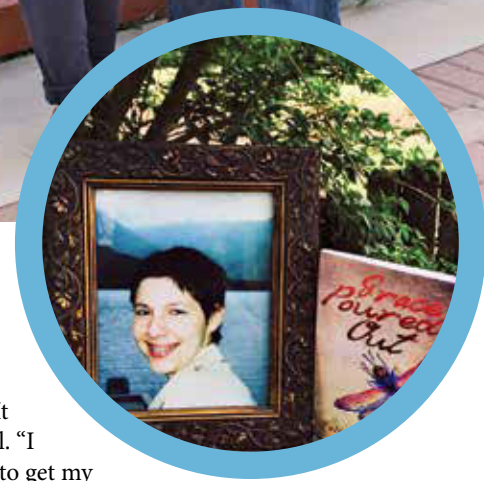
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The Herndons lost their 14-year-old daughter, Katie, to bone cancer



Two years later, the H-E-B store director and father of two thought he had seasonal allergies. "My voice was acting up. It was real soft," says Randall. "I couldn't yell loud enough to get my voice heard. My boss said, 'That's not normal. You need to see a doctor.'"

After running a few tests, Wallace was knocked flat by a new diagnosis, vocal chord cancer. He underwent 35 treatments of radiotherapy, and even needed a feeding tube for meals, but he found strength in his family and especially his wife, Anetrius. "There were times when I couldn't eat because my esophagus was closed up. When I did eat, it felt like glass going down my throat. I couldn't have done it without Anetrius," he says.

Anetrius adds, "Complete strangers, who we now cherish as friends, showed up bringing food to us. People stopped him in the store to pray for him. Miracles just started happening."

Despite his difficult recovery, Randall never gave up hope. "I knew it wasn't my time. I don't accept defeat that easily."



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SAMUEL PARK
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I never felt like the carcinoma or vocal chord cancer was something I couldn't handle with the help of God and support of my family," he says.

He now has a renewed appreciation for life. "I'm going to spend as much time with Anetrius and the boys as I possibly can and keep faith that God's got me on the right path." Today, he participates in the MS 150 for multiple sclerosis, contributes to the American Cancer Society, and makes his voice heard. "I just sit down with people and walk them through my story," he says. "If I can get through it, they can get through it."

"For a while there, I thought I would never hear his voice again," says Anetrius. "But I'm overjoyed when he talks, sings in the car, or calls the kids from another room."

VALERIE & WES HERNDON | Loss Survivors

Valerie and Wes Herndon's 14-year-old daughter Katie complained that her knee was hurting. Katie was in track and basketball, and they were worried she may have injured herself.

Her knee was swollen, red, and hot to the touch. At first, the orthopedic doctor thought it was a stress fracture or infection. However, X-rays determined it was much worse.

"She had a very painful bone cancer, went through several operations, and died 16 months later," says Valerie. "I was at the hospital 24/7, and Wes buried himself in his work," says Valerie. "It was a very lonely and intense time in our marriage."

The divorce rate increases for couples who have lost a child, and the couple now teach a marriage counseling class at Lakewood Church. "Each person grieves separately," says Valerie. "We get to tell our story wherever we go." Her book, *Grace Poured Out*, won the National Indie Excellence Award. It includes entries from Katie's journal and epilogues written by her husband and surviving children. "It's our testimony about all God did through us," says Valerie. "I had to come to grips that Katie was God's child first. We rest in knowing that God loved Katie even more than we did. It helped us in letting her go."

The Herndons found comfort in the support of others. "You don't ever really get over it, but the grief triggers occur less over time," Valerie says. "The biggest challenge was believing that God was good. I know there are a lot of people who are disappointed in God when they don't see their own will come to pass, but there was a much bigger purpose in this whole thing." **KM**

TASSIE HEWITT is a freelance writer who believes in the healing power of prayer, and the human will to survive.



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