

TIME TO HONOUR

Treatment in Mexico is the goal for determined Felicia

Felicia Cantone

THEENAGER Felicia Cantone has been fighting cancer for almost half her life but she's not about to give up now.

The 14-year-old has had to live with a rare form of bone cancer, Ewings sarcoma, since she was seven.

The condition led to her right leg being amputated to prevent the disease spreading.

Felicia, who is now in remission, has been helped by two sessions of a pioneering therapy at the Oasis of Hope Hospital in Mexico.

Each session costs £20,000 and Felicia's family will now spend 2012 fundraising to enable them to take her for another bout of treatment.

Her mum Samantha Kaya, 44, of Leighton Avenue, Leigh, said there were several events in the pipeline to raise money for Felicia's cause.

She said "We are still trying to get enough money to go to Mexico next year."

"Her school is holding a non-

We are still trying to get enough money to go for treatment in Mexico next year



■ In remission – 14-year-old Felicia Cantone

uniform day in the summer and a bank has said it will match the money raised by the school.

"Another benefactor has said he will match £7,000 if we raise that amount."

Just two years ago, Felicia only had a 20 per cent chance of survival, but she has fought back at every stage.

Samantha added: "She's doing all right. It is difficult for her. She gets some pain and gets sore because her prosthetic leg is ill-fitting."

"Our ultimate goal is to get something much better once

she stops growing. That will enable her to walk further.

Felicia, a pupil at Belfairs High School, in Leigh, was first diagnosed with the disease in 2005.

She is known for her steadfast attitude and the fact she tries to keep as upbeat as possible.

Just two days after the operation to remove her leg, Felicia astounded pals and teachers at North Street Junior School, in Leigh, where she was a pupil at the time, by returning to class.

E-mail carlocantone@hotmail.com to help Felicia's cause.

CONDITION WON'T STOP JAKE PERFORMING ON THE STAGE

Jake Stacey

LITTLE Jake Stacey has spent 2011 showing the world you don't ever have to let a medical condition hold you back.

His parents were told Jake would most likely never walk or lead a normal life, because he was born with spinal muscular atrophy five years ago.

But now the youngster, of Springfield Road, Canvey, is defying the odds by refusing to let the muscle-wasting disease affect his life.

Jake whizzes around on crutches and leg braces and is so determined to lead a normal life, he will soon perform on stage at the Towngate Theatre in Basildon.

The Leigh Beck School pupil will appear centre stage with his performing arts troupe, Star Studios, as they put on Let's Dance at the St Martin's Square theatre in February.

Despite his illness, in November Jake raised £500 for Children In Need by taking part in a sponsored swim at Waterside Leisure Centre on Canvey.

Jake's mum Lora, 31, said: "Jake wanted to do something for the charity, so he got sponsored to swim a length of the pool."

"He shot up the pool like a rocket, we couldn't believe it."

"He was so thrilled when he saw his name appear on TV on Children in Need night, when they named some special fundraisers."



■ Walking proud – Jake Stacey

Although he does occasionally need a wheelchair, Jake is a world away from the seriously disabled lad medics expected him to be by now.

Lora added: "We were told he probably wouldn't be able to use his legs at all."

"But Jake has always had such an amazing attitude. He has some problems, but fingers crossed he hasn't had any bad chest infections this year and his health is improving."

"Every day he shows us he's a little fighter."

Ready to run at last after gruelling treatment

KAREN Morris has demonstrated to women everywhere that you can fight against cancer and win.

The 40-year-old is more determined than ever to support Cancer Research throughout 2012 after experiencing the disease's devastating impact.

The mother-of-four was diagnosed with breast cancer in January.

She then had to have the lump removed and undergo a mastectomy, as well as gruelling chemotherapy.

Karen, of Worthing Road, Laindon, finished radiotherapy only recently, but last week she received the best Christmas present of all.

She explained: "I went to the hospital for a check-up, and was told as far as they can tell the cancer has gone."

"I won't officially get the all-clear for five years, but this was a wonderful present."

"It's been a very hard year for me and my family, but everyone's been so supportive."

"To think I am going into a new year feeling happy and hopeful is

Karen Morris

truly amazing. If you'd told me six months ago I'd be feeling this good, I'd never have believed you."

Karen is a Race for Life veteran, having completed the event nine times in aid of Cancer Research and raising thousands of pounds for the cause in the process.

Unfortunately, due to the chemotherapy, Karen was too unwell to take part in this year's event in Gloucester Park, Basildon.

But come next June 24, she will be back with a vengeance to complete the race, which will this year be moved to a bigger venue at Barleylands in Billericay.

It has switched venues so it can become the east of England's biggest 5k charity event for Race for Life.

Karen added: "As well as running the race, I've also been asked to officially launch it on the day, which is a great honour."

"I'd say to anyone going through cancer now, don't give up. Stay strong and positive and you will get there in the end."



■ Determination – Karen Morris, who will run the Race for Life 5k on June 24, with supporters Gill Burgess, Gemma Davies, Michelle Roberts and Emma Cullen
Picture: MAXINE CLARKE BA52788

BRAVE AMONG US

FROM a woman who was left paralysed and "locked in" her own body, to a poorly youngster who can't eat a thing and has to live off

water and a feeding tube, we honour those whose bravery has shone through over the past year. EMMA PALMER reports.

Fighter Daisy goes back to school again

Daisy Palmer

DSAISY Palmer has had more than most, yet the eight-year-old never lets life get her down. This is despite Daisy being robbed of doing something we all take for granted – eating.

Daisy suffers from chronic intestinal pseudo-obstruction, basically meaning her digestive system doesn't work.

She cannot eat a thing, and is instead entirely reliant on intravenous feeding for 18 hours a day via a Hickman line directly into her heart.

This means Daisy is stuck in her bedroom at her home in Langdon Hills, connected to the machine on the drip stand next to her.

Tumour can't be cured, but Joan is so courageous

Joan Hampson

AWOMAN who was left battling terminal cancer after medics failed to spot a 14lb tumour in her stomach is an inspiration to us all. Joan Hampson, 78, appeared in the Echo in November after a scan at Basildon Hospital had missed the baby-sized tumour which left her stomach swollen and looking like a "mum-to-be".

The cancerous lump was only picked up when Mrs Hampson, was scanned at Queen's Hospital, in Romford.

Through the Echo, Mrs Hampson said had been robbed of a "fighting chance of survival".

However, Joan, of Long Meadow Drive, Wickford, decided to speak out to ensure others don't have to go through the same agony.

Her daughter Karen, 40, who is a nurse, said: "Mum was told three months ago she had three months to live, but she's still here and hanging in there."

"The tumour is so big now nothing can be done, and she is not

Her dad, Damon, said Daisy had had a traumatic year, but was still smiling.

He said: "After a tough end to 2010, she had a good start to 2011 going back to school in January after six months away."

"But in March, she picked up an infection in her line, meaning she was back in hospital for a couple of weeks."

"She came home, but didn't seem right, then in April, the infection came back with a vengeance, and she ended up in intensive care while her little body fought the extreme infection. It was a very scary time."

After many ups and downs, sev-



■ Warning to others – Joan Hampson with daughter Karen going to have any more radiotherapy. Despite this, she is making the most of the time she has left with dignity and courage.

"She has wonderful carers who spend time with her. We take her out for a coffee now and again just for an hour, and it really cheers her up."

"I'm really hoping that in the new year I can take her on a shopping trip to Marks & Spencer – it would be a wish come true for her. It doesn't sound a lot, but to her it would mean the world."



She has had many ups and downs, but throughout Daisy has remained remarkably brave

■ Smiling on through – eight-year-old Daisy Palmer, from Langdon Hills

eral operations and tests, Daisy finally came home at the end of July.

Since then, Daisy has coped well enough to do her first full term at Great Berry Primary School, in Langdon Hills.

Damon said: "She has had many ups and downs in between, plus many outpatient appointments for numerous horrible tests, and many days where it has been touch and go whether to rush her back to hospital."

"But, throughout all this, Daisy has remained remarkably brave

Brain injury that locked Claire in

THE new year is always a hard time for Claire Harrison, because that's when the mum-of-two almost died of a massive brain injury.

The 36-year-old suffered the terrifying ordeal of ending up "locked into" her own body, paralysed and able to communicate only through blinking.

At one point Claire, of Northampton Grove, Langdon Hills, was given the last rites by a priest.

But, amazingly, she has battled back from the brink – learning to walk and talk from scratch.

The Echo told Claire's story in July, and since then she has become an inspirational figure around the town.

I couldn't speak or move any part of my body. It was terrifying. I blinked to communicate

Claire Harrison

Claire said: "Since the story in the Echo appeared, people have been coming up to me and saying, 'I can't believe you went through all that!'"

Claire's ordeal began in January 2009 when she felt a headache coming, and took a couple of painkillers.

Twenty four hours later, she was on a life support machine in Basildon Hospital, paralysed, unable to breathe by herself, unable to speak and left only with the ability to blink.

She said: "I remember going through the door of the hospital but have no memory of what happened after that, until I woke up several days later and felt the paralysis coming over me."

"I couldn't speak or move any part of my body. It was terrifying. I had to blink once for yes and twice for no in order to communicate."

After she was transferred to the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel for lengthy treat-



■ Recovery – Claire Harrison

ment, an MRI scan showed Claire had suffered acute disseminated encephalomyelitis – a severe infection of the brain.

Claire is now slowly but surely making a full recovery from her ordeal, and has recently begun a sign language course at night school.

She said: "It's something I've always wanted to learn and I kept putting it off and putting it off until I thought, 'what am I waiting for?'"

Claire will also spend 2012 promoting head injury charity, Headway Essex and raising money for the cause.