

Our Hero: Essence

In 2014, halfway through her senior year in high school, Essence White started feeling sick. A combination of persistent fatigue, nosebleeds, vomiting, and headaches sent her to the doctor, who said she had the flu. As the symptoms continued and worsened, Essence took herself to the emergency room. Shortly afterward, she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia or AML.

It took three rounds of chemotherapy, and a stem cell transplantation before Essence's cancer went into remission. Afterward, she received a stem cell transplant and remained in the hospital for several more months. While successful, Essence's treatment caused her to experience other complications, including GVHD (graft-versus-host disease) and weakened her bones. All of which caused Essence to undergo physical therapy and learn how to walk again.



Thanks to her team of doctors and with the support of Hope & Heroes, Essence has been cancer-free since 2016. She credits the child life specialists who helped her remain optimistic about her prognosis during her months-long stay in the hospital.

Looking forward to the future, Essence plans to enroll in college and pursue her dreams of becoming an actor and a model. However, she admits that her cancer journey has sparked a new interest—motivational speaking. During a trip to her former high school, Essence spoke to several groups of students. She wants to reach other children and teens, whether it's at local schools or hospitals.

“I think having cancer happened for a reason; it was meant to be my testimony. Maybe God gave me cancer to help inspire a nation. Now I am doing something great by inspiring schools, teachers, children, parents, and even strangers.”

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and National Blood Cancer Awareness Month. Join Hope & Heroes in raising awareness and support to help local children and families fighting these diseases. Visit hopeandheroes.org/September.