

## **Girl Overcomes Cancer Scare and Amputation for Active Life**

PORTSMOUTH, R.I.--Nine-year-old Olivia Hinsey-Langlais likes scary movies and frightening rides like Disney World's Tower of Terror. So when she was diagnosed with cancer in the bone above her right knee two years ago and had part of her leg removed, she wasn't as scared as she might have been.

In May 2001, Olivia was playing in an inflatable pool with her younger sister, Camille, when she slid on her knees and screamed in pain. Following a trip to her pediatrician, tests and a biopsy revealed that Olivia had osteogenic sarcoma in about four inches of the distal femur above her right knee. A week later she began chemotherapy to shrink the tumor in the bone and surrounding tissue before surgery.

Olivia's father, James Hinsey, describes her as "strong willed and determined," but also with a silly side. "Our family tries to find the fun in situations," he says. When Olivia's hair fell out during chemotherapy, she greeted her father in the hospital by throwing a bunch of her long blonde hair at him. They blew up hospital gloves into balloons and taped her hair on their balloon family.

By early September, the tumor had shrunk and Olivia underwent Van Ness Rotationplasty at Children's Hospital in Boston. Doctors removed the diseased portion of Olivia's leg, from mid-thigh to below her knee, rotated the lower portion of her leg so her foot faced back and reattached her calf to her thigh. Her ankle would serve as a knee joint.

Four days after surgery Olivia was using a walker, and two weeks later she began a final round of chemotherapy to kill any remaining cancer cells in her system. By late October she was fit with a prosthesis at Next Step Orthotics and Prosthetics in Warwick, R.I., and walked on her own with her new leg a month later.

"The Van Ness Rotationplasty surgery is complicated and requires special protocols with both the rehabilitation and prosthetic design," says Peter Couture, C.P., president and clinical director of Next Step. "The first day I met Olivia, she told me that she was going to ice skate again. I knew right then that she was going to be okay."

Olivia has always had a zest for life. She learned to ice skate at age 4, and at 6 performed as a butterfly in the ice show, *A Bug's Life*, followed by a leopard's role in *Tarzan* at 7. About six months after Olivia's surgery, her skating instructor offered to show her how to skate with her prosthesis. Six months later, Olivia opened an ice show dedicated to the Make-a-Wish Foundation and making children's wishes come true. In the show's second half, she skated as Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*.

After her surgery, she also took up gymnastics again, competing in the spring of 2002 and 2003 on a Special Olympics team. A local coach had seen Olivia's skill and upper body strength during a birthday party at his gym and recruited her for the team. Paired with an able-bodied girl, Olivia competed in the state meet at Harvard University in June and won several gold and silver medals, including a gold medal in the all-around category.

When she's not on the ice or in the gym, Olivia can be spotted horseback riding, swimming at the beach or windsurfing with her water leg. Still on her wish list is riding a bike, which may have to wait until she is taller and the angle of her right foot and left knee match up.

Olivia thinks her leg and prosthesis are cool; they make her unique. “In a way, it didn’t change her,” says her father. “Physically it did, but not inside.” She is still the girl who loves scary movies and the thrills of life.