

By Danielle Ray

Ken Schneid was dealt a tough hand.

A charismatic, lovable man who was a friend to all in need, Ken had battled Hodgkin's Lymphoma twice already when he was diagnosed in November of 2013 with a Myelodysplastic syndrome, or MDS, a type of cancer in which the bone marrow does not make enough healthy blood cells and there are abnormal cells in the blood and/or bone marrow.

The MDS was pretty aggressive, and Ken and his medical team came up with a treatment plan beginning in January of this year that included chemotherapy and eventually a bone marrow transplant from his sister.

The first week he started treatment for MDS Ken was waiting for his car from the valet at Tufts Medical Center in Boston when he overheard a couple having a conversation about their money concerns, specifically surrounding the cost that would be incurred to park for the remainder of the week at Tufts to receive daily chemo treatments.

While driving home Ken realized how lucky he was that that was one thing he did not have to worry about - the cost of parking - due to his insurance and disability coverage.

"Kenny heard them arguing that they wouldn't be able to go to treatments every day, when all they should be concentrating on is the treatment and getting better," said Ken's wife of nearly 17 years Paula Schneid.

"It all adds up - \$20 a day for parking, tolls, babysitter and pet sitter costs, co pays, etc. He wanted to do something to help other people, even though he was going to be fighting his own battle, helping to lift someone's burden."

Ken, who was a strong supporter of the Greg Hill Foundation - attending fundraisers and the annual golf tournament, donating goods for events - reached out to his friend Greg Hill and said he wanted to come up with some sort of fundraiser to help ease the financial burden of people like that couple.

"Kenny was always a big supporter of Greg's foundation," said Paula. "He was always doing what he could to support Greg's fundraisers."

Greg said, 'Come up with an idea and I will help you' and Ken did.

Ken, who was proudly from New York but had lived in his adopted city of Boston for nearly two decades, was inspired to create a t-shirt that promoted his personal mantra 'Boston Strong, New York Tough' and sell them to raise money for people who are battling cancer and are in need financially. He also incorporated the slogan 'Working Together to Beat Cancer'.

"It's the way he did things, always thinking about other people," said Paula of her husband.

Ken's initial goal was to raise \$10,000, enough to cover the cost of the t-shirts and to raise \$5,000 or so to give away – within the first 24 hours of selling the t-shirts they broke \$10,000, and Ken's goal immediately jumped to \$20,000.

"The fundraiser gave Kenny something to focus on," Paula said. "He was just a positive person and did not want to dwell on his illness."

Around the time he had his stem cell treatment (in lieu of the bone marrow transplant) the amount raised had reached \$30,000.

"He got to see it," Paula said, her voice heavy with emotion, of the new benchmark they hit. "It really kept him going. He was so happy and proud watching the numbers grow."

From January through April Ken was home only a handful of days, spending most of his time in the hospital under heavy sedation on and off a ventilator. When he was able to talk, the first thing he would ask Paula was 'Where are we at with the fundraiser?'

Ken was in and out of the Tufts ICU many times over the spring months with infections, yet it looked like the stem cell treatment had been successful. But he took a turn for the worse at the beginning of May and another infection landed him in the ICU.

Ken lost his brave and courageous battle against cancer on May 6.

Greg offered his restaurant, 29 Sudbury, for Paula to host a Celebration of Life for Ken on May 10. 300 people came out to honor the man who was so full of life and love for those around him. They raised \$2,600 that night for 'Boston Strong, New York Tough'.

"Kenny wanted one last party - he said, 'If things go bad don't go cheap on me'," Paula said with a laugh. "Greg was extraordinarily generous to let us host his Celebration of Life there."

The continued and steady climb in raised funds is due in a big way to friends of Ken's who stepped up to help with the fundraising efforts. The company he worked for, MS Walker, whom Paula refers to as "family", along with Luis Luna, Paul Wilson and Paul Bruno of The Glynn Hospitality Group, organized and held a fundraiser mid-May at one of Ken's accounts, Dillon's Restaurant & Bar on Boylston Street, that 150 people came out to. They raised \$5,670 that night.

Another longtime friend of Ken's, Paul Auersperg, was turning 50 in June and also celebrating his company turning 30. He sent out an email to employees and friends and asked that in lieu of gifts would they consider making a donation to 'Boston Strong, New York Tough' – just under \$3,000 was raised through those efforts.

To date almost \$45,000 has been raised through Ken's 'Boston Strong, New York Tough' campaign.

“The show of support has truly been a testament to who Kenny was,” said Paula. “He was such a generous person in life. He always liked to be the ‘Big Man on Campus’ [yet] he wanted to help people and he wanted people to be happy. It was second nature to him.”

Paula cannot say enough about Greg Hill and his Foundation, and how supportive he was to Ken and remains so.

“Greg is just such a generous man, he does so much good with his Foundation,” she said. “It’s absolutely amazing what everyone has done.”

Going forward Paula said they will continue to raise funds for Ken’s ‘Boston Strong, New York tough’ campaign, turning it into a foundation in honor and in memory of Ken. They will hold quarterly events and an annual giving event.

The first giving event will be held on June 30, in association with Tufts Medical Center and The Neely House – six recipients (who are starting their cancer treatments at Tufts) have been selected to receive donations from ‘Boston Strong, New York Tough’. Greg Hill, Scott Neely, and Ken’s oncology and medical support teams from Tufts will be there along with his immediate family.

“We are going to keep the [‘Boston Strong, New York Tough’] foundation moving forward, and hopefully we can continue to give back,” Paula said.

To donate towards Ken’s cause visit [www.sharingcounts.com/events/231-boston-strong-new-york-tough](http://www.sharingcounts.com/events/231-boston-strong-new-york-tough). Find ‘Boston Strong, New York Tough’ and The Greg Hill Foundation on Facebook, and for more information visit [www.TheGregHillFoundation.org](http://www.TheGregHillFoundation.org).