

R E N O W N

JOURNEY

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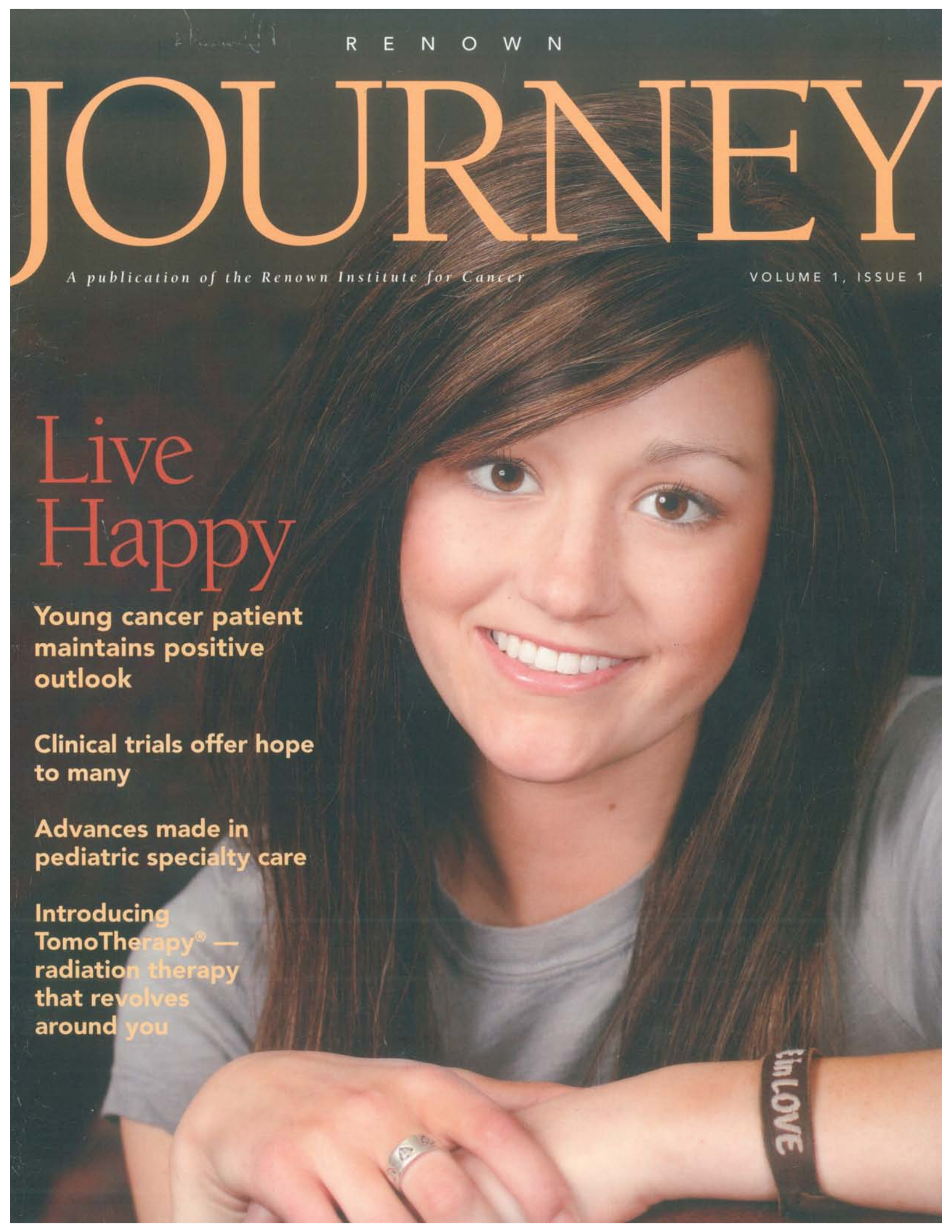
Live Happy

**Young cancer patient
maintains positive
outlook**

**Clinical trials offer hope
to many**

**Advances made in
pediatric specialty care**

**Introducing
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radiation therapy
that revolves
around you**



{Live Happy, Laugh & Love

Local student has hope, optimism and perseverance

HER ROOM HAS ALL THE REQUISITE ELEMENTS OF A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL: It is a combination of typical teen with funky flair. She has an iPod on a docking station, a stuffed moose sitting atop a desk next to a half-eaten sandwich, an ACT study guide on the floor and pictures of friends in wacky poses decorating a person-sized bulletin board.

The décor seems to make sense — until you come to the wall of wigs. Then the messages scrawled on her closet mirror: “Do Homework” (that one makes sense); “Practice” (referring to her guitar); and the phone number for her oncologist.

Kristin Katich is a typical teen — a typical teen who just happens to be dealing with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

“Yeah, this kinda sucks,” Katich said as two Goldendoodle dogs scurry into the family room, distracting her from the obviousness of the understatement.

“She downplays this so much,” mom Leslie Katich said. “Kristin is amazing, and she has shown everyone her strength through this battle.”

The strength is underscored by a motto by which Kristin and many fellow cancer patients aspire to abide: “Live Happy.” What that means to Kristin can only be revealed through her personal story, the context provided by her obvious strength in the face of adversity.

Her diagnosis came only weeks before Christmas 2007. Following a night of intense pain in her knees and lethargy, she had a series of blood tests. Then came the call from the family doctor, who advised Leslie and husband Darren to immediately talk with specialists — Doctors Hastings and Raphael, pediatric oncologists working at Renown.

“It was like the world stopped turning — but I was still spinning,” Leslie said.

After consulting with the specialists at Renown, the only hospital in the region providing Pediatric Specialty Care, Leslie and Darren came home, crawled into bed with Kristin and told her what they knew.

“Her eyes filled with tears,” Leslie said. “Then she just said, ‘I

“The doctors and nurses at Renown — they treat us with the very best care and concern.”

Leslie Katich

don't want to have cancer.”

The unwelcome diagnosis was an unfortunate reality. But Kristin has seemingly turned that reality into opportunity, one highlighted by hope, optimism and perseverance.

Friends and family have rallied to support her, even undertaking a T-shirt selling campaign to raise money to finance her care. The T-shirts — which tout Kristin's motto, “Live Happy” on the front and “Team Kristin” on the back — can be seen everywhere on the backs of friends and strangers alike.

Her will to “live happy” effectively arms Kristin for battling the disease, her doctors affirm. Even the experts at the American Cancer Society suggest that cancer patients proactively tackle the disease armed with optimism and help from their support networks, including the following tips:

- Ask for practical and emotional support from significant others.
- Seek out other cancer patients to talk about their experiences and advice.
- Maintain your normal life as much as possible.
- Check out local resources for cancer patients.
- Concentrate on taking an active role in treatment.

For Kristin, many of these suggestions come to fruition in the routinely updated blog that her mom has started on Kristin's behalf — www.kristinkatich.blogspot.com.

“This blog means so much to us and to all who know us,” Leslie said. “It is our chance to connect, and that has really helped in the journey.”

Even locally, the outpouring of support for Kristin was evident from the battle's beginning. The family initially told select

people at Kristin's school, Galena High, asking them to keep the news quiet.

“But we had to turn off her phone within minutes,” Leslie said. “Everyone knew.”

Evidently, you can't keep that kind of news quiet when it affects a popular, beautiful 17-year-old. She was a Winter Ball Queen candidate and a student athlete. She had been in leadership class since her freshman year, recently being elected Student Body Vice President — in absentia.

“My friends campaigned for me,” Kristin said, noting that the election was in April — a time when she was not in school.

Her diminutive stature is counterbalanced by a long mane of chestnut hair. “It's from the Hair Club,” she said, admitting that the hardest part of the process has been the inevitable losing of

Kristin Katich relaxes at home in Reno.



Pediatric services offered at Renown Regional Medical Center

- Chemotherapy
- Bone marrow aspiration and biopsy
- Infusion (injecting medications)
- Radiation therapy
- Medication management
- The region's only Pediatric Intensive Care Unit
- 27-bed pediatric unit with board-certified pediatricians and specially trained critical care pediatric nurses
- Follow-up care
- New patient consultations
- X-ray and imaging
- Clinical trials
- Counseling and support groups

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hair characteristic of chemo treatments.

"I know it sounds shallow," she said.

But the casual observer would never use the adjective to describe Kristin, a successful student who calls a schedule of classes that includes advanced placement government, trigonometry and mythology — "you know, just the basics."

"I'm totally excited to go back to school," Kristin said of her return to school for her senior year — after almost a year's absence dealing with diagnosis and subsequent treatments. She has even started the journey back to normal life, working part-time at Buffalo Wild Wings.

Easing back into her pre-diagnosis routine has been made easier by the accessibility of her most prized counselors — her oncologists. Renown's team includes a duo of pediatric oncologists who spend four days a week in Reno seeing patients.

"We're so lucky to have her doctors here and available," Leslie said. "The doctors and nurses at Renown — they treat us with the very best care and concern. They have an amazing spirit."

Appropriately, these same words were uttered by Kristin's oncologist — referring to her and her family.

"They're such a pleasure to work with, and Kristin is a remarkable young lady," Dr. Raphael said. "She has really put herself out there in a way most teens wouldn't."

Doctors Raphael and Hastings and the entire Renown team have

a singular goal: to provide top-quality care for all patients.

"Whenever possible, we want to do this close to home," he said. "We really applaud Renown's efforts to build this program."

And while the program continues to build, so does Kristin's strength and determination to heal.

"In 10 years, I want to be accomplished, to feel like I've done something with my life," she said.

Little does she know: She already has. ■

Caroline Hastings, MD

Caroline Hastings, MD, is the Medical Director of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology at Renown Regional Medical Center. She also serves as Director of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Fellowship for Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland, where she practices as pediatric hematologist/oncologist and pediatric neuro-oncologist. She received her graduate education at the University of California, Davis School of Medicine.

Robert Raphael, MD

Robert Raphael, MD, is Associate Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist at Renown Regional Medical Center and Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland. Educated at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine, he completed his pediatrics internship and residency at the UC San Diego Medical Center. He also is a Clinical Associate Professor for the University of Nevada School of Medicine.
