

## News

# Heart of Iron

By CALEY MEALS

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Heart of Iron

UW senior races to save his brother's life

Caley Meals

Features Editor

When University of Wisconsin-Whitewater sophomore Eric McLean decided to get his wisdom teeth removed this past June, he never imagined it would save his life. But on June 27, when Eric went in for a follow-up appointment to see why his mouth was not healing as quickly as it should have been, doctors discovered he had Leukemia. Within a week of the diagnosis, Eric's older brother, Mike McLean, a senior at UW-Madison, was already hard at work raising money to fight the disease.

Mike, a political science major and member of the ACACIA Fraternity, competed in the Ironman Wisconsin triathlon last year for the sheer challenge of it, but decided this year he would run it again to raise money for his brother.

"As soon as I found out Eric was sick, I knew I had to do it," McLean said. "I wanted to do it anyway, but now it just seems really important."

The triathlon, which involves biking 112 miles, swimming 2.4 miles and running 26.2 miles, will be held Sept. 7 in Madison. All the money Mike raises will be donated to the Wisconsin Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. McLean originally hoped to raise \$10,000, but so far has only been able to raise \$5,400, a sum he still thinks is "awesome no matter what."

With medical expenses topping the half million mark, the McLean family is all too familiar with the high costs of dealing with such a deadly disease.

"Any dust or mold in the air could be extremely lethal to Eric," Mike said, "So before he came home July 15 for his 19th birthday, we had to repaint and re-carpet the entire house."

Paired with the hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills, the expenses are staggering. Luckily, the McLeans' insurance has been able to cover much of the medical expense.

What Mike can't give to his brother in money he is prepared to give him in body. Having recently been declared "a near perfect match" for Eric's bone marrow, Mike will begin the long process of donating bone marrow in an attempt to save his brother's life, one week after competing in the Ironman. Since Eric's form of Leukemia is a result of genetically damaged DNA found in development cells in the bone marrow, a transplant will up his chances of survival from 25 to 50 percent.

Beginning Sept. 14, Mike will be injected with three shots a day, costing \$400 a shot. The shots will boost his immune system for the ensuing transplant. Bone marrow will then be removed from Mike's body and put into Eric's Sept. 18, hopefully bolstering his current immune system to a level at which he can survive.

"The testing and appointments for the transplant have definitely affected my training for the triathlon," McLean said, "but it doesn't matter because they're both so important."

*Those interested in donating to Mike's cause, which he has deemed LIFE — The Leukemia Ironman Fundraiser for Eric — can make a check out to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and send it to Mike McLean at: 222 Langdon St., Madison, WI, 53703.*









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