

NIAGARA FALLS



John Hickey/Buffalo News

Officer William J. Gee has been on a chemo cocktail for the past six months as he battles stage four stomach cancer.

Officer determined to beat cancer and get back to 'helping people'

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NIAGARA FALLS - Veteran Police Officer and Niagara Falls native William J. Gee has been in a battle with stomach cancer for more than six months.

He says he's prepared to "fight the cancer into submission" and get back to work. Tuesday, he got good news and bad news from doctors at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

They have been successful in fighting the cancer, but they won't clear him to go back on the job for at least a few more months.

"The walls are closing in on me at home," Gee said with a smile. "The cancer is improving and behaving, but I need a few more months to let my bones heal."

The officer said the cancer caused micro fractures in his bones as it tried to advance. "[Dr. Renuka Iyer] doesn't want me jumping fences and fighting guys," Gee said, at least not right away.

Even if he can't get back on patrol in the spring, he said he still wants to work, helping people.

"I appreciate that every day is different," Gee said of being an of-

ficer. "It's a nice feeling to help out. You get a rush of adrenaline from catching the bad guys, but at the end of the day it is not about the bad guys, but helping out all the good people. That's something I enjoy."

Gee said his doctor told him that he will be on chemotherapy for life and that the toxins he needs to fight the cancer will eventually create other cancers. He also has been told he has a healthy head start and is in good shape.

He appears mentally ready for a tough fight, having spent more than 11 years working as a corrections officer at some of the toughest maximum security prisons in the state before coming to the Falls Police Department in 2002.

Gee said that in May he began having pain in his back, which he first brushed off, figuring he hurt himself working on the house. He said he went to the chiropractor a few times, then went in for X-rays when it wouldn't go away.

"You know when they call you in after hours that it is not good news," Gee said. He said the doctor said they had found spots on his spine, and he was sent to Roswell Park where he got the diagnosis of

stage four stomach cancer. He was told it was terminal.

"I've been on a chemo cocktail, which is multiple types of therapy to target the stomach cancer, three times a week, every two weeks for the last six months," Gee said. He said the good news is that the cancer had not spread outside his stomach to his glands or bone marrow.

Looking healthy and in good spirits, he was still waiting for his doctor's announcement when he stopped into Police Headquarters on Monday to accept a donation of \$2,000, in the form of two individual \$1,000 checks, one from the Federal Law Enforcement Foundation and another from Niagara Falls Redevelopment. Gee thanked those who had come forward to help and called the support from several fundraisers "incredible."

A single father of two boys, ages 15 and 20, Gee said that the funds raised have helped defray some of the co-pays and travel costs, and provides a buffer so he doesn't fall behind. It could be a lot worse," Gee said. "I count my blessings every day."

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