



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 28, 2019

FIT 'FIGHTER' NAMED FAYETTE 'FACE'

Uniontown, PA – Teacher; coach; mother; wife; sister; friend; champion; fighter - all these words and more can be used to describe Fayette County resident Amy Tungate.

Born and raised in Uniontown, Tungate is a third-grade teacher at George C. Marshall Elementary School; co-owner of CrossFit U-Town, a gym she opened in 2012 with her husband, Jason; and mother of 6-year-old son, Maddox.

She's also battling stage IV pancreatic cancer.

"There's not much research out there for pancreatic cancer; the survival rates aren't very high because it's hard to diagnose early," Tungate said. "Most times, it's not detected until it becomes stage IV. The symptoms can be common. The only symptom I had was abdominal pain, but that was explained by my training."

Tungate believed she pulled a muscle while training in the gym, and doctors originally thought her gallbladder was compromised. A series of tests revealed masses on her liver, pancreas, and spleen, leading to her admittance at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh.

On October 2, she received her diagnosis at age 35. She began her first round of chemotherapy the next day.

"I'm currently receiving two different chemotherapies and an immunotherapy drug," Tungate said. "We are thrilled because my last scan at the end of November showed that all my tumors have shrunk."

Despite the often-bleak prognosis that comes with pancreatic cancer, Tungate is turning her fight into a positive message for others by drawing from her athletic history.

Tungate was a well-rounded athlete while attending Laurel Highlands High School in Uniontown; and continued her basketball career at the University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg, competing in NCAA tournaments and winning titles.

After graduating from UPG, she attended California University of Pennsylvania and worked as the women's basketball team graduate assistant. From 2007 to 2013, she coached the Laurel Highlands girls' basketball team; only resigning to build her CrossFit community.

"I played basketball pretty much my whole life, but I wasn't the star player who was blowing up the stat book every game. I had to fight for every minute I earned on the court; I had to fight for every game I played against opponents who were 6 feet tall. Nothing ever came easy, so I've always been a fighter," Tungate said. "Now I'm fighting for my son; I'm fighting for my husband; I'm fighting for my family; I'm fighting for my friends; I'm fighting for people I haven't even met. I fight because that's what I've always done."

The Tungate family is currently forming a team to participate in the Purple Stride Walk in Pittsburgh this April. The event raises money for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, a nonprofit organization which helps people navigate their lives after diagnosis.

Tungate said the network, known as "PanCan," has been a wonderful resource for her throughout her journey, along with her friend and fellow pancreatic cancer warrior, Adam Deal of Ohio. In addition to Deal, her husband and son, Tungate is also leaning on her parents, Bill and Marlene Bandzuch; siblings, Billy of Delano, Minn., and Tina of Pittsburgh; in-laws, Jack and Deanna Saluga; her CrossFit "Box" family; and countless aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

"Jason and Tina have played huge roles in caring for me while on this journey. Neither of them have missed a doctor's appointment, and Tina has been with me for every treatment day," she said. "My parents have created a 'safe haven' of a germ-free house, so if I need a place to stay if Jason or Maddox gets sick, I have one."

Tungate said she was in the "best shape of (her) life" when she received her diagnosis. Now, she's focusing even more on her training and nutrition.

"I'd like to encourage everyone to take the steps they need to live a healthy lifestyle, as I believe it is a main reason why I'm handling the treatments so well with very few side effects from the chemotherapy," she said. "Jason and I have always supported our community in whatever fitness avenue a person enjoys. Everyone can do CrossFit, but CrossFit isn't for everyone, so we encourage people to find their 'fit.' Whatever is your 'fit,' do it. Start today."

A group of Tungate's supporters, affectionately known as "Amy's Army," has been regularly organizing fundraisers to help the family with medical and other costs throughout her treatment.

Earlier this month, her army held an alumni charity basketball tournament at Laurel Highlands High School. Former Laurel Highlands and Connellsville girls' basketball players came together for an afternoon of friendly competition, food, and fun, raising almost \$1,500 for the cause.

"The support from our community here in Fayette County has been overwhelming. People have been reaching out to us from all over; friends that I haven't seen since high school have reconnected; complete strangers have sent messages of well and positive wishes," Tungate said. "We couldn't be more grateful for all the love, support, and prayers we have received since the moment we found out about my diagnosis. It truly is overwhelming and humbling to know that so many people care."

For updates on Tungate's journey or to contribute to her cause, visit her family's GoFundMe page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/amy-tungate-pancreatic-cancer>.

For more information about pancreatic cancer and how you can get involved, visit <https://www.pancan.org/>.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the 2016 Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Journalist, at 724-317-6924, kmoore@fayettecountypa.info.