

# Coming together for Kayla Spero

At a sports symposium held at the University of Notre Dame last month, I learned that I had been thinking about the concept of competition incorrectly. The Latin derivative of the word is “com”, which means “together”, and “petere” which means “aim at” or “seek”. We do not compete “against” our opponent, but rather we come “together for something” that teaches us about ourselves and our team, opponent and community.

The community of Sachem School District, Sachem Youth Athletic Group and Good Shepherd CYO learned this concept of competition first hand recently. And they did so to help a wonderful young teenage girl, Kayla Spero, in her battle against cancer.

Kayla is the daughter of Nicole and Justin Spero. Her CYO basketball coach, Kim Turano, speaks of Kayla as a talented athlete who is a leader on and off the court, with an infectious smile and a spirit of generosity. Kayla is like so many teenagers that participate in our CYO programs, but with one exception — Kayla was diagnosed with metastatic osteosarcoma in her left leg and right hip.

She has endured a series of chemotherapy treatments that

unfortunately did not respond, and Kayla had to undergo further surgery. She had a rotationplasty on her left leg and received a prosthetic leg. Pictures of Kayla with her new prosthetic leg show a beautiful young girl with that same infectious smile and that same spirit of generosity and optimism.

Sachem School District is amongst the largest in New York State, and several years ago, the school district underwent a reorganization where one centralized high school was split into two — Sachem North and Sachem East. When the two new schools' sports teams “competed against” each other, it was an unusual feeling. What was once “one” was now “two.”

In early March of this year, The Sachem School community, SYAG

and Good Shepherd CYO sponsored “Free Throws for Kayla” — an opportunity to spend an afternoon playing basketball with two objectives: first, to come together as a community for a cause greater than themselves; and, second, to show their love and support for Kayla and her family, whose infectious smile, generosity of spirit and bravery in the face of adversity is an inspiration to all.

“The atmosphere in the gym was beautiful. There was no Sachem North or Sachem East — just Sachem.”

The atmosphere in the gym was beautiful. There was no Sachem North or Sachem East — just Sachem. All in attendance understood this new concept of competition — that we come together for something that teaches us something about ourselves and our community; that our goals are selfless service to others.

Let the greater CYO of Long Island community “come together” to join Good Shepherd CYO in offering our prayers and support to Kayla and the Spero family. Donations can be made through [www.syag.com](http://www.syag.com). †



**PAUL ECHAUSSE** is on the board of trustees of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nassau-Suffolk

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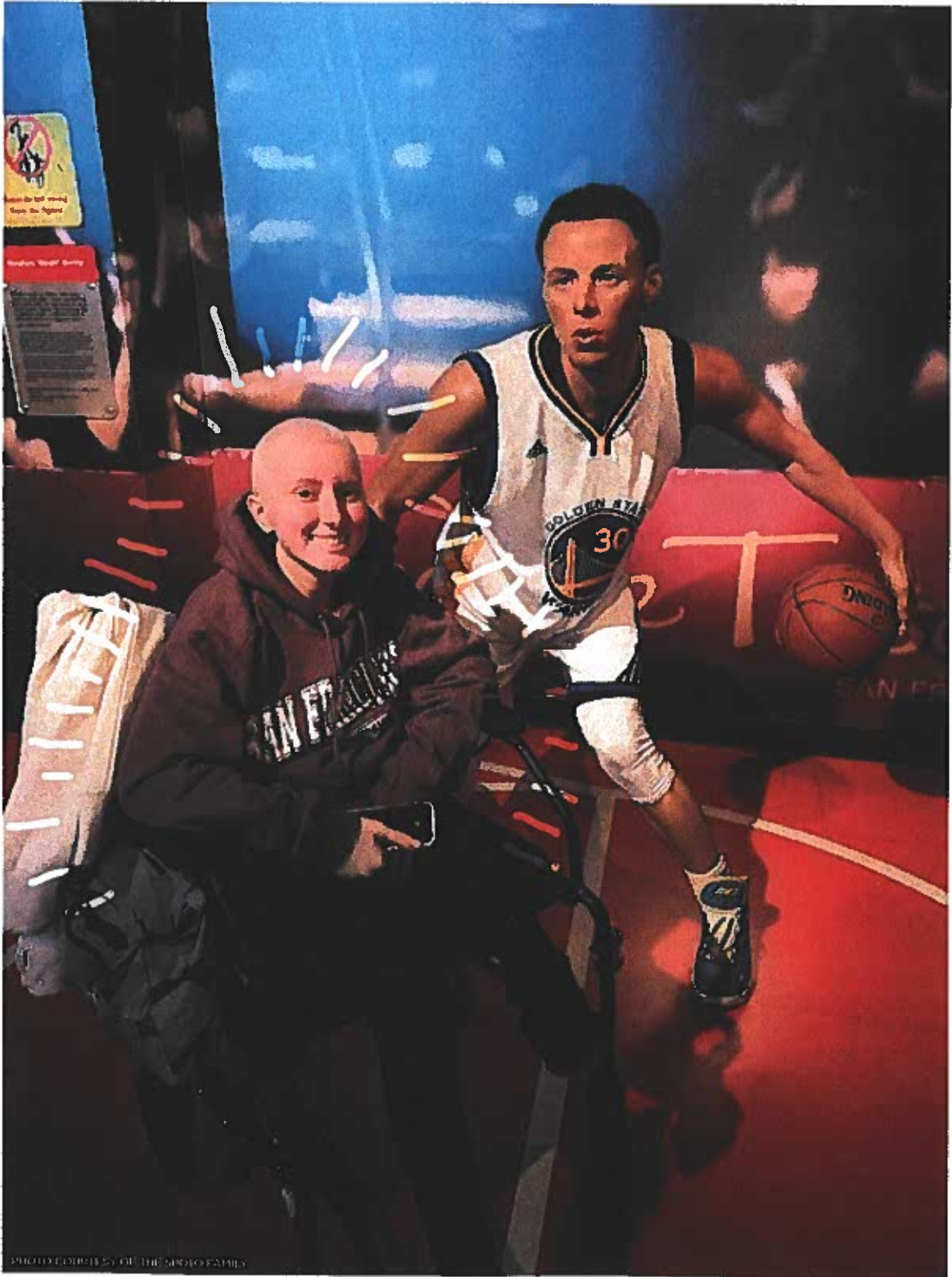


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