

# **Local Cancer Survivor Jim Corby Throws Out Ceremonial First Pitch At River Dragons Game - Tells His Story**

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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ALTON - Wednesday night, July 27, was OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center Night at the Ballpark. It included doctors and nurses receiving free admission, people giving out health care information, and a local cancer survivor throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

Jim Corby, 61, of Alton was diagnosed with esophageal cancer earlier this year. After multiple different treatments and surgeries, he received the news that he was 100% cancer free.

When asked how relieved he and his family was to hear that news he got a little emotional.

“To be honest, in January, I didn’t think I was going to make it. I’m not going to lie.”

He thanked the help of his excellent doctors and nurses at Saint Anthony's and credited them for saving his life.

“If it wasn’t for these nurses and these doctors, I wouldn’t be here. They get you to where you need to be. It’s not about them, it’s all about you and that’s what’s neat.”

Now that he's back on his feet again and able to go out and about, he took in the scenes at the local Alton River Dragons game. It was his first River Dragons game and he said he was having a ton of fun. He was there with his girlfriend Amy and her daughter.

He started the game by throwing out the ceremonial first pitch with his two primary doctors by his side Dr. Sandhu and Dr. Piephoff. He threw a strike to hometown favorite and team leader Blake Burris who was behind the plate.

“It was neat. I still got the ball; I’m going to get it signed by all of them too.”

“The good thing is they didn’t just include me, they included the kids, and that’s what was cool.”

Jim was there with one of his softball teams, 14U Illinois Spree. He doesn't just coach them though. He coaches 10 softball teams from ages 10U to 18U.

He mentioned that throughout his older teams that more than 100 girls have earned college scholarships.

"That’s what we do it for," Jim said. "No one gets paid, it’s all for fun.”

He had to step away from his teams for a year while he dealt with his chemotherapy and surgeries but made his triumphant return a few weeks ago.

Jim received all of his treatment and chemotherapy in Alton at Saint Anthony’s. The only time he had to go downtown to Barnes Jewish Hospital was for the esophagus surgeries. He was in the hospital for nine days where he couldn’t eat or drink anything.

“That was killer,” he said.

He also said that he used to smoke up to three packs a day but has since quit cold turkey with his last smoke on January 5th.

He said that's been very difficult, but "it's what I have to do if I want to live.”

Finally, Jim gave advice to those going through treatment and struggling with the battle against cancer.

“You’ve got to keep your chin up. Talk to the nurses, they’re going to guide you in the right direction. Every one of those girls, if you’ve got a problem, they’re going to find out.”

He said that help is always just one phone call away.

It's been a battle for Jim no doubt, but now he can finally get back to enjoying his life again which he is very grateful for. He'll continue receiving his treatments at Saint Anthony's, but the most important part is that he is cancer free once more.





Below is Jim's own typed out cancer story.

### **Jim's Cancer Journey:**

“Writing my cancer journey is not something I ever thought of doing because no one thinks they have cancer. I am a retired laborer and if anyone knows me, I have always enjoyed a cold adult beverage and with that a cigarette or two. So, I knew I did not have the best habits.

In 2021 I started having health issues but never thought much about it and hoped it would pass. I was having heartburn, so I ate antacids all the time but with no relief. Then I was having lots of pain when I was eating. In May I finally decided to go to the doctor, and they started treating me for acid reflex. After no relief, they decided to run tests. After an ultrasound and CT scan with no results, my issues were getting worse. I started losing weight because it hurt so bad to eat.

Finally, in September I had an EGD where they examined my throat with a camera. That was when my life changed. The doctor came in and sat down (which is never good) and told us I had a mass in my esophagus which was cancer.



Within a week I was at OSF Cancer Center meeting Dr. Sandhu and Dr. Piephoff. They explained to us about the type of cancer I had and my treatment plan which was chemo and radiation followed by surgery. By the time I finally had surgery in January 2022 I was down to 135 pounds and scared I was not going to make it through this. The surgery went great I quit smoking and drinking so even though I am still having treatments I am cancer free. Without the great care of all the nurses at the cancer center, I do not think I could have done this. They have gone beyond what I expected. They truly show how they care about me and my recovery.”

