

Valerie Greene

"NEVER GIVE UP!"

By Connie MacLeod



Valerie Greene

When last we spoke with **Valerie Greene**, she had just released her awe-inspiring, true-life story ***The Fire Within***. Her saga chronicles a successful businesswoman who, at 31 and in top physical condition, suffered a massive stroke. Valerie, who had been completely unaware of the warning signs, was left speech and hearing impaired and paralyzed on the left side of her body. Doctors told her she might never walk or talk again. But with every ounce of courage and determination, Valerie defied this prognosis by taking her healing journey into her own hands.

Today, Valerie is a high-spirited survivor who continues to share her story of triumph over tragedy. Her motto, "Never Give Up!" is evident as she rallies for better medical care, insurance coverage and preventative measures for stroke victims.

Along with the **American Heart Association**, Valerie was instrumental in passing the Florida Stroke Act that went into effect in July 2005. This law ensures Emergency Medical Systems will transport victims to a primary/comprehensive stroke center for treatment. If patients are diagnosed properly, a clot-busting drug administered at the start of symptoms can reduce long-term disability for most stroke survivors. **Florida is the first state to enact this piece of legislation.**

May is **Stroke Awareness Month** and the perfect time to acquaint yourself with Valerie and the warning signs that could save your life! As the international spokesperson for Bayer Healthcare and CIS Biotech, Valerie was honored when asked to introduce their new project, a blood test designed to predict strokes. Developed through an exclusive agreement between these research giants, the test is in the final stages of clinical testing and awaiting FDA approval.

Stroke devastates the body by depriving the brain of proper blood flow and killing cells in the process. However, Dr. Richard Neubauer states, "Using pure oxygen under increased pressure, the body's natural ability to heal from traumas, diseases and other afflictions is enhanced, and in many cases accelerated." A relatively new treatment, referred to as hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT), does just this. Although most insurance companies don't cover the cost, it continues to be a major factor in Greene's healing process. With each treatment, Valerie has noted remarkable results, inspiring her to create the **Valerie Greene Stroke Foundation**. This non-profit organization will be a resource center for stroke survivors and caregivers alike, providing access to therapies such as HBOT and medical equipment not readily available or not yet covered by insurance.

Greene continues to make strides in her recovery while inspiring others around her. Wheelchair bound for only the first few months, Valerie was back on her feet, determined she would climb the stairs of her two-story townhome. At the time of our interview, more than 10 years since her stroke, Valerie boldly led

Valerie shares her story of stroke survival around the world



the way to her office on the second floor! The staircase is hung with athletic victories and, more importantly, framed reminders of her survivor status. Encased in a shadow box is the cane she depended on for so long. It now serves as a reminder of how far she has traveled.

After hearing Valerie's story, Sanford artist Lisa Mikler created a mural for Greene's home. In it, felled Roman columns depict something great that had toppled, giving way to a phoenix ascending, reborn into a rainbow where angels reflect Valerie's victory and surround her with blessings. Valerie is poised to release a new book and emboldened by her own fire within; she travels the globe, speaking, inspiring and making a positive impact. May her story spark an ember in each of us. ■

Learn to Recognize a Stroke

Stroke is a medical emergency. Know these warning signs of stroke and teach them to others. Every second counts.

Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.

Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.

Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.

Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

Call 911 immediately if you experience symptoms.

For more information, visit www.ValerieGreene.com.