



Lynwood and Maria Garner

# Lynwood Garner Toughing It Out

By Alan Sally

**O**n the way to see his three-month old daughter, Ashley, and with only six months on the job with NYCT as a CTA, Lynwood Garner walked into a hail of bullets back on January 7, 1991. Three men tried to rob him after he left work. He ran – but they kept coming, shooting him 9 times. The bullets gouging deep holes in his back and belly, and nearly destroying his left leg. Those holes are still deep and dark today.

“They told me I’d never walk again,” he recalls, “but they were wrong. Sometimes the doctors don’t have the last word.”

Transit was ready to write him off, but Garner came back to work. Some of the metal in his torso could not be removed because the bullets had lodged too close to vital organs.

In 2006, Garner had 15 years with Transit and was five years into a close relationship with Maria, a Court Officer, when another life-changing blow hit: a diagnosis of chronic leukemia on top of diabetes. Garner conjectures that the bullets caused blood poisoning that underlies his diagnosis of leukemia in 2006. Doctors aren’t ruling it out.

Regular treatments of chemotherapy began then – including a dozens of pills that he takes on a daily basis. Seeing him through the nausea and discomfort were his NYCT colleagues, both co-workers and supervisors.

In 2016, his leukemia turned acute, and he was hospitalized, again near death. His weight – once 360 – dropped to 170. Chemo was prescribed every day, with radiation three times a week. In April of 2017, the letter came from Transit, notifying him that his employment would be terminated if he didn’t get back to work.

So he did, with supervisors working with him to help him take it easy on the worst days.

It wasn’t only Ashley and Garner’s fiancée who wanted him to win his battle. TWU Local 100 and the managers at Broadway Junction were also on deck. “I couldn’t work at a better place,” Garner says. “It was a great place to work when I got sick. Mario Galvet is a great union rep. Whenever I had a problem, I would go to Mario. He always answers his phone. Every discipline I had, he was standing right there with me.

“They think I’m crazy, but I still want to work,” Garner says. With 23 years of good time in the pension system, he wants to attain a normal retirement and considers that opting for disability would be a defeat. “When you love your job and the guys you work with, it makes you want to keep going.”

In 2016, Garner’s co-workers took up a collection for him and gave him \$1,700. Just last month, it happened again. “I was sitting here in my apartment, all tore up from the chemo,” he recalls. My daughter opened the door. Guess who was here – eight of my co-workers and one of the bosses, with \$1,600 in cash.”

Ashley Garner, who at 26 is an accountant at the Bank Street School on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, has set up a GoFundMe page <https://www.gofundme.com/lynwood-garners-cancer-battle> for her father. Although Garner’s transit insurance pays for his chemo, he has lost confidence in his medical team and wants to get a second opinion and perhaps an alternate course of treatment from one of the City’s top cancer doctors – before it is too late. He faces long odds – but it wouldn’t be the first time he beat them.