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YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR THE BETHLEHEM SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PRESS PHOTO BY JENNIFER LADER

**Vilma Ravelo** and son **Gabriel Pozo**, center, are set to host the second annual Zumbathon April 12 at the ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks to raise funds for leukemia

research. Ready to dance with them are **Veronica Toro**, **Ian Chavez**, **Ione Pozo**, **Sardis Pozo** and **Ricky Mitman** with **Aryana**, **Chase** and **Logan Mitman**.

## 'The doctor's on the phone, and I think I have cancer'

Grateful family raises funds, awareness with 2nd annual Zumbathon

**COME DANCE, & STEP & SHAKE**

Second annual Zumbathon Sunday, April 12 ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks \$10 in advance \$15 at the door All proceeds go to The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Information & tickets: 484-546-1233 or [vrmomof05@gmail.com](mailto:vrmomof05@gmail.com)

by **JENNIFER LADER**  
 Special to The Bethlehem Press

**I**t started with a pain in Gabriel Pozo's left shoulder. In 2010, he was 16 and a junior at Freedom HS, pushing carts part-time at WalMart. At work one day, he noticed the pain and, when he took a deep breath, felt another sharp pain. On a recent evening, Gabriel's family gathered around him in their Bethlehem home as he recounted the story of what came next. Together, they look forward to the upcoming second annual Zumbathon, which started as an expression of his mother Vilma Ravelo's gratitude for her son surviving what turned out to be leukemia.

**FIRST THOUGHTS**

Their doctor at first attributed Gabriel's pain to his work. When the pain spread to his left jaw, Gabriel wondered about his wisdom teeth and saw a dentist. The pain traveled down his side. There was now no doubt something was wrong. His mother took him to the hospital. At her insistence, blood work was com-

pleted.

When the phone rang the following Friday, Ravelo took the call.

"They told me to pack a bag and one for Gabriel," she recalled.

Daughter **Sardis Pozo** continued the story.

"He called me right away," she said of Gabriel. "I could hear my mom in the background, but he was just as calm as he is right now, telling me, 'The doctor's on the phone and I think I have cancer.'"

"I had a feeling," Gabriel said, "and I knew my mom wouldn't be able to drive." Sardis and her fiancé, **Ricky Mitman**, drove the two to St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia, where mother and son stayed for three months.

**DENIAL**

During that time, Gabriel said, he simply did what he had to do - chemotherapy for early stage acute lymphocytic leukemia, or ALL, the most common form of the disease in those under 19.

Ravelo at first couldn't believe and even denied that the diagnosis was correct.

Then she prayed.

"At first, in my head, I thought, 'Just get him better,'" she said. "I didn't understand how big this is."

During the times when Gabriel could be at home, she often had to rush him to St. Luke's emergency department with fever and dehydration.

"I said, 'God, if you allow my son to come out of this, I'll do something.'"

**PAYBACK**

He did, and she did. In 2014, when the cancer had been in remission for three months, Ravelo made plans to get 50 people together to raise funds for cancer research.

"My 50 people took on a mind of their own," she said. That first Zumbathon got more than 100 participants and raised \$3,700.

In addition to her daughter and Gabriel, Ravelo has three other sons - **Ione** and **Eliezer Pozo** and **Ian Chavez**. For the interview, the whole family, right down to Sardis' toddler daughter, **Aryana**, sported T-shirts promoting the second annual Zumbathon. This year's afternoon of dance will

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**PEOPLE SAY**

BY **DANA GRUBB**

As the investigation continues to unfold, what has been your reaction to co-pilot **Andreas Lubitz** deliberately crashing Germanwings flight no. 9525 into the French Alps?



"It's sad that somebody would feel so overwrought with life that they would take so many innocent lives."

**Lorraine Johns**  
 Downingtown



"It's very disturbing."

**Suzanne Otto**  
 Center Valley

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Becahi's musical 'Brigadoon' opens April 10 - See page A15

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