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**It's a big Challenge for Daniela**

By Adrienne Agg

FRANCA Lo Surdo was petrified as to what the future held when her daughter Daniela was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia last November.

One year on, Mrs Lo Surdo has a brighter outlook, largely due to the enduring positive spirit of her daughter.

When *The Journal* spoke to the Noble Park North family in March, Daniela had undergone intensive chemotherapy and blood transfusions.

Now in remission, she will require treatment for the next 15 months. Daniela takes oral chemotherapy every night, intravenous chemotherapy once a month and steroids for the first five days of every month.

Mrs Lo Surdo said the drugs made her daughter feel "moody and generally miserable". But she said non-profit organisation Challenge had given Daniela a reason to smile.

"It put a great strain on our family when Daniela was diagnosed with leukaemia as her two younger sisters [Alessia, 6, and Kiara, 4] didn't quite understand what all the fuss was about.

**MEETING THE CHALLENGE**

CHALLENGE is a not-for-profit organisation which supports children living with cancer and their families from the time of diagnosis, throughout the treatment period and beyond.

It receives no government support, depending solely on the help of supporters, one of which is the Parkmore shopping centre.

Challenge believes that children and families who are offered fun and support, are better able to cope with the pressures of a life-threatening illness.

The Lo Surdo family, will take part in Parkmore shopping centre's annual Santa Arrival Parade, on Saturday at 1.30 when Daniela will arrive on Santa's sleigh with Santa and his live reindeer.

To become a supporter of Challenge, visit [www.challenge.org.au](http://www.challenge.org.au) or call 9329 8474.

"The great thing about Challenge has been that they organise things for the whole family so that the siblings never feel left out."

Through Challenge, the family has been to the movies, Luna Park, the Royal Melbourne Show and during the summer school holidays will spend one week at the Challenge House in Torquay.

"Without Challenge we would never have been able to afford these outings and trips," Mrs Lo Surdo said.

But more importantly, she said the activities put a smile on her daughter's face and made recovery easier.

"When Daniela goes on the camps or the sleepovers, she socialises with children and siblings who are going through similar things as her and this makes her realise that she is not alone."

Mrs Lo Surdo said Daniela had the least aggressive form of leukaemia, and was still able to do weekly dance lessons and



**Bright future:** Joe and Franca Lo Surdo with daughters Kiara, Daniela, Alessia, thank the volunteers and staff of Challenge.

Picture: Lucy Di Paolo

netball. "She copes so well her strength that gets us through."

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