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Amanda's Story



Jared, Amanda and Janie Ostrem are pictured at Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines

by Toni Larson

Amanda Jane Ostrem looks and acts like any other bright, curious three-year-old with the exception of the mask she wears to protect her immune system from infections and for the tubes that run from a port placed in her chest that is used to deliver medications. Those medications and that mask are hallmarks for the treatments Amanda receives for her illness-acute myelogenous leukemia (AML).

There are many strains of AML, and unfortunately, Amanda has one of the most difficult to treat, according to her parents, Janie and Jared Ostrem of Stratford. They explained that the difficulty lies in the change of chromosomes in the cancer cells and makes it necessary to destroy large amounts, if not all, of her bone marrow. In AML the bone marrow makes many unformed cells called blasts which normally develop into infection fighting cells, but don't with this illness. The number of these abnormal cells grows quickly and crowds out the normal white and red blood cells. A bone marrow transplant following several rounds of chemotherapy may have to be used to stop the manufacture of these cells.

AML is an extremely fast growing cancer which Janie and Jared indicated probably began only two weeks before her symptoms appeared. Those symptoms were very typical of a child with a cold and a bump on her knee that hurt. After three days with a mild fever, on May 12th the couple took her to their physician who, after running many tests came to them and said, "I don't know

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Ellsworth has been hit hard – from the flood of '93 and the closing of the only grocery store a decade later, to sad and tragic events in the community at the end of 2007 and the March 2008 closing of..

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South Hamilton Elementary students received certificates for perfect attendance on the last day of school...

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The South Hamilton baseball team suffered a heartbreaking loss to Ogden on Thursday, May 28 in Jewell...

[Hawks give North Polk all it can handle](#)

The South High softball squad gave Class 2A number one ranked North Polk all it could handle before falling 4-1 in Heart of Iowa Conference action on Thursday, May 28 in Alleman. The Hawks scored t..

[Gustafson places 12th at Class 2A State Golf](#)

South Hamilton sophomore Katie Gustafson battled the elements at the American Legion Golf Course in Marshalltown last week during the Class 2A State Golf Meet but still managed to finish in 12th place..

[DMACC President's, Dean's, Grads lists](#)

DMACC's President's List Des Moines Area Community College President Rob Denson recently released the names of students eligible for the Spring Semester President's List...

[Williams and Meyer attend P.E.O. Convention](#)

Jennifer Williams from Chapter GP, Jewell attended the 116th annual Convention of Iowa State Chapter P.E.O...

how to tell you this, but Amanda has leukemia". The couple was instructed to get her to Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines as quickly as possible. The next 24 hours were a whirlwind as more blood tests were run and the type of leukemia began to be identified.

Amanda was given general anesthesia during which her port was put in place, a bone marrow sample was taken and a spinal tap done. Chemotherapy was injected into her spine to begin treatments immediately should the cancer be in her spinal fluid. Thankfully, it was later determined that the cancer had not spread to her spinal fluid or brain.

Amanda began ten days of intensive chemotherapy. Her response, though up and down, was immediate. Jared said one of the physicians noted, "We might have lost her if you hadn't gotten her here when you did." In 28 days following this first round of chemotherapy, another bone marrow sample will be taken to determine the next step, which will likely be more chemotherapy and/or a bone marrow transplant if necessary at that time.

Amanda has not been left in the hospital without a close family member by her side. Jared has tried to work as best he can as an entomologist for Pioneer out of Johnston. He noted that his work has allowed him to be very flexible about his hours this past three weeks. Janie has taken leave for an undetermined time from her job as a respiratory therapist in Ames.

Both are very pleased with the care their daughter has received at Blank. Jared stated that the doctors told them right away, "We're taking out our big guns and going in to this very aggressively". Ups and downs for Amanda have included nosebleeds, vomiting, and an intestinal infection. Through it all the couple has stayed very positive for Amanda. They know she understands she is sick, but can't understand the enormity of her illness. They want her to always feel through them that she is going to be okay and they will always be there to see to it that she gets better. They believe that their positive energy flows to her and is very much a part of her treatment.

Jared and Janie admit that there are times they feel down, but through family, their faith, and the Stratford and South Hamilton communities, they have found themselves lifted up in prayer and hope. They noted there is no way to ever repay all the people who have been so supportive these last three weeks and for the many weeks to come.

Right now, the family is living day by day, enjoying their daughter and

drawing closer as a couple as they support one another through this. They have been told by the hospital social worker that this will be remembered as "their summer of chemo" as they will spend a lot of time in the hospital with vacations at home.

[Obituary](#)

Earl Solberg age 82, of Ames, Iowa died Monday June 2, at Israel Family Hospice House in Ames...

[Simpson College graduation held](#)

INDIANOLA, Iowa – About 420 students graduated with bachelor's degrees from Simpson College during Commencement, which was held May 17, 2008 in Indianola. Lisa Holechek of Hubbard, the daughter o..

[Northwestern College Dean's List](#)

ORANGE CITY, Iowa-The Academic Dean's List for the spring 2008 semester at Northwestern College includes 368 students...

Though the couple lives near Stratford, Jared is a South Hamilton

graduate and his family lives in the community. Janie is from Minneapolis, but her family has been able to visit as often as they can. They belong to the Bethesda Lutheran Church in Jewell.

Jared said he has heard that there may be a donation fund in process at First American Bank in Jewell and possible fund raisers for the family. To follow Amanda's progress and write a note to the family, log on to <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/amandaostrem>

As I watched Amanda tickle her daddy's whiskers and paint on the hospital windows it was very clear she is making the best of a difficult situation. As her adoring parents gently held her and talked with her they let me know in no uncertain terms, "We're never going to give up".

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