

Your children are the rainbow, but your grandchildren are the pots of gold (Sabra Tircuit). Each one of them is precious beyond belief and unique in their own ways.

Evelyn Allen (aka Ev, Evvers, Evvy, Evs, The Evster, Ev-monster) is one of our precious pots of gold; a true gift from God to the world. She is loving, determined, independent, funny, intelligent, beautiful, and very much in charge.

Late in her 4th year, Evy began complaining of pain in her hips. Weeks passed as doctors worked to determine the source, while all the while the pain continued to increase and Evvy's mobility decreased. On March 26th, it was determined that Evvy had stage 4 Neuroblastoma. Neuroblastoma is a fairly rare form of cancer with about 800 cases diagnosed in US children each year. This cancer typically begins in the adrenal glands with the high risk, stage 4 designation meaning that her cancer has spread. In our Evy's case, they found the main tumor in her right adrenal gland with additional tumors along her spine. The cancer was also found in her bone marrow. This was devastating news that caused tears to flow easily; fear for the future and what it might hold; and the overwhelming question of "why."

During the next couple of weeks, the medical team and the support team (Team Evvy) were assembled and put their plans in place. The treatment plan was to last a grueling 18+ months and would involve six rounds of chemotherapy with approximately 3 weeks in between each round; bone marrow and stem cell extraction; surgery to remove the tumors; reimplantation of bone marrow and stem cells; radiation; and immunotherapy to name just a portion of what the future held. The support team plan was also extensive and included everything from care for Ben (and Macy) to logistics; from work schedule modifications to food and funding. All of these were important considerations but the main focus of "Team Evvy" was to ensure that Evelyn, Benjamin, Stephanie and Dustin were thoroughly supported and would not walk this unwanted part of their journeys alone.

5 months have now passed since the Neuroblastoma diagnosis and great progress has been made both medically and mentally. The doctors are reporting that the plan is going well and are pleased so far with the results.

We are so proud of Evvs and how she has handled herself and has braved the examinations, scans, tests, transfusions, 6 rounds of Chemo, surgery, long stays in the hospital, ups, downs, hair and weight loss, and pain. What once was a scared, small child keeping an eye on the hospital door wondering what the next nurse or doctor who passes through it might do to her, has now blossomed into a near-model patient. She confidently struts into the Starfish ward on the 10th floor at Doernbecker children's hospital and owns the hearts of the Staff. She now takes an active role assisting with her own care; wears her hearts/American flag inspired back brace faithfully; and helps Mom and Dad keep her Hickman Port (her surgically implanted "tubies") safe and clean. She has shown great endurance and fortitude and is very inspirational.

We are also proud of Stephanie, Dustin and Benjamin. Their happy lives filled with their daily routines and family outings were turned upside down on March 26th, 2019 and have been drastically altered ever since. They have all sacrificed and done everything necessary to ensure Evs' treatment stays on track including learning all they can about this disease; questioning if the plan can be improved; countless trips and stays at the hospital; giving shots and medication; monitoring Evvy's vitals closely; and altering work schedules. This type of situation can change people forever and sometimes the choice comes down to sink or swim. They have all elected to swim and have shown great growth as individuals, and as a family.

And you should all know we are "very" thankful for all the people who have offered support. In fact, there has been an absolute outpouring of support of all kinds. "Team Evvy" has swelled from a troop of family and close friends to an army; many of whom do not even know her. We can't begin to mention everyone, so we won't attempt to. But please be assured that you are appreciated, and your acts of kindness and generosity will not be forgotten.

These acts have come in many forms including prayers; phone calls; visits; letters; donations of meals, funds and gift cards; morale support and being there; chores; work vacation donations; gifts for Evy; advice; sharing your own experiences; and skilled medical expertise and care. You have all helped to provide Evelyn, Stephanie, Dustin and Benjamin with faith, hope and love for the journey forward. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Thankful and Blessed Grandparents