Leukemia survivor to help other kids who have cancer

By PAUL SWIECH
THE (BLOOMINGTON) PANTAGRAPH
NORMAL, Ill. — Ginny Kreckman, then 3½, was receiving chemotherapy intravenously at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., when an announcement was made that the St. Jude Runners were about to take off for Peoria.

Ginny’s parents, John and Kristin Kreckman, are runners, so John urged Kristin to take a break to help see the runners off as he remained at Ginny’s bedside.

“I stood by the curb, high-fiving all the runners. And I thought ‘God, if you wanted us to run, all you needed to do was ask,’” recalled Kristin, smiling but with tears in her eyes.

“I came back to Ginny’s room and told John ‘I know what we have to do.’”What the Kreckmans have done in the 13 years since then is not only love and care for Ginny, who is considered cured of her acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), but also participating in the Bloomington-Nor- mal-to-Peoria Run.

John and Kristin have participated in the run every year since 1997. At first, they ran with Ginny to raise money for the hospital. Now, they are part of the satellite runs, the LaSal-le-Peru-to-Peoria Run.

“We want every kid who is sick to get better.” Ginny was 3½ years old in summer 2002 when her right leg began hurting.

After treatment, “She seems to be doing just fine,” her mother said. “She’s a success story.” John and Kristin began participating in the run after they moved to Bloomington-Normal in 2012, they joined the Bloom-ington-Normal-to-Peoria Run.

“At the end of the run, when there is this sea of runners entering the (Peoria) Civic Center to kick off the (St. Jude) Telethon, and knowing that we all are running for the same reason, there are a lot of hugs and a lot of tears,” Kristin said.

“I went through it (cancer treatments). I want to help other kids who are going through it.”

“I want them to know ‘You can do this,’” Ginny continued. “I want to help St. Jude in any way I can.”

Kristin nodded. “We run for the next family coming through the door. We run to find a cure (for childhood cancers).”

“One of the beautiful things about this whole event is we get a chance to meet some of the patients,” said Dennis Cler, co-chairman of Bloomington-Normal-to-Peoria Run. “To see a success story like Virginia’s (Ginny’s) — she’s now healthy and fit and able to join the run — that’s what we all want.

“That’s why we’re doing this,” said Cler, who is participating in his 19th Bloomington run. “We want every kid who is sick to get better.”

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“I want to do it,” Ginny said. “I want to do it (cancer treatments). I want to help other kids who are going through it.”

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John and Kristin also have participated in St. Jude Runs to support the hospital in Memphis and the Jim and Trudy Maloof St. Jude Midwest Affiliate Clinic at Children’s Hospital of Illinois, Peoria.

This year, for the first time, the Kreckmans of Normal, will be joined in the Bloomington-Nor- mal-to-Peoria Run by Ginny. Now 16, she is old enough to par-}

The symptoms are very vague,” said Dr. Jane Kanowitz, director of oncology at Bristol Hospital’s Cancer Care Center.

“You might not recognize these symptoms as being anything too abnormal.”

The symptoms, according to Kanowitz, include bloating, weight loss, feeling full quickly when eating, a change in bowel habits and discomfort in the pelvic area.

Ovarian cancer is not a highly-curable form of cancer, although it is considered fairly rare.

About one in every 80 women develop it, but only half are typically cured, Kanowitz said.

Doctors believe ovarian cancer stems from the same genetic mutation that causes breast cancer.

Women can be tested for the mutated gene have about an 80 percent chance of getting ovarian cancer, but they can undergo a prophylactic surgery to prevent the disease from developing.

Kanowitz encourages any woman who suffers from the symptoms for more than a week to consult their primary care physician.

Focusing on Health

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Though, there have been some recent developments, Kanowitz said, including a test to determine if an ovarian mass is benign or cancerous, as well as a drug that, along with chemotherapy, helps prevent ovarian cancer coming back after surgery.

Kanowitz encourages any woman who suffers from the symptoms for more than a week to consult their primary care physician.

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Increase awareness is key for treatment of ovarian cancer

By JUSTIN MUSZYNSKI
STAFF WRITER

September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month and one of the strongest messages doctors try to convey during this month is know the symptoms of this deadly disease.

Ovarian cancer is known as the “silent killer” because the symptoms often don’t appear until the disease is in its advanced stages, and when they do, are sometimes overlooked.

“The symptoms are very vague,” said Dr. Jane Kanowitz, director of oncology at Bristol Hospital’s Cancer Care Center.

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Doctors believe ovarian cancer stems from the same genetic mutation that causes breast cancer.

“Women can be tested for it if there’s history of it in the family, and, or if there’s a family history of breast cancer, especially at a young age,” Kanowitz said.

If it spreads to the abdominal cavity, it can be surgically treated, the odds are it will come back.”

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