



JENNA'S STORY

Jenna Susana Westerholm was born on July 2, 2003. On January 23, 2006 we noticed a small vaginal growth. After an attempted surgery to remove the growth, CT scans, bone tests, etc., we found out on February 8th that the growth was embryonal rhabdomyosarcoma, a soft tissue cancer. Immediately Jenna started chemotherapy, mostly outpatient, for about eleven months. She was declared cancer free but relapsed by her first three month check-up. Her surgeon tried again to remove the tumor, but the margins were not clear. This time Jenna had stronger chemo, all inpatient, staying in the hospital for three to five days.

Halfway through treatment she had major surgery, removing her bladder and other cancerous organs. A piece of her intestine was used to reconstruct a bladder, but it leaked and it required a lot of medical care.

She continued with chemo to kill any remaining cancer cells. This chemo knocked down her immune system severely, so we were in the hospital for blood transfusions and fevers frequently. She also had an NG tube for food, to help her maintain her weight since the drugs made her throw-up. Jenna finished up treatment in February 2007 and was again declared cancer free.

In June we noticed another vaginal growth, but her surgeon thought it was only a prolapse of internal tissues, so surgery was scheduled for June 27th. During surgery we were paged and told that it was actually a golf ball sized tumor, and more major surgery was performed. It took Jenna 19 days to recover in the hospital, spending yet another birthday inpatient.

We decided to try radiation, so in late August Jenna started daily treatment for five weeks. On November 11th she had an MRI to see if the cancer was still there, and it revealed several tumors.

So, with no sure medical options available to her, we decided to stop treatment and go on hospice care. At first Jenna looked amazing and had no pain, but very quickly the tumors took over, sucking the life out of her and causing a lot of pain. As a family, we did a lot of special things, trying to maximize the time we had left with Jenna.

She died on January 22, 2009 at 5:35pm. She was five years, six months, and twenty days old.