



HEB. 10:24

WEARETHESOLUTION

UNITED TO PREVENT
(WATSUP!)

KICKING-CANCER CHRONICLE

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SUPPORTING THOSE WHO HAVE FOUGHT, OR ARE FIGHTING,
THE GOOD FIGHT AGAINST CANCER.

EDUCATING PEOPLE ON HOW TO LIVE AN ANTI-CANCER
LIFESTYLE BY EATING REAL FOOD AND DOING SOME MOVEMENT.

TRIBUTE TO MARY NELSON – “DESIRE TO FIGHT” (EPHRATA, WA)

(SUBMITTED BY HER DAUGHTER LIZ BRIDGMAN)

My mother, Mary Ellen Kemper, was born in Toppenish, WA on May 4, 1946. In 2010 my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, had a partial mastectomy, removal of quite a few lymph nodes and endured six rounds of chemotherapy. She knew she would beat breast cancer and that her time here on earth wasn't even close to being complete.

Unfortunately, she wasn't out of the woods yet. In 2013 she was diagnosed with endometrial (uterine) cancer after ignoring some concerning symptoms for longer than she should have. She asked me to go with her to the doctor appointment because she was concerned

what she would learn and needed another ear to listen after the initial diagnosis. She had everything robotically removed in Spokane, WA. She had the same oncologist, Dr Tucker and some of the same nurses, throughout her 11+ year battle against the cancer monster. Her doctor called her after the

surgery and asked her to come in for an appointment to go over the findings. The cancer had encroached the uterine wall and the recommendation was radiation and possibly some chemo due to the high possibility that it made it to her bloodstream. She chose not to have the recommended treatments because there was no sign of cancer anywhere else in her body at the time.

In 2016 one of the blood work visits had some high markers that concerned her oncologist and asked her to submit to a body scan. The body scan showed cancer in her lungs and needed to start chemo again right away. Another 6 rounds of chemo at which time Dr Tucker told her the growth had slowed and in some spots even reduced in size. This reprieve from chemo would last 18 months.

In 2018 the cancer was growing again and she needed to start another 6 rounds of chemotherapy. Her strength, positivity in the face of effects of chemotherapy and her unshakeable resolve that she was not meant to end this journey yet kept her going for many years past the original prognosis given. Her cancer slowed again & she was able to enjoy another “chemo-holiday”. This one wouldn't last for as long and it was essentially the calm before the storm.



In 2019 her cancer metastasized beyond her lungs to her abdomen and other areas. Dr Tucker advised mom on her options and true to form she chose to fight the beast. Up to now she had endured 18 chemo treatments in 2010, 2016 and 2018. In 2019 she would endure 18 chemo treatments from January through June. These treatments were considerably more difficult on her body. She ended up having a heart attack due to the damage to her heart from the chemo.

Mom was sent home with a cocktail of meds and seemed to be finding a new normal when she started having trouble breathing again. She thought at first it was pneumonia and asked to just go to the clinic, where they prescribed breathing treatments Mom did a few breathing treatments but her heart rate was very erratic and by the next day she was having even more difficulty breathing and asked for an ambulance. Her oxygenation was down to 50 at that point and she had to be intubated and flown by helicopter to Spokane again. Apparently, they had to adjust her heart meds to control the damage to her heart.

In 2020 Dr Tucker found a new form of treatment that included an infusion weekly and a pill taken daily. We were so hopeful this was the answer mom had been praying for when her blood work came back promising. Regrettably, this would not be the case. In 2021 my Mom would continue to decline over the course of the year, both mentally and physically, until she passed on Aug. 3, 2021. She never lost her desire to fight and her faith was stronger than ever.

TRIBUTE TO VEDA NELSON – “READY TO LEAVE” (IDAHO FALLS, ID)

(SUBMITTED BY HER DAUGHTER KAREN ATAMANCZYK)

In the spring of 2001, when she was 83, Veda felt sick. A visit to the doctor meant removing her gall bladder. Months later, the oncologist asked if there had been a biopsy of her gall bladder but there was no record of it, and none of her kids were aware of it. Veda recovered from the gall bladder surgery and seemed fine, but at 83 years old, she just generally began slowing down. She didn't have much appetite. By the fall she was having a lot of pain in her shoulder area. She had cancer and was having radiation. In September she rode to Salt Lake City, UT to visit her kids. Then in Oct she seemed to be getting weaker and less cognizant.



I went to Idaho Falls, ID to spend a week with her, and was with her at the oncologist when he said nothing more could be done. It looked like the cancer was in her pancreas, but also spread thru her abdominal area. By November 9, 2001 several of her children and their spouses gathered in her room to visit and pray for her. Shortly after they left, she quietly slipped. I am grateful that she really didn't suffer much. She was ready to leave this life, and did not want extreme measures taken in treatment.

TRIBUTE TO ERIN "SKUNK" STARR – "TOO OUTRAGEOUS" (SALEM, OR)

(SUBMITTED BY TARA SCHAEFER, HIS GIRLFRIEND)

Erin "Skunk" Starr lived a life that sounded too outrageous to be true. This began back in 2008 when he fought a brain tumor and successfully won that battle with surgery, chemotherapy and radiation. Skunk then went on to become a tattoo artist and left his art on hundreds of living canvases.

On December 10, 2020 Erin had a major seizure at his home. During hospitalization an MRI showed a very small mass was present on his brain. Doctors didn't seem too concerned and had him get a follow-up MRI in April to check on the mass. Erin and his girlfriend, Tara, were shocked when shown the latest images and their hearts dropped upon receiving the diagnosis, glioblastoma, a stage 4 brain tumor. He was told that with another surgery and treatment that he'd have less than 12 months to live, 3 months without it.

On April 22, 2021 Skunk had a 7.5 hour surgery to remove as much of the tumor as possible. He was discharged on April 30, 2021 and was excited to get home and watch the new Mortal Kombat movie with his girlfriend. Sadly, on May 3, 2021, Erin suffered three small strokes. During his stay at OHSU the pathology report came back from testing the tumor. Due to a genetic mutation, chemotherapy and radiation would have little to no effect in treating the remaining tumor. Erin was discharged into the care of his girlfriend and hospice care began a few weeks later as his health declined. On June 29th 2021 the world lost a beautiful soul to cancer. At just 47 years old, he left behind his mother, sister, three daughters and hundreds of friends he loved as family. His first grandchild, a girl, was born in September 2021. Anyone who's ever met Skunk knows how great of a man he was. His laugh was contagious and his humor was unmatched. He could light up any room.

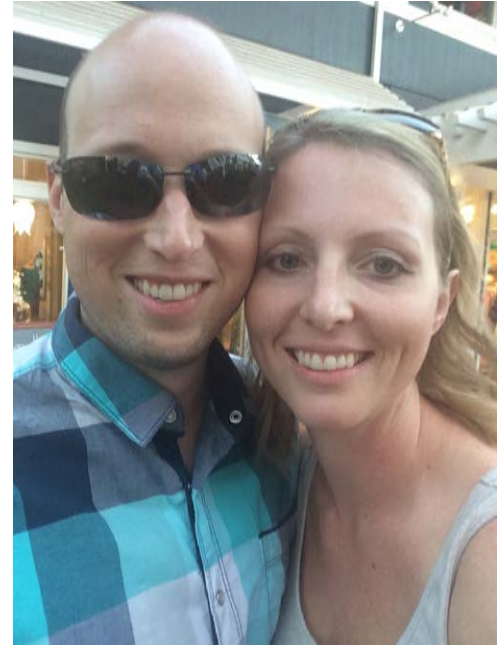


TRIBUTE TO JONATHAN VAN KEULEN - "CANCER CAN'T" (SPOKANE, WA)

(SUBMITTED BY HIS SISTER DR. KRISTINE MEDYANIK)

When I was asked to share the story of my brother I thought, "How can I capture him, his story and the grief left behind?" The truth is, nearly 6 years since Jonathan has passed, the waves still come! The waves come because of the man he was, that we all miss!

Jonathan was diagnosed with osteosarcoma in the summer of 2014. He was 29, two little boys and an incredible wife! To say his life turned upside down that day is an understatement, and if you've had cancer be a part of your story you know this! He pretty quickly began an aggressive regiment of chemo. They called the chemo "red devil" because of how aggressive and awful it was. The rounds lasted several months until it was time to attempt surgically removing the tumor near his knee. In the hospital following surgery he was incredibly miserable following months of being chemo sick and the pain levels he was managing. It was at that time that he realized he had a choice, turn inward and be miserable or focus his energy on finding joy! He realized he could control something to improve the lives of others and find purpose in his diagnosis. That's when Cancer Can't was founded. He and his wife set out to establish a non-profit focusing on improving the lives of cancer patients! In the first year they raised enough money to remodel the oncology ward at the hospital that had become a second home to him.



Following the foundation of Cancer Can't, my little brother had another round of chemo. The disease progressed and the "terminal" word was attached to the big C word. He made decisions at that time to pursue quality of life instead of quantity of time. The whole family loaded up and headed to Hawaii. Memories were made, laughter was plenty, and we lived every minute.

In his final weeks he was able to work with Washington Legislation to get "The Charitable Pharmacy Act". The work he started with Cancer Can't and The Charitable Pharmacy Act continue today and positively impact hundreds of cancer patients. Jonathan lost his battle to cancer, BUT that doesn't change how much I miss him. Since we were children we were rarely able to sit together in serious settings (like church) because we'd start laughing about something random at the same time. I miss all the moments we won't have. For many years I had imagined we'd spend our 30's building our empires and raising our kids then in our 40's we'd travel together with our spouses and go on many amazing adventures. As I approach that milestone I miss him more. He was my best friend, and his story lives in these moments to remind us that CANCER CAN'T take away our joy, our family, our love - unless we let it.

As you are reading this, as you reflect on what matters - remember to LIVE YOUR MINUTES, time is finite. Hug those you love, take the time to care for your health (you only have one body), and remember to DO THE THING, TAKE THE RISK, GO TO THE PLACE, and don't sweat the small stuff. It all becomes small in the face of cancer.