

# Cancer patient beats odds and lives

By Karen Krien

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She beat the odds and is alive today.

On June 27, 2007, Krista Pummer, daughter of Don and Carol Gamblin, St. Francis, was diagnosed with acute lymphoma leukemia. The odds of recovery were not good.

"I was told that there was a slim recovery rate," Ms. Pummer said.

There is a much better rate of recovery in children under the age of 5 and adults over the age of 50, she said. While in the hospital, there were other leukemia patients and four of them had died.

The only cure is a stem cell transplant and at the time of her arrival in Denver, she was so ill, the doctors were not sure she could ever be well enough to have the transplant.

Ms. Pummer became ill on April 18. However, cancer was not diagnosed.

"I was so sick," she said.

The doctors said she had septic arthritic elbow and recommended surgery. She went home and a day later, she was back — sicker than before. This time, they found a hole and aneurysm in her heart and scheduled surgery for May.

However, she continued to become weaker and was going down hill. She was taken to Presbyterian/St. Luke Hospital in Denver. There she was told she had acute lymphoma leukemia.

Her mother said she was alone when she received the sad news.

At that time, she was 98 percent full of leukemic cells.

The doctors started the first dose of chemotherapy that night. She had what the doctors called, "aggressive chemo" and she was in the hospital until August. There was a week break in the chemo and she was able to come home for a short period.

When she went back for the second round of chemo, she stayed at Brent's Place, an apartment for cancer patients. This time she was an outpatient.

She had eight bone biopsies as this was the only sure way the doctors could tell how the chemo was working. The last session in Sep-

tember wiped out her entire immune system. Now she was back in the hospital in isolation. If she were to get any kind of bug or disease, she would not be able to fight it off.

She started radiation therapy in October.

Having a stem cell transplant has its risks including "Graft vs Host" disease. This is when the person's body rejects the transplant and they can bleed to death.

I was scared, Ms. Pummer said, and I didn't know what to do. Then she had a visitor. An 83-year-old man, who had the transplant, talked to her. She knew if she was going to beat the cancer and come back to her kids, she had to have the transplant.

The stem cell transplant was made on Oct. 5. A week later on Oct. 12, she had heart surgery to repair the hole.

She had been told that she would probably be very ill after the transplant but, she wasn't sick at all. In fact, she talked to her mother to tell her that she was eating.

Ms. Pummer's doctor, Mark Brunvand, said she was his "poster child," — that her positive attitude was one of the things that had pulled her through.

"I owe my recovery to God, the doctors, the stem cell donor and all the people who said prayers," she said. "Mom, Dad and my kids were the ones who kept me going."

Ms. Pummer said it took awhile for the cells to build but she was able to come home right before Christmas and she had 98 percent donor cells (in other words, she was cancer free).

"It was the best Christmas present we could have had," Mrs. Gamblin said.

There were ups and downs, highs and lows during the 7-month illness.

"The hardest thing was being away from my kids," she said. "I would go through the chemo again if I didn't have to ever be away from them."

"I had trouble (keeping a positive attitude) when she lost her hair," Mrs. Gamblin said. Leukemia not only is hard on the family but also includes the family, both mentally and emotionally."



**KRISTA PUMMER** celebrated being cancer free on Sept. 14. She would like to talk to other cancer patients with encouragement.

Courtesy of Carol Gamblin

Today, Ms. Pummer's youngest daughter still worries about her being sick again and leaving them.

On Sept. 14, Ms. Pummer's 35th birthday, the Rocky Mountain Cancer Center held a Cancer Survival Reunion and she was able to celebrate being cancer free. It was a joyous day for her and her family. It was also a sad day because some of the people she had known during her time at the hospital had died or were unable to attend.

Ms. Pummer is at home in Goodland with daughters, Davada, 11, and Britney, 7. Jonathan, who is 14, attends school in St. Francis. She plans to organize a "Blood Cancer Walk," and is eager to talk to groups, organizations and individuals about leukemia, how it is detected and the treatment. She will also be a spokesperson for Rocky Mountain Cancer Center and maybe she, like the 83-year-old man, can give reassurance to other cancer patients.

The odds of the cancer returning are slim and after three years, there is very little chance.

"I will have conquered it!" she said.

Her doctor has not released her to go back to work so she is spending quality time with her family. She has a passion for stock car racing. She built her car and was a track official in August.

Last year, she was able to make one round at the race in Goodland. This year, she has raced all year. She was presented with an orange trophy at the last race at the Thomas County Speedway in Colby for being a cancer survivor. The orange signifies the type of cancer she had.

This summer, she built an orange bird bath in her yard out of pieces of stock car as a reminder of the cancer she had and the races she has to look forward to.

To contact Ms. Pummer with questions or to arrange a speaking engagement, call her at 785-899-4179.



**JUNIOR HIGH** Cougars, Ty Carmichael 12, Heath Churchwell 20 make their way down field. Carrying the ball is Martin Veleta 81

Times photo by Darci Shields

# Cheylin junior high has another win

On Sept. 18, Cheylin junior high football team played against Golden Plains and came off with another great win. The final score was 26 to 12.

"We came out a little nervous against the Bulldog's huge line," Coach Nick Ketzner said. "Once we got our defense figured out and started using our blocks the game came to us very smoothly."

Adam Orten had missed the last game and the team was glad to have him back. On the offense, Orten had 13 carries for 142 yards. Keenan Reeh had 13 carries for 146 yards. Ruben Razo had three carries for 14 yards, Walker Janicke had one carry for five yards and Martin Veleta had two carries for 1

yard. Touchdowns were made by Orten, Razo and Reeh.

On defense, Reeh had 10 tackles, one recovery, Orten had eight tackles, one recovery and one interception, and Razo had seven tackles.

Josh Keltz had six tackles, Janicke had four tackles, Caleb Frink had three tackles and one recovery, Heath Churchwell had three tackles, Ty Carmichael had two tackles, Veleta had one tackle and one interception, Eddie Frisbie had one tackle.

Today (Thursday) the Cougars play against Grinnell/Wheatland. Last year they lost to them, this year it's personal!

# Cougars stay one step ahead

By Darci Shields

The Cheylin Cougars junior varsity football team met up with the Brewster/Triplains Titans on Sept 15. The game was continuously close throughout; however, the Cougars seemed to stay just a step ahead.



The Cougars were ahead by two points during the third quarter with the score 22-20, and then stepped up a notch in the fourth quarter running away with the score by beating the Titans 48-32.

On offense, the Cougars had two new starting guards with Erick Estrada and Lance Leonard. Both did a great job of blocking along with Ethan Young and Mitchel Jensen.

In the first half, they wore the defense down and the second half they dominated the line of



**JARED CAHOJ** runs the football as the Titans try to hold him back.

Times photo by Darci Shields

scrimmage making holes for Jared Cahoj and Dalton Magnani to run through.

"Offensively, Brewster had a few big plays but for the most part we held them to short yardage plays, but once in a while they would get loose. We had to make some adjustments with our

corners that took a few plays of them getting beat, but after they figured it out our defense did much better," said Coach Dennis Hengen.

Their next game will be against the Tribune Jackrabbits on Monday at home.



**DEMI SHAHAN** and long-time friend, Stacy Hazuka, have fun looking at all his 90th birthday cards.

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To apply or for more information, contact Karen Krien at the Saint Francis Herald, 785-332-3162 or stop by the office at 310 W. Washington, St. Francis.