



Will and his nephews

Will's Story

June 2, 2008 at 10pm, I went to the ER with pain in my side. I had, had the pain before, but on this day it was not going away and I could not get comfortable. When I got to the ER they ran a blood test and then came back with pain meds and the news that I had Leukemia. I went to Spectrum Hospital to get more tests that night. There it was confirmed I had AML (Acute Myelogenous Leukemia). I had to start treatment the very next day.

June 18 2008, God answered our prayers. The testing I had done that day came back negative and I was in remission. I still needed to complete follow up treatment, but the news was great. Even though I was in remission, I was advised to consider a bone marrow transplant to ensure that I remained in remission. Both of my sisters were tested and neither of them were a match. I still needed a bone marrow transplant and I was feeling very uneasy.

70% of patients who are diagnosed with leukemia, lymphoma and other blood diseases do not have a donor match in their family.

The bone marrow coordinator at Karmanos Cancer Center started looking for a match outside of the family right away. At the time, West Michigan did not have an adult bone marrow program (I was 19) and I had to travel to Detroit for treatment and the transplant. My mom travelled with me and we had to be away from the rest of our family, friends and community. I continued my treatments and thought that it could be God's plan that I would not find a match. The first few search results came up with no matches. Months went on without any luck until December of 2008 when ONE PERFECT MATCH popped up. I knew that I had to seize the chance and get the bone marrow transplant.

On January 24 2009 I received my bone marrow transplant. Following the transplant, I was in the hospital for 3 and a half weeks and then I lived in apartments connected with Karmanos for another 3 and a half weeks with appointments every day. My doctors were concerned with graft versus host disease and other complications that can come up from getting a bone marrow transplant so I had to stay near the hospital in case emergent treatment was needed.

It is now 4 years post-transplant and I am back to my life. I work at my families green house and I do not take any medicine. I cannot Thank God, the doctors in the community and my family and friends for the support that they gave. Not to mention my bone marrow donor. A year after my transplant I learned that my donor was from Germany and we have had some communication via e-mail. Last year Spectrum Hospital in Grand Rapids started an adult transplant program. When the program is fully functioning, patients from West Michigan will be able to be treated here in Grand Rapids, rather than have to travel to Detroit or Ann Arbor.

Thank you for your support of this event!