



Amanda's Journey

By Amanda Bowers

February 4, 2011: Super Bowl Sunday will be a day I'll never forget. It was the day my life changed forever. The day that the painful, debilitating headaches were too much to handle. I was at work and had called my stepmom to tell her I was coming home and needed to be taken to the ER. Something just wasn't right. At this point I had been to every urgent care in town and each had sent me away with pain killers and anti-inflammatory shots; none of which had worked. Upon our arrival at the ER, she demanded I get a CT immediately. After what felt like an eternity, the results finally came back. There was a "mass" on my brain. Those words seemed to echo in my head forever. Quickly, after telling me the news (when I was alone mind you), they said they would have to send me elsewhere as this hospital was too small for something so serious. After my whole immediate family came to say their goodbyes, I was transferred via ambulance to Sparrow in Lansing.

I was kept "comfortable" as possible until the surgeon was available for the consult. In the meantime, I had to fill out my will and power of attorney - everyone was convinced I would not make it. I was 25 years old.

The surgeon came in to discuss what would happen. I didn't feel confident in his judgment so got a second opinion and decided on a highly recommended brain surgeon at U of M hospital in Ann Arbor who had dealt with some rarities. In the middle of the night, I was transferred again, via ambulance, to Ann Arbor. (Worst. Experience. Ever.) By the time we got to U of M I was in agony because they hadn't kept up on my pain meds.

Everything was kind of a whirlwind after that. I had to have a shunt put in for a few days prior to surgery to drain off the spinal fluid that had accumulated on my brain. February 11, 2011, was the day I had surgery to remove the medium sized potato «mass» in my brain. I don't remember much from the surgery itself, and parts afterwards are fuzzy as well. Thankfully, my family kept a journal of what happened. (After everything it was kind of neat to reference back). I was in the hospital for at least a month or so after surgery. I had therapy to make sure there was no damage and that I would return to «normal». I do remember that the left side of my body was paralyzed for a day or so. The nurses would make me try to use my left hand/side for everything to try to get the function to return. After daily CT scans and checkups I was finally able to return home!

About a month later I would return to U of M for emergency surgery to open up a hole in my skull for spinal fluid to drain properly.



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CCS is not affiliated with American Cancer Services

CCS Makes a Difference in Isabella County

- Has been helping cancer patients in Isabella County since 1982.
- Is run completely by volunteers and almost every penny goes directly to meet patient's needs.
- Pays transportation costs in addition to medical expenses.
- Pays for mammograms during National Breast Cancer Month for those without adequate health insurance.
- Maintains at the public library a rack of current National Cancer Institute booklets on many kinds of cancer.
- Supports the Nancy Carey Support Group for women in Mt. Pleasant.
- Your tax-deductible donations, gifts, memorials stay here in Isabella County for research, patient support and education.

Megan Bair to receive "2016 LIVE UNITED" award



We are proud to announce that CCS's Vice President and co-chairperson of the Into the Light Cancer Awareness Walk has been accepted by United Way to receive one of their prestigious "2016 LIVE UNITED" awards that are awarded to "individuals that make a difference in our community". The awards ceremony will be at the PohlCat on Thursday, April 7th starting at 5:30 pm.

Megan is instrumental in organizing and running the main fund raiser for Community Cancer Services, the "Into the Light Cancer Awareness Walk" where last September almost \$40,000 was raised for cancer patients in Isabella County. In the spring, one will find Megan working with the "Girls on the Run" program and offering the young girls mentorship, leadership and a great role model. Megan has definitely made significant contributions to the quality of life in Isabella County. Congratulations Megan!

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A year later at my MRI and surgeon checkup, I would learn that the remaining «mass» they couldn't get had grown 2mm. I was told I would have to meet with an oncologist and discuss a treatment plan to receive radiation therapy. I was scared to death. I had thought this awful thing was behind me. During the summer of 2013 I underwent 31 days of radiation therapy at U of M. I wanted to return to the place that had once saved my life, in hopes they'd do it again. I traveled back and forth from Mt. Pleasant to Ann Arbor to receive my daily treatments. Community Cancer Services made this possible. They reimbursed me for mileage during treatment. This was a huge relief since I was unable to work. I experienced nausea, extreme exhaustion and unfortunately hair loss during treatment. Looking back now, I honestly don't know how I did it and stayed so strong. But I'm happy to say that the treatment I received saved my life. I continue to have annual MRI scans and meet with the treating oncologist at U of M to make sure there is no change. As of this past November, I am 2 years cancer free!

Miles for Miracles

We again want to thank the middle school and high school students in Isabella County, especially Mt. Pleasant for all of their fund raisers for beating cancer in our county. This past year they donated \$6,580.00 to Community Cancer Services. Since they help four cancer organizations, these young adults raised over \$26,320.00. That's a lot of bake sales, school dances, extra circular activities. West Intermediate has already had their kick-off meeting for 2016 and has had numerous cancer survivors speaking to the students. We applaud them and feel very gratified to be part of their fundraising goals.

Suzanne Courser receives Chamber of Commerce Eagle Award

Suzanne Courser was honored on February 27th with one of the Chamber of Commerce's prestigious Eagle Awards for her dedication and passion for helping cancer patients in Isabella County. Suzanne is a fifteen year cancer survivor. She remarked that "her passion is helping other cancer survivors" and that is definitely what Suzanne has been doing for the last fifteen years – helping others in our community survive cancer.

She is a major component of the planning and success of the yearly "Into the Light Cancer Awareness Walk". With her cheerful, smiling, friendly attitude, she is the major backbone of this walk. She has recruited her whole family to help with advance planning and all the work that needs to happen the day of the walk. You name it, and she sees that it gets done from the silent auction, the live auction, talking to the local radio stations, lining up food for the guests, games for the kids, and setting out luminaries. She has had the honor of being the Master of Ceremonies at the Cancer Survivors Ceremony and proudly leads the cancer survivors around the luminary lit pathway on their walk as a cancer survivor.

She even gave up going to her grandson's homecoming football game, his senior year, just to be at the walk – talk about dedication!



Nancy Carey Support Group for Women

This amazing group of compassionate women meets the last Wednesday of each month to provide friendship, information and comfort to those who have had a cancer diagnosis recently or in the past. Women at any stage of diagnosis or treatment are welcome to attend. The meetings are informal, upbeat and informational and begin at 7:00 pm and are held the last Wednesday of each month at Oxford Row/Canterbury club house. Call Giesela Moffitt at 772-1602 for more information.

Important Phone Numbers

Pardee Fund of Isabella County	772-6896	NCI (up-to-date information)	1 800-4CANCER
Community Cancer Service	772-2524	Y-ME: (24 hour breast cancer hotline)	1 800-221-2141

Current CCS Board Members

President	
Bill Sowle.....	773-3673
Vice President	
Megan Wedge-Bair	944-4843
Treasurer	
Mary Ann McPherson.....	772-4673
Service Coordinator	
Vanda Barker.....	772-2524
Acting Secretary	
Deonna Doty	828-6903
Publicity	
Zora Walsh	773-0346
Memorials	
Amy Bourns	506-3443
Historian	
Jane Clark.....	773-3596
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Donna Parr	772-3925
Minde Lux.....	773-3428
Don Bertsch	772-1424
Mary Kay Price	289-5374
Ruth Anne Sowle	773-7648
Clarence Tuma	773-5639
Betty Campbell	773-9639
Diane Fleming.....	772-5556
Richard Fleming	772-5556
Carolyn Baltazar Kaya...203-650-4814	
Sheryl Sias	565-0207
Bill Odykirk	
Nancy Carey Support Group	
Pam Pfau	828-5476
Shirley Wiltse.....	773-7565
Community Liaison Director	
Bill Sowle.....	773-3673
Educational Coordinator	
Karen Williamson	773-5478
Mastectomy Counselors	
Betty Stiff.....	644-2334
Ruth Anne Sowle	773-7648
Newsletter Co-Editors	
Zora Walsh	773-0346
Ruth Anne Sowle	773-7648
Professional Advisors	
Sandra Howell, M.D.	
Somdev Roy, M.D.	

March
COLON CANCER
AWARENESS MONTH



preventable • treatable • beatable



CCS Appreciates the Support of the Community

Thank you to:

- A nice surprise! I will use the CITGO card for my doctor appointments in Midland in January. Christmas blessings to all of the CCS Board Members.
- Merry Christmas to all of the board members! Without you I would surely be in financial ruin. Words cannot describe my sincere thanks. I was certainly surprised to open the Christmas card to find yet another gift of your sincere caring. A gas card! It is my goal to someday be able to give back somehow to your wonderful foundation. God bless each and everyone one of you this holiday season and in the coming years.
- Thank you for your caring and concern. God bless you for all that you do. We appreciate it very much.
- Thank you and CCS for all of the help we receive. He is currently taking an oral chemo called Promalist. He will see his oncologist in Detroit again in February and we are expecting his treatment to change then.
- I and my family cannot thank you enough for the service you provide and helping us through this difficult year. I am so grateful for everything and it sure has been a lot easier fighting cancer with some financial peace of mind with the medical bills and being able to get back and forth to treatment. I cannot wait to be well enough to pay the generosity I have received forward. Bless you all.

Pardee Cancer Fund of Isabella County

Isabella County residents are fortunate to have the Pardee Cancer Foundation available to help with the expenses of cancer. Pardee provides financial support for expenses not covered by insurance to Isabella County residents undergoing cancer treatment. Call 989-772-6895 for more information.

CCS Board of Directors Meetings

CCS Board of Director Meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Commission on Aging building on Lincoln road. New members are always welcome. If you are looking for a tangible way to give back to your community, consider CCS. For more information call Vanda at 772-2524.

New Board of Directors Officers

The following individuals were elected to a two year term beginning January 1, 2016 and ending December 31, 2018: President - Bill Sowle; Acting Secretary - Deonna Doty; Historian - Jane Clark; Community Liaison Director - Bill Sowle; Publicity - Zora Walsh

Mileage Program for Cancer Treatment Travel

Did you know that CCS will help pay your mileage to and from cancer treatment? Last year, 2015, CCS provided almost \$60,000.00 in medical mileage to their clients. Call Vanda, Patient Coordinator, at 772-2524, for more information.

Need a Tax Deduction – CCS is a good Choice

When donating to CCS, you know that your money will be spent to help local people with their struggle with cancer. CCS is a 501-c-3 fully tax deductible organization so all of your donations count.

www.isbellacommunitycancer.org

Check out our web site www.isbellacommunitycancer.org for information about CCS including pictures of our Into the Light Cancer Awareness Walk, past survivors newsletters, and how to apply for aid.

Memorials / Luminary Request Form

Yes, I would like to make a tax deductible donation to Community Cancer Services.

Please accept this contribution in the amount of \$ _____

In Memory of: _____ or in Honor of: _____

Your name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Send to: Community Cancer Services of Isabella County, PO Box 36, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48804-0036

An acknowledgement will be sent to the person or family you choose. Your gift will help fight cancer in a concrete way.



*Please make a luminary in honor of _____
for the "Into the Light" cancer awareness walk this fall.

COMMUNITY CANCER SERVICES OF ISABELLA COUNTY

“Your Local Cancer Organization”

PO Box 36
Mt. Pleasant MI 48804-0036

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In Memory of *Julia Sias*
5/7/93 - 8/19/98

Dx: Brainstem Glioma 12/1/97

Newsletter Donated in part by Julia's family at:
E&S Graphics, Inc. - 989 875 2828

Almost \$40,000 Raised at “Into the Light 2015 Cancer Walk”

The 17th annual Into the Light Cancer Awareness walk was a huge success with almost \$40,000 raised for Community Cancer Services. Thank you everyone who participated for your time and donations to make this a heartwarming experience for our cancer survivors and their caregivers and families!

Top Teams were: Cowabunga Classic, Isabella Bank, Greens Towing, Dean Team, Nancy Carey Support Group, Morbark, Silver Sneakers, Northern Lights, Chip Hill FFA and ICCU Glowtrotters. Thanks to all of you.

We welcomed our own David Verwey back for the Cancer Survivor Ceremony and his traditional song of “We Made it Through the Rain.”

Thanks to all of our sponsors. Our major sponsors contributing over \$1,000 were: Morey Foundation, MidMichigan Health, McLaren Central Michigan, Target Stores, and Cowabunga Classic.

Thank you to the Into the Light committee: Megan Bair, Zora Walsh, Suzanne Courser, Sue Richmond, Harold Cook, Don Bertsch.

Plans are already being made for our 18th annual walk. We will again be looking for volunteers to help

with this annual event. The first planning meeting will be held in April. For more information contact zwalsh1@yahoo.com, Megan at wedge1ml@gmail.com, Suzanne at 621-4096 or log onto our web site at www.isabellacommunitycancer.org.



Women Battling Cancer Can Look Good ... Feel Better

Discover hands-on instruction on makeup, skin care, nail care, and suggestions for using wigs, turbans and scarves. This program is facilitated by trained, licensed cosmetologists.

Monday, March 14 from 9:30 – 11:30 am
Karmanos Cancer Center
1221 South Drive, Mt. Pleasant

Call ACS at 1-800-227-2345 to register for this free program.

Reprinted from McLaren, Community Health Classes spring 2016