

### **Asmussen Family speaks of hope, love and community support**

“A picture’s worth a thousand words,” so the saying goes. One thousand words nor a picture, however, can convey the gratitude of a family toward a community as supportive and loving as Quitman and Wood County.

Our family began a most wearisome and horrendous journey one year ago on July 27, 2007, when our little Sophie was diagnosed at age 4 with a large brain tumor. This summer, we found ourselves searching beyond the surgeries already endured and the failed chemotherapies of the previous nine months of her fight. We searched, prayed, and sought counsel from our families and friends as to how best to heal our daughter. The therapies offered by Envita Natural Medical Center of Scottsdale, Arizona, became the beacon of hope we so desperately needed and prayed for.

On June 25, 2008, with great urgency and purpose, we called together our closest and hardest-working acquaintances for a meeting on how best to raise funds to get Sophie to Envita as soon as possible. With a long explanation of the issues and a tearful plea for help, we petitioned those gathered to help. That night, in a circle of prayer, this blessed group began to facilitate a miraculous marathon of events to benefit a little girl deserving of the best care possible.

The following Thursday, July 3, Quitman witnessed a pink parade of individuals with buckets in the streets across our town and the fundraising effort was born. In that one day of fundraising alone, volunteers collected just under \$20,000. Miraculous does not begin to adequately describe the outpouring of generosity experienced in six hours time.

We were able to get Sophie to Arizona on schedule, arriving there for our consultation appointment on Tuesday, July 7. We started her treatments the very next day and experienced such humility and gratitude to be financially equipped to make the down payment without delay.

As we spent the next weeks in Arizona pumping Sophie with loads of wonderful new medicine and loads of hope, Quitman and the surrounding area continued to work on our behalf. From little children selling cookies to adults running around a softball field, this town reached deep down into their hearts and pockets to benefit our child. What we experienced in the coming

weeks is no less than the ultimate gift. To have the opportunity to see the true beauty of humanity, the kindness of people whom we have lived among for years and never showed one kindness to, the generosity of those who do not have anything extra to give, and the cumulative voice of prayer and support echoing over the miles two states away to help us achieve our goal is utterly and completely indescribable.

As we sat in the treatment room at Envita and watched the hope flood Sophie’s body through an intravenous tube, we thanked you in the deepest places of our hearts for the gift of opportunity. As we paid for the hotel room to give us a home away from ours, we thanked you for the gift of hospitality and comfort. As we experienced Daddy’s ability to fly back and forth between Quitman and Scottsdale, we thanked you for the gift of a united family. Most of all, as we continued to watch the numbers increase in the donation accounts, we thanked you for helping us bring Sophie toward her miracle.

Recent MRI scans show that Sophie’s tumor has not grown for four months, the longest time period without tumor growth she has experienced since diagnosis. From early May to late August, the pictures of the tumor are identical with no detectable changes whatsoever. We truly believe the six weeks of therapy offered to Sophie this summer at Envita Medical Center made the difference.

While Sophie is considered stable for now, she must remain stable or experience tumor shrinkage within the next 6 to 8 months to be considered stable enough to come off of therapy and enter the maintenance phase of her healing. The next months will reveal how close we are to ending the treatment phase of our journey. Sophie continues to enjoy the blessing of not experiencing any side effects from the tumor or the new medicine and supplements.

Sophie is currently receiving the medicine from Envita orally rather than intravenously, which may not be as effective. While cheaper than the IV therapy Sophie received at Envita Medical Center, her oral medications and supplements cost about \$250 a week and the money raised is going toward maintaining her current health. At some point in time either when the tumor dictates or time and money allow, our family will travel back to Arizona to complete the round began this

summer, as six weeks was only one half of the complete round. Our mission is not yet complete.

The fundraising effort thus far yielded enough money to complete the first six weeks of therapy, including hotel expenses, airfare, and food. All expenses included, the cost averaged out to \$10,000 a week. Though we do not know at this time when we will return to Envita Medical Center, we do know that we will definitely return.

We are encouraged by Sophie’s stability at this time but we do know that we must stay aggressive to keep her healthy. Because of the certain need to return to Arizona to complete the IV therapy, the Sophie Jars will remain in the area businesses as your extra pocket change truly adds up to significant amounts, beyond what you can imagine. In addition, Sophie will remain on the oral medication and supplements for the next several years to ensure the tumor stays at bay. Thus, as we continue our journey toward her complete healing, we thank you for continuing your support of our family with your prayers and generosity.

Please know that we look forward to the opportunities that arise for us to give back the kindness and generosity you are showing our family. Until then, from the depths of our hearts, we ask that you accept our gratitude in the form of two little words. Thank you.

Note: Look for upcoming fundraisers in November sponsored by the Quitman Running Club and the Lindale Fun Factory.

