

## Alexis' Story

I took Alexis to the emergency room on July 25, 2005, and was told she had something wrong with her blood. She was five years old at the time and had her first ambulance ride in a Children's Mercy ambulance. The first two days were filled with tests to determine what type of cancer she had and getting her port placed. Alexis was diagnosed with T-CELL ALL Leukemia two days later. She resided on 4 Henson, the HEM/ONC floor in the hospital, for 8 days. The nurses and care assistants were wonderful! It didn't matter how many times my family and I asked the same questions over and over...the nurses took their time to answer everything we asked. They even went as far as to provide information on paper for us to refer back to.

When you are told your child has cancer, it takes all you have just to function. Anything we needed was taken care of. When we cried, the nurses often cried with us. The HEM/ONC unit is something special. There's a playroom for the kids, and when they can't leave their rooms toys, movies and games are provided for them. There's also a parents' room that has a washer/dryer, a kitchenette and a computer for Internet access. It serves as a quiet haven for when you need to get away from it all.

For the next 18 months this became our second home during many hospital stays. There are so many wonderful people: Dr. Gamis, Joy Bartholomew, the nurses in HEM/ONC, the child life team and the activities department staff. We have met so many other families and now share bonds with them. Alexis was encouraged to attend Camp Quality in our area by her doctors and nurses. When she returned home she was so excited to tell us that some of her nurses were her buddies there, as well as Dr. Gamis and Joy showing up to visit one day (who she got to give hugs to). These staff members are a family to us! They get to know you on a personal level and treat you like their family also. At the HEM/ONC clinic the children celebrate all holidays. Many times we've worn our Halloween costumes to clinic a week before, just so Alexis could show all the nurses her costume. When she received her last treatment, all the kids in clinic that day got an ice cream party to celebrate, complete with balloons and a gift provided by the hospital.

Alexis just celebrated her three-year remission on August 12. She still gets excited when it's time to go to clinic every month. Imagine...a child happy to go to the hospital! Even today when she gets a cold she always tells me "Mom...you'd better call Joy." She still looks for a reason for extra trips to Children's Mercy. I remember when we were told that Alexis would be followed in clinic until she graduated high school. "Unbelievable," was all I could think. The walls in the clinic are filled with collages of pictures from patients that are babies to senior pictures. This hospital is truly amazing!! It has saved my child's life. I thank God every day for the wonderful care she has received at Children's Mercy!

*Bobbi Barnes - Hamilton, Missouri*



*Alexis (Alex)*



*Tanner, Bobbi and Alexis @ Children's Mercy Hospital*



*Alexis  
and her brother Tanner*



*Alexis*