

## Local News

### Community unites behind boy with cancer diagnosis

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By [Matthew Stolle](#)

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KASSON -- Ever since her son, Nathan, was diagnosed with leukemia, Yvonne Braun has marveled both at how quickly news has spread about her son's condition and the speed with which neighbors, friends and strangers have offered to help.

Yvonne and her husband, Todd, learned about their son's diagnosis three weeks ago, on a Friday. By the next morning, a neighbor down the street was organizing a group of Nathan's classmates to walk in the Relay for Life fundraiser.

"I was just overcome," Yvonne said.

Large groups of Nathan supporters circled the track at the Kasson fairgrounds, wearing orange T-shirts that read, "I wear orange for Nathan." Their group alone raised an estimated \$1,300 for the American Cancer Society.

And the offers of help to Nathan and his family haven't stopped there.

There was a recent Festival in the Park fundraiser for the family. Orange T-shirts continue to be sold. Nathan has been named honorary captain of the Kasson-Mantorville High School football team in its Sept. 11 game against Lourdes High School.

Knowing that chemotherapy would cause Nathan to lose his hair, his parents acceded to an oft-repeated ambition of Nathan's to get a mohawk. In an act of solidarity, a group of Nathan's classmates followed suit and got mohawks too.

"Nathan is a strong competitor, and he can fight through this," said 10-year-old Tyler Wanous, a close friend who has known Nathan since kindergarten and who was soon sporting a mohawk.

Even people with tenuous connections to the family have pitched in with help. Like Yvonne, Mantorville resident Jennifer Grey runs a day-care center, and every year her kids operate a lemonade stand out on her front lawn. Money raised from lemonade sales went to the American Cancer Society.

This year Grey, who has a son in Nathan's class, and her day-care charges ranging from age four to seven, decided that their lemonade sales would go to Nathan and his family. They raised \$450, twice the amount of previous years.

"The turnout was amazing. People were just driving by, handing out \$20 bills out the window," Grey said.

The object of all this attention and outpouring of support remains in good spirits, but it obviously has not been an easy time for the 10-year-old Kasson boy.

Yvonne said she first became aware that something was wrong when Nathan came down with a persistent cough. Usually an active boy, Nathan was uncharacteristically listless. Complaining of feeling sick, Nathan was heading to the bathroom when he passed out. Yvonne set an appointment to see a doctor, and as they were walking to the van, Nathan passed out again. He passed out a third time when he stood up to have his blood pressure taken at the hospital.

"He went down hill so fast," Yvonne said. "He looked too sick for someone who had just started



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A number of supporters wearing orange T-shirts proclaiming, "I wear orange for Nathan," walked in the Dodge County Relay for Life on behalf of Nathan Braun, raising \$1,300 for the American Cancer Society.



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Knowing that chemotherapy would soon cause Nathan Braun to lose his hair, Nathan's parents let him get a mohawk haircut. Nathan's friends soon followed suit. They are from left, front row, Austin Rendler, Nathan Braun, Alex Miller and Tyler Adam. Back row is Max Kundert and Tyler Wanous.

Max Kundert and Tyler Wanous.

throwing up hours ago."

When doctors finally came up with their diagnosis -- T-cell lymphoblastic leukemia -- Nathan was put on chemotherapy the next day. His treatment regime is expected to last three years, with six months of fairly intense therapy, followed by two-and-half years of maintenance treatment.

Now in his fourth week of chemotherapy, Nathan is "really doing good" with his treatments and his prognosis is good, Yvonne said.

That's not to say there haven't been setbacks. Nathan had to return to the hospital after a blood clot developed in his leg in the area where an IV had been inserted. Blood clots also were found in his lungs. Doctors have told the Yvonne their development during chemotherapy is not uncommon, and Nathan is now taking blood-thinners for them.

Yvonne said she has been overwhelmed by the support her family has gotten from friends and those in the community. That, and her son's smile continue to buoy her.

"He still is smiling. He's got a great sense of humor. I can't believe how well he's done," Yvonne said. "When you're in his room, it's only smiles."

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