



Lauren Alexis Ballard was born on May 29th 2006. She was a happy healthy little girl. At 2 years of age she started complaining about tummy aches. Then she started to have unexplainable fevers. After numerous doctor visits the doctors finally realized that something serious was going on. On March 16, 2009, we were sent to The Children's Hospital in Iowa City where we found out that Lauren had a huge tumor growing out of her kidney. The doctors assured us that her type of cancer had a good survival rate but we had our doubts. The giant tumor was causing extreme pain, dangerously high blood pressure and consuming her blood. She needed chemotherapy to begin right away to start shrinking the tumor that was trying to take her life. The next 28 days were spent in the hospital as doctors worked to help her get better. She was finally released from the hospital a few days before Easter. Lauren had many surgeries, biopsies, chemo and radiation. In September she finished her treatment. Lauren's brother Tre was born. We were so excited to get back to a normal life.

In October Lauren began having pain in her stomach. When it got so bad that she couldn't sleep I took her to the doctor. He sent us to Iowa City where a CT scan showed that her left lung was collapsed, filled with fluid and cancer- a relapse. The doctors informed us that she would need to stay at the hospital for her next course of chemotherapy because it would make her very sick. Her chance of survival dropped to 50%. She had more radiation to her lungs. After 9 months of treatment she was declared cancer free. In December Lauren had routine scans which showed new spots in her lung. Doctors performed a biopsy on her lung and the results showed that the cancer was back. We were devastated. Doctors weren't sure what to do for Lauren since there had only been a handful of kids who had relapsed twice with her type of cancer. They decided to try a couple of new chemo drugs and attempt a stem cell transplant. They gave her less than 20% chance of surviving at this point. The next few months were spent in the hospital getting chemo and treating the side effects of the chemo. In May we found out that our health insurance would not pay the \$200,000 for the transplant so we stopped treatment and went home. We didn't know how much time Lauren had left so we spent the summer having lots of quality time with family and friends. In August our social worker informed us that Medicaid approved Lauren and would pay for her transplant. We were ecstatic. Lauren had high dose chemo which killed every blood cell in her little body. On September 29th she got her own stem cells to grow back her blood. She was very sick, but by the end of October she was well enough to come home. It took 6 months for her body to recover from all the side effects. Today doctors are shocked at how healthy she is.

