

Lilli Curry, center, is a 14-year-old Katy student with Ewing sarcoma. The Curry family is working diligently to raise funds for childhood cancer research, while enjoying precious time with their daughter.

“We’re directing our focus and attention to childhood cancer research because it receives so little.”

- John Curry



### Rare Diagnosis

In 2011, Lilli Curry was a happy, energetic 11-year-old when she began having strange leg pain. The doctors initially diagnosed it as growing pains, and assured her it would pass. Although inconsistent, the leg pain continued to come and go for months. When the Curry family insisted on more tests, they received the most devastating news of their lives. Lilli had Ewing sarcoma, a rare bone cancer with a 10% to 30% long-term survival rate. Upon hearing the diagnosis, Lilli’s mother Kay says, “It was a complete shock. She had always been healthy.” Although unprepared for the news, the Curry family has since held more tightly to each other, and to God, than ever before. Lilli remains hopeful, but says she sometimes wonders what could happen. “You think about what would happen if you would die,” says Lilli.

### One Tough Little Flower

In her initial treatment, Lilli endured 17 rounds of chemotherapy, removal of the tumor from her pelvis, and a complete hip replacement. She relapsed in 2013 and experienced another eight chemo cycles, two surgeries, and five weeks of radiation. Now, the cancer has metastasized to her lungs, and she has undergone five more cycles of chemotherapy.

In her cancer journey, Lilli says, “Chemotherapy is the most difficult part.” After surgeries, she can still read and draw - what she loves doing most. But during the week of chemo treatment, she feels too sick to even eat or drink. Despite these difficulties, Lilli’s father John says, “She has such a great spirit about her. She loves life so much that when chemo week is over, she is bouncing back and is so happy to be more normal.”



# Lilli's Hope

The Curry family fights for a cure for their daughter while bringing awareness to childhood cancers

*Written by Lacey Kupfer Wulf | Select photography by Anetrius Wallace*

Today's Katy teens have to juggle a lot of things. Academics, extracurricular activities, hobbies, family, and friends. As a cancer patient, Lilli Curry deals with all of those things and more. Chemotherapy, numerous medications, losing her hair, and other life-threatening issues no 14-year-old should ever have to face. That's why the Curry family is trying to do something about it.

## Katy Community Support

In addition to treating Lilli's cancer, the Currys have dedicated their time and efforts to address the lack of basic awareness of childhood cancer and funding for research. John says, "All cancers are bad and should receive focus and attention. We direct ours toward childhood cancer research because it receives so little." Kay and other cancer parents created and distributed handouts to local hospitals, doctors' offices, and schools to show that childhood cancer isn't as rare as people think.

Following their example, friends in the Katy community have stepped up to help the Currys personally with spreading awareness. For example, Christine Cagle frequently brings meals to the Currys. Sean Fecht, a

neighbor whose daughter died in 1996 of a rare soft tissue cancer, has designed a T-shirt to support "Team Lilli" and offers an understanding ear to her parents.

Both Cagle and Fecht helped coordinate with Nottingham Country Elementary, Memorial Parkway Elementary, Memorial Parkway Junior High, and Taylor High School to "Be Bold, Go Gold" for childhood cancer awareness month last September. As part of this effort, these women and a few students made gold ribbons for the staff to wear, ribbons to go around trees and light posts, and banners and signs hung inside and outside of the schools. In all these efforts, John says of friends from church, the neighborhood, and Scouts with gratitude: "Katy is a great community that's very caring."

In 2014, 15,780 new cases and 1,960 deaths among children ages newborn to 19 were projected, yet very little funding goes to children's cancers. According to cancer.gov, less than 5% of the federal government's total funding for cancer research is dedicated to childhood cancers each year. And even more disturbing is this sad statistic: The FDA has approved only one drug to treat childhood cancer in the last 20 years.

### Hope for the Future

As impressive as their efforts have been so far, the Currys acknowledge that much still needs to be done. More awareness leads to more funds for research, which could lead to safer cures and healthy, normal lives for children after cancer. Next September, Kay hopes to expand Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to all schools in Katy ISD. Fecht adds, "I would also like to try to make gold ribbon advertising that we can do in the community a yearly event, similar to every October for breast cancer awareness." Until then, the Curry family focuses on researching potential clinical trials specifically for Lilli's cancer, completing her treatment, spreading awareness, and enjoying precious time as a family. **KM**

*LACEY KUPFER WULF is a freelance writer who loves writing about awe-inspiring people and how they make the world a better place.*



The Curry family at Katy Heritage Park in their Team Lilli T-shirts



Lilli is a work-from-home student at Memorial Parkway Junior High

## Head-Shaving Extravaganza!

The Curry family stays as positive and hopeful as possible. They recently hosted a head-shaving party in support of Lilli and the St. Baldrick's Foundation, the largest private funder of childhood cancer research in the U.S.

### Love and Support for Lilli

More than 100 Lilli supporters came to the head-shaving event to show their love for Lilli and donate to the cause. Originally, six people committed to shaving their heads and, in the end, 13 people shaved their heads, including Lilli's mom Kay and her brother Chas. The Currys have raised \$20,000 to help childhood cancer research.



Lilli's dad, John, took his head-shaving in stride



Lilli's mom, Kay, happily shaved her head in support



In total, 13 supporters shaved their heads for Lilli

### How to Help

To donate to St. Baldrick's for childhood cancer research on behalf of Lilli, visit [stbaldricks.org/participants/Kay](http://stbaldricks.org/participants/Kay)

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