

BATTLING THE BIG "C"



Caring for Cathy

By TRAVIS ROEMHILD
 AHWATUKEE FOOTHILLS NEWS

For two sisters in a family that has had more than its share of rough times, faith is of the utmost importance looking forward.

Cathy Staats is battling brain cancer. The malignant brain tumor, Glioblastoma Multiforme Grade IV, growing on the right side of her brain is the third occurrence since she was first diagnosed in late 2008.

The battle continues daily. When Staats underwent that MRI three weeks ago it shocked her family to see that the tumor had returned. Plans were in place for her to undergo a clinical trial in Israel using a personalized vaccine, DCVax-Brain, created with antigens removed from Staat's brain tumor and her own white blood cells. But the vaccine would not be effective if the tumor was present.

That was when she was notified of a type of gene therapy that was unique. Two weeks later Cathy was injected with a virus, Toca-511, directly into the tumor on her brain. Its job was to attach itself to every cancer cell. Next she will receive the antiviral, which has worked to destroy cancer cells in 100 percent of

previous cases.

Only she is the first human being that this procedure has ever been tried on.

"They have been testing it on lab animals for the past five years with 100 percent success," Staats said. "I'm hoping that when it is over, I feel the difference and my brain goes back to where it used to be."

If all goes well, Cathy will soon be on her way to Israel. But with a total cost of around \$110,000, insurance does not help any, her family came through in bringing about donations from all over the country.

"With me and Cathy's husband, Toby, and our brothers and their wives, we were able to tap many resources to help out," Terri Wold, Staats' sister, said. "So far we have raised about \$70,000. Because she has to stay there for three weeks, we are hoping to get around \$150,000 for her whole trip."

This procedure is administered in the United States, but only for people who are newly diagnosed. According to her website, www.FaithforCathy.com, "Israel has obtained all the required permits from the U.S... to allow tumors



to be transported to a hospital where the vaccine is approved for use."

"It sounded like an incredible door had opened," Staats said. "We have no doubts about the benefits of this procedure."

Wold said that survival rate is increased to more than 20 percent. That is a significant increase from the 3 percent figure that was given to Cathy early on.

"We are buying her time," Wold said. "We all knew from the start that she is going to beat this."

Going back to the beginning, it was Wold who was in the hospital in late 2008. She had just received a liver transplant and was recovering in her home. Staats and her family, who live in Tatum Ranch, were visiting and showing their support.

It was at that time Staats noticed a tingling in the fingertips of her left hand. Then the sensation began to spread over the left side of her body. After undergoing an MRI, it was confirmed that a tumor was growing.

"It was something you never think about, something that could never happen to you," Cathy said. "And I felt from day one, I have Christian faith, I have the grace of God in me. There are lots of prayers and lots of positive thinking. Terri's fine, I'm going to be fine."

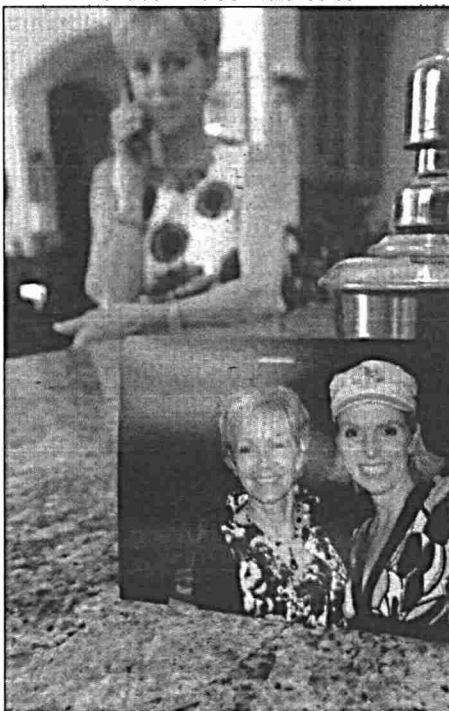
Those who would like to show support can visit www.CaringBridge.org/visit/

CathyStaats or www.FaithforCathy.com.

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Brian Johnson/AFN

Terri Wold is shown on a conference call with her sister who lives in north Phoenix.