

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to share the incredible story of my son's battle with leukemia, and the blessing of our friends at THANKS, who have walked this road with us.

Ethan was diagnosed with ALL in April of 1997, at just 3 years old. He suffered a spinal relapse in 1998, while on maintenance therapy. He then underwent a bone-marrow transplant in 1999. Then unfortunately, was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2000.

It was at that point, when U of M could do nothing more for him, that we began searching for answers elsewhere. In answer to our prayers, we found the Oasis of Hope hospital in Mexico, where they taught us the cause of cancer (for my son, it was "benzene" in his bone-marrow). We were taught to juice powerful, nutritious foods that contained the antioxidants needed to recover and prevent the reoccurrence of his disease.

We met our friends at THANKS as we began the battle to bring Ethan back to health.

I was a desperate single mom, who had only been able to work periodically during the previous 4 years of Ethan's treatment. The emotional and financial toll of our experience was overwhelming and now we were told there was still much more we needed to do.

Ethan would need daily treatments, not covered by insurance, to continue to remove the benzene from his bone-marrow, and to prevent yet another relapse. The specialist that would be helping us was in Texas and that would require travel expenses.

Imagine how my prayers were answered when I received a phone call from THANKS, telling me they were here to help make sure that Ethan would receive the treatment that he

*needed. My household expenses exceeded my income and our very home was in jeopardy. Though I would do anything I could to prevent losing Ethan to this disease, I understood that I could not continue to do this alone. The compassion and understanding I received from our new friends is hard to describe. I felt as though we had a new family that had gathered around us to support, encourage and relieve us from this painful burden.*

*Truly every parent is able to relate to the fear of losing their child. Though, as you can imagine, nothing comes close to actually living that nightmare. Cancer is a senseless, merciless, insidious disease. How incredible it is that our friends at THANKS are eager to walk again and again with families who are struggling with a crisis that does not seem to end and to be part of a story where the outcome may well be the loss of a precious, innocent child.*

*Ethan's story, thanks be to God, is turning out to be one that has a hope-filled ending. Though he has complications with his eyes, heart, hormones and muscles due to the many years of chemotherapy, radiation and the steroids used, they are being managed and consistently showing signs of improvement because of his continuous care. Ethan has thrived on the love and attention he has received from so many strangers who have become friends. I believe there is great purpose in all that we have endured and my deepest, heartfelt gratitude goes out to all those who have given so much of themselves, their time and support to Ethan and our family.*