

TANNER

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With the arm swelling, the Spragues headed for the ER at Vidant Chowan Hospital. X-rays detected no breaks, but the doctor did see a mass in Tanner's right arm.

"We believe that that (fall) happening was just a godsend because his tumor was so small, it would have taken a long time to find the tumor or be able to notice it," Holly Sprague said, adding that a later diagnosis could have resulted in a much different prognosis.

The next day his primary care physician sent him to Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters for an MRI. It was not clear whether the tumor was attached to the bone itself or just very close to it, Holly Sprague said.

The family went back to CHKD two days later, and was sent to oncology, even though no one had said the word "cancer." Orthopedic doctors reviewed Tanner's test results and thought perhaps doctors in other places might be better able to treat Tanner. They shared test results, and doctors from the Washington Cancer Institute at Georgetown University Hospital diagnosed periosteal chondroma, a benign cartilage tumor. All the doctors were in agreement, and the Spragues felt relieved.

And so, just over a month after Tanner's fall, the family went to the Institute in Washington, D.C. for a simple surgery to remove the tumor.

"We felt good about it," Holly Sprague said. "Even after the surgery, they thought it was benign."

Less than two weeks later when they went back for a follow-up, doctors said it was healing well and looked great.

"Now we need to talk about the pathology," Holly Sprague remembers the doctor telling them. "It's come back as osteosarcoma. I lost it and started crying."

The D.C. doctors had already consulted with CHKD, so the family came home to tell their families



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Tanner lost his hair but keeps his smile.

Holly's parents in Hertford and Shane's in Charleston, S.C. - what was happening and prepare to go back to CHKD. A port was put in the following week and Tanner started chemotherapy.

The Spragues said when CHKD looked at the pathology report, there was some question about the margins — the area around the tumor — and whether there might be any cancer cells there. That, combined with the misdiagnosis at Georgetown, gave the Spragues pause.

"We weren't satisfied with 'maybes,'" Holly Sprague said, so they went to the sarcoma center at Duke University Hospitals for a second opinion. Duke requested tissue samples from Georgetown, did their own testing and felt that there was still a positive margin.

"We knew we had to do everything that we can to prevent this from coming back," Holly Sprague said. "Recurrences take you to another level."

The decision was made to remove the ulna in Tanner's right arm, where the tumor had nestled, and replace it with the fibula and surrounding blood vessels from his left leg, an 11-hour surgery.

Soft tissue biopsies done during the surgery came back clean.

"Our main goal was to get it (cancer) all out and it's all out," Holly Sprague said.

"All margins now are negative, so we are very blessed and thank God for that."

Five days later, Tanner underwent skin grafts.

Tanner is now in a wheelchair recovering from the surgery. He can put no weight on the arm or leg until it heals well. X-rays are scheduled for this week to check progress. Once enough wound healing has taken place, Tanner will resume his chemotherapy.

He is considered cancer-free at this point.

Tanner has known and been a part of his diagnosis and treatment plan from the beginning.

"Tanner knew from the start," Holly Sprague said. "We haven't kept anything from him at all. Things have been explained to him through the whole process."

"When we told him about the second surgery, he said, 'Then I have to have the surgery because you have to make sure you get it all out.'"

Tanner has faced the entire ordeal with amazing aplomb, according to both of his parents.

"He's a very grown up 9-year-old," Shane Sprague said. "He's had a great dose of adulthood over the last year. It definitely has changed his personality in some things."

But through it all, the honor student with a million dollar smile who answers questions with the best of Southern manners,

has been amazing.

"He's well-mannered with lots of drive (and) that's helped him through," Shane Sprague said. "He goes to chemo with a smile on his face, ready to go. He lets the side effects roll when he can. He stays positive. He's not a complainer."

And Tanner reports that he's doing really well writing and eating with his left hand.

The family has bonded as they've faced this crisis together. While their priorities have always been centered on faith and family, they don't take things for granted and they appreciate how they've all pulled together using their individual strengths to fight the illness.

"Cancer in general is just something that will just change you forever," Holly Sprague, who lost her father to cancer as a youngster, said. "I sure have let a lot of things go and slide that would normally maybe bother me, and now I'm just like, oh, that's nothing!"

"Just watching him some days when I might be having a day when I'm just not with it or I'm just not as strong that day, and I'll look at him and I'll think to myself, all right, you know, you need to stop because look at him, look at what he's going through so you just need to pull it together."

"It makes you look at a lot of things really differently, just the every day things people take for granted," Shane Sprague added. "The reality is that we don't know whether it's going to come back and whether we're going to have to battle this again a second round — You just have to keep your faith that God is gonna help you through it. You keep your faith and you press forward. We live our lives right now moment to moment, day to day."

What has overwhelmed them has been the outpouring of support from so many places. A child in Tanner's class at school last year wanted to do something and decided to sell Team Tanner T-shirts as a fund raiser for Tanner's family. That was followed by several fund raisers, donations and kind-

nesses shown to the family that they have just been taken aback.

"We've just been completely blown away by everything," Holly Sprague said. "We are very thankful and appreciative. We want to thank the community and surrounding counties for all the love and support they've given to us."

Sometimes it's tough to accept help and share a story, but the Spragues were told from the beginning that they should.

"You need to talk about it, don't hide anything, it is what it is," Holly Sprague said they were told. "When people want to help absolutely let them help. Just say 'thank you' and you let people help you."

So they have shared their story and people have been wonderful, they said.

A Team Tanner Facebook page has helped them update family and friends, as well as provided a vehicle for others to send encouragement and support.

The family is speaking out about what they're going through to help spread awareness of childhood cancer, especially during September, which is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

This year, 10,380 children from birth to 14 years are expected to be diagnosed with cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute. Over 1,200 children are expected to die. The Institute reports that cancer death rates have fallen by about 70 percent over the past 40 years, but cancer is still the leading cause of death from disease among children.

The effects of childhood cancer treatment are particularly concerning, the Institute's website states, because it can lead to physical and emotional concerns even after the treatment ends, and sometimes those effects are profound.

Tanner has also met new friends through what he's been through, as has his family.

"I've met a lot of cool people," Tanner said. "I've made a lot of new friends."

And they said the CHKD prediction that the hospital

would become their home away from home has come true.

"There's always something fun going on up there for the most part," Shane Sprague laughs. "They let you get in trouble!"

Nerf gun fights, squirting each other with syringes and other shenanigans help brighten days for children going through some tough treatments- and parents facing heart-wrenching diagnoses and decisions.

"There's that immediate connection (with other families at CHKD)," Holly Sprague said. "You know how each other is feeling."

"It's kind of like dorm life, you come out in the morning in your pjs to get your coffee. We have our own little section so you have the same nurses all the time, so it's great. You really feel connected (with patients families and medical staff.)"

"I think we know some of the people at CHKD better than we know our families," Shane added. "While you're there, you're helping each other — buying each other dinner, picking up a cup of coffee for someone when you go get one for yourself."

Holly Sprague said people often ask her how she can be so strong, how she can talk about what her only child is going through.

"You don't know how you'll act or respond until you're put in a situation," she said. "You are stronger than you think you are. This is what it is. This is the way it is right now and we'll deal with it. At the beginning, you cry a lot, but then you just get into this mode where you are just determined."

And there have been sad times as some of those with whom Tanner made friends lost their battles.

"It's tough," Shane Sprague added. "Other children weigh heavily on your heart. Obviously we're facing a situation where there can be bad consequences."

But the Spragues won't dwell on the negative.

"There's been so much positive," Holly Sprague said. "There's been so much good that's come. Hey, we're gonna' beat this!"

WIND

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begin copies of the transcript of the hearings will be provided to Commissioner Emmett Winborne, who was absent last week, and to Commissioner Ellis Lawrence, who was absent Thursday.

Apex presented testimony that more than 70

peer-reviewed studies on the health effects of wind energy generation facilities had found no substantial evidence of harm to human health at the setback distances that are included in the county ordinance.

The opposition sought to introduce testimony by longtime practitioner of internal medicine, Dr. Wayne C. Stegall, but the board did not accept Stegall as an ex-

pert witness.

Stegall said he had interviewed more than 20 people in three states about the effects large-scale wind turbines had on their health. He said he is still in the process of conducting such interviews.

"I intend to continue this kind of study in collaboration with my colleagues as the months go by," Stegall said.

Henry Campen, an attorney representing Apex, asked Stegall whether he had any specialized training in psychiatry or psychology. Stegall said he was not a specialist in psychiatry but

he added that most mental health treatment in the country is provided by primary care physicians rather than by psychiatrists.

John Morrison, an attorney advising the county commissioners in the CUP hearing process, advised the commissioners not to accept Stegall as an expert witness since his study had not been completed.

The board members present at the hearing voted unanimously not to accept Stegall as an expert witness. Winborne was excused from the session for medical reasons and Chairman Jeff Smith has been recused because his family farm is included in the proposed project area for the Timbermill project.

In addition to expert testimony presented by the parties, the hearings last week also included brief testimony by some citizens who live near the project.

Kim White said she was concerned about how close the windmills will be to her

home and property. She said she is concerned about the effect the wind turbines could have on drainage.

"Don't put them so close," White said.

She said she was concerned because she doesn't know how the wind turbines will affect the ecosystem.

Liz Alons said the closest of the wind turbines would be just a little over half a mile from her home. There will be 27 turbines within two miles of her home, she said.

Alons said she has lived on Paradise Road for 30 years. After the wind project is built the sky will be lit up with red lights at night, she said.

Because of the negative effects from having 27 wind turbines near her home she won't be able to sell her home, she said.

The wind turbines will harm property values, Alons said.

Farmers have been blinded by the money they think they will be receiving, she said.

Alons said the wind turbines will make flooding worse, kills bats and birds, and cause families living nearby to become sick.

"We do not want our home to be surrounded by these industrial structures," Alons said.

Another resident of the county, Bob Kirby, said he was concerned about the dangers posed by accumulation of ice on the turbine blades.

Kirby said the county ordinance states that a conditional use permit is valid for one year after it is issued. He told the county commissioners that they need to hold Apex to that requirement.

"Once you vote the clock starts," Kirby said.

Kirby said he has a lot invested in his property and he is concerned about the effect the turbines will have on plants at his home. By killing bats, the turbines will increase the threat posed by insects to the plants his wife cultivates at their home, he said.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

The Perquimans County Board of County Commissioners will continue the Quasi-Judicial Hearing on Monday, October 17, 2016 through Tuesday, October 18, 2016, at 5:30 PM each night in the Courtroom on the 2nd floor of the Perquimans County Courthouse Annex Building located at 110 North Church Street, Hertford, NC (next door to the Historic County Courthouse), to consider Conditional Use Permit No. CUP-16-01, by Timbermill Wind, LLC, c/o Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC, for a Large Wind Energy Facility in the Bear Swamp and Centerhill Communities [to include Tax Parcel Nos. 3-0039-00011B; 3-0047-00001, -00002, -00014 and -00028; 3-0048-00001 and -00003; 3-0049-00009, -00024A, -00025, -00026, -00038 and -00039(part); 3-0058-00004(part), -00007 and -00013; and 3-0059-00012A(part)], and extending west into Chowan County.

Property owners, residents and other interested parties may review this item during normal business hours before the quasi-judicial Public Hearing at the Perquimans County Planning & Zoning Office, 104 Dobbs Street, Hertford, NC, or call 252-426-2027 or email dgodfrey@perquimanscountync.gov for more information.

PUBLIC HEARING

The Hertford Town Council will hold 2 public hearings on October 10, 2016, 7:30 PM. The meeting will be held in the Municipal Building located at 114 W. Grubb Street. The following items are on the agenda:

- Proposed amendment from the Planning Board addressing section 3-6 of the Town's Zoning Ordinance, Lots with Multiple Frontages.
- Proposed amendment to section 8-25 of the General Town Ordinances addressing nuisance abatement.

Any information regarding this may be obtained from Town Manager Brandon Shoaf, at the Municipal Building, or by calling 426-1969 x. 9. You may also submit comments regarding this by mail no later than 5:00 PM Friday, October 7th.

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