

FIGHTING WITH JAKE: Botterbush family hopes for great turnout at benefit for young man battling leukemia

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ALTON - On February 13 this year, 29-year old **Jacob Botterbush** of **Hardin** just was not feeling well.

“He thought he had the flu and he ended up in Jersey Community Hospital,” **Karen Botterbush**, Jacob’s mother, said. “They ran test after test and when the results came in, the doctor told him he had leukemia. I said, ‘no, he has the flu,’ but the doctor said he was really sick.”

Totally shocked by the diagnosis, the family didn’t have much time to respond before the hospital was organizing Jacob’s transfer to Barnes Jewish Hospital, where he stayed for over a month.

“It hit me,” Botterbush said. “All I could think was, ‘Oh my gosh, this is real.’”

Although acute myeloid leukemia, the type of cancer Jacob has, has one of the highest cure rates, the treatment process has been quite grueling.

Botterbush began his treatments immediately, going through a seven-day intensive session, followed by five-day rounds of chemotherapy once a month to keep the leukemia at bay.

Jacob and his wife, Elizabeth, just moved into their new home with their young daughter, Libby, prior to his diagnosis. The couple went from making it with two incomes to struggling to get by with only one. Among the financial stress that the family was under, the only hope for Jacob’s health was a stem cell transplant.



In efforts to help curb some of their financial needs, the family, along with the help of their friends, began organizing the **Fighting With Jake Benefit**, which will be held between **5:30 and 11:00 p.m.** this **Saturday** night at **Marquette Catholic High School**.

After beginning to plan the fundraiser in May, a blessing came from anonymous source in the form of a match for a stem cell donor.

“We’re so grateful that we had a donor,” Botterbush said. “It’s standard protocol for all donations to be anonymous. After a year, you can contact the donor bank and they will send something to the donor to see if they want to be recognized.”

The anonymous donor had to be hospitalized for five days where they received shots to build up their stem cells in preparation for the donation. After that five days, they draw the blood out of the donor and separate the stem cells. Within thirty minutes, the process was complete and the cells were ready to be transplanted into the patient.

Last week, over five months after his diagnosis, Jacob received his transplant. He is currently still in the hospital, recovering and managing the side effects. Although he is unable to attend his fundraiser, he knows how blessed he truly is to have friends and family to support him.

“We are hoping to see that it turns out well and that his body accepts the stem cells,” Botterbush said. “The only sure way that he can be cured from this is to get a transplant and make sure it sticks.”

The community has overwhelmed the Botterbush family with support, donating items for the silent and live auctions, bake sales and more. The benefit will have plenty of delicious food for guests to eat while a DJ entertains the crowd. 50/50 raffle tickets will also be sold.

“I can’t express how grateful I am to the community and our family and friends,” Botterbush said. “When people come tomorrow night, I want them to know that there are so many neat things that people can bid on, but most of all, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you. Come out, have a nice meal and enjoy each other’s company. Life is precious and anything can happen at any moment.”

Tickets for the event are \$20 each for guests 13 and older and \$5 for kids 6 to 12-years old. Children five-years old and younger can attend the event for free.