

Leah Rishavy **2004 Colorado Champion**

At the age of seven, Leah Rishavy visited her primary care physician in Colorado Springs with what her mother thought might be a sinus infection. When standard treatment didn't help, her doctor ordered a CT scan to see what was obstructing Leah's sinuses. The results indicated a possible tumor. The Rishavy's family doctor wasted no time in referring Leah to The Children's Hospital in Denver.

Leah's mom, Lynne Rishavy, said that when Leah arrived at Children's, her caregivers "hit the ground running." The doctors at Children's ran tests on Friday, when Leah arrived at the hospital. The next day, Saturday, the Rishavy's learned the devastating results of her tests. Leah was diagnosed with cancer. Specifically, a nasopharyngeal Burkett's lymphoma, a rapidly growing cancerous tumor that was taking over whatever space that it could in Leah's head. This form of tumor can actually double in size each day. Fortunately, with early detection, this type of cancer is very treatable.



The physicians in Children's Cancer Center acted immediately and started chemotherapy treatments within days of diagnosis. Because of the location of the cancer, Leah has undergone several spinal taps and intensive chemotherapy to combat her condition. Leah responded very well to the chemotherapy. Lynne credits The Children's Hospital with saving Leah's life. "There was no time with Leah's diagnosis. If it had been a couple of weeks later the cancer could have moved into her brain." Today, the lymphoma shows no signs of returning and Leah is now seen periodically at The Children's Hospital for routine follow-up.

Leah has won the hearts of her caregivers, who describe her as a sparkling personality who is "very intelligent and deeply faithful, yet is giggling and mischievous – a typical 8-year-old girl". Leah's oncologist, Dr. Albano, finds Leah's spirit and courage to be an inspiration. Leah has also given families in similar situations so much hope for the future with her successes.

When Leah is asked what she is thankful for, she immediately cites The Children's Hospital and her doctors and nurses. Leah strives to give back to the place that helped her so much. In 2002, Leah created two winning holiday card designs that are part of an annual fundraising program for the hospital. Leah continues to visit the doctors and nurses who helped her so much and brings them each beaded bracelets hand made specifically for them.

When Leah is not helping to raise funds or awareness for the hospital, she enjoys drawing, making bracelets and jewelry, dancing to hip-hop and playing with her two Siamese cats.

