

May 21, 2010

Dear Friends and Family,

Praise the Lord ... it won't be long now!!! Thanks to a lovely young lady by the name of Darrah (Dollens) Berck, Lexa is scheduled to have her kidney transplant on Tuesday, May 25, 2010, at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. Since she has to check into the hospital at 5:00 AM that day, we will be going to St. Louis on Monday, May 24 and staying at the Parkway Hotel, which is connected to the Barnes complex. That way we can enjoy a relaxing evening before going over to the hospital early the next morning. Darrah has to check in at 9:00 AM on Monday, May 24, for her final pre-op tests. Lexa went for hers on Wednesday, May 19, so she doesn't have to check in until the day of surgery.

A little about Darrah and her Decision – Darrah is a 20-year-old pre-med major at the University of Missouri-Columbia. She is from Centralia and married to Justin Berck, also from Centralia, who is in the military stationed in North Carolina. Lexa and Darrah met at Camp Cedarcrest, a Baptist church camp they attended when they were younger. They really haven't seen each other much in recent years, except maybe at the Centralia basketball tournament where they would speak in passing. Darrah found out about Lexa's diagnosis of Wegener's and her need for a kidney transplant through Facebook. She said her grandfather had a heart transplant when she was a little girl and, had it not been for that, she would never have had the opportunity to get to know him. So, she decided she wanted to be tested to see if she could be a match for Lexa as her way of giving back. She didn't contact Lexa about the possibility until she was at the final stage of testing because she didn't want to get her hopes up if it wasn't going to work out. Well, Darrah was approved as a match and the transplant date was set!



How did we get here? – Most of you know that Lexa was diagnosed with Wegener's Granulomatosis in March 2008 and that she spent 3 weeks in the hospital at Barnes in St. Louis in April 2008. I retired from Columbia Public Schools in June 2008 so I could devote full time to Lexa's care – taking her to doctor appointments, physical therapy, blood draws, etc. For the most part, Lexa has managed her illness very well with the exception of a few other stays at Boone Hospital in Columbia between then and now. In September 2009 Lexa's kidney function deteriorated to the point where she had to begin hemodialysis. She began a schedule at DaVita Dialysis in Columbia where she was on a machine for 3 hours every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. In February 2010 she switched to peritoneal dialysis that she could do at home daily on her own. After one complication where she had to have the PD catheter repositioned, she has been doing PD with a cyclor that performs dialysis at night while she sleeps, which gives her more freedom during the day. This has gone well and Lexa definitely prefers this to going to the center.

An Update on Lexa's Education – Back in March 2008, Lexa had to leave Culver-Stockton College in Canton, MO and return home to be closer to her doctors in Columbia. This was in the middle of the Spring semester of her freshman year. Fortunately, she was allowed to finish 3 of her 4 classes from home so the semester was not a total loss. After almost 2 years, Lexa transferred to Central Methodist University in Fayette, MO for the Spring 2010 semester as a commuter with classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday (working with her dialysis schedule). At this time, she is planning to live on campus next year since, after the transplant, she will slowly return to "normal" life. She has 3 semesters remaining in her elementary education degree program – Fall 2010, Spring 2011 and then her student teaching semester in the Fall of 2011. Not bad for having to sit out almost two years!?!

The Transplant – We're told the transplant surgery will take 3-4 hours and then another possible 3 hours in recovery. Darrah will be able to return to her room on the transplant floor as soon as she is out of recovery. Lexa will be kept in transplant observation overnight and then moved to the transplant floor as soon as they think she's ready in a day or two.

No Live Plants or Flowers; Patient Emails Welcome! – Lexa will not be allowed to have live plants or flowers in her hospital room due to bacteria that could be in the soil. However, artificial plants and/or balloons are allowed. The best thing you can do for either of the girls is send patient emails! To do this you can go to www.barnesjewish.org and click on Patients & Visitors on the top menu bar. Then go to Email a Patient and follow the instructions. The girls (or young ladies) could be in the hospital for 5-7 days so the patient emails give them something to look forward to each day and words of encouragement are greatly appreciated.

We will try to keep everyone posted before, during and after the transplant. In the meantime, please keep both Lexa and Darrah and their families in your thoughts and prayers. We have already seen answers to these prayers!

Thank you so much! May God Bless! Jorene Brooks, MO

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