

Kara "Klara" Luett

Omaha's 2011 Memorial Honoree



Kara was a recent graduate from the University of Northern Iowa, in Cedar Falls, and was working as a waitress at Red Lobster while she looked for her "real" job. However, those plans were put on hold when she was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia on Sept 19th, 2003. Upon diagnosis, she was immediately transferred to University Hospitals in Iowa City where she began several rounds of chemotherapy. She would rebound amazingly well from the chemo, but the leukemia always came back.

After approximately 4 months and 6 rounds of chemo, it was determined that a bone marrow transplant was the best course of action. Her brother Marc was a match, so off to Stanford University, in Palo Alto, California. While at Stanford, numerous complications and continuous set-backs prevented the bone marrow transplant from taking place and the doctors suggested there was nothing else they could do. Kara thought otherwise.

After asking numerous other doctors, one suggested an experimental drug that was being developed at UCLA. As there were no other options available, off to Southern California she went. Kara's response to the drug was unprecedented. She came back from the brink of death to the bright, fun-loving person we all knew her as. The doctors said they had never had anyone respond so well to the drugs as she had.



Unfortunately, they knew that the results wouldn't last and follow-up doses drastically decreased the effectiveness of the drug. However, Kara was able to get healthy enough to have the bone marrow transplant. The procedure was done back in Iowa City in late June of 2004. After the first couple of weeks, Kara appeared to be in complete remission, but was still very tired and very sick. About a month after the transplant we got the devastating news that the leukemia had come back. At this point the doctors had no answers and it was determined that there was nothing left they could do.



Kara passed away almost a year to the day she was diagnosed, on Sept 17th, 2004, at the age of 26. It's hard to put into words how difficult this was on everyone involved. Obviously losing someone you care for at such a young age is difficult. But Kara was such a fun-loving, free spirit who always lived life to the fullest. She had hundreds of friends and always jumped at the chance to try new things and experience new opportunities. She had a sarcastic, yet warm personality, and always had a huge smile on her face and laughs to go round.

But as the disease set in and ultimately the finality of it set in, these traits were no where to be seen. Not only was the physical pain she endured as the disease progressed profound, but the mental aspect of what she was experiencing was especially difficult for Kara. The uncertain and always changing situation made her very scared about what the future held, but she didn't like to talk about it. As the days progressed and the outlook worsened, she became very withdrawn and spent most of her time either sleeping or vacantly watching TV. It was as if the disease took away her passion for life before ultimately taking her actual life.

This is exactly why we continue to support the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society. The randomness of those afflicted with leukemia is frightening. Doctors do not know what causes the disease and do not have a cure. And unlike other cancers which have more direct cause and effect attributes, Kara, and thousands others every year, do nothing to deserve this disease. This is why funding is desperately needed to continue to learn more about what causes this dreadful disease and how it might be cured.



Kara's biggest fear in her last days is that she **would be forgotten**. **As if that were even possible**, her family and friends continue to celebrate her memory despite continuing to miss her deeply.