

# Girl battling cancer needs your help collecting firefighter patches

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By **Steffany Means**



12-year-old Mileena is collecting firefighter patches. (Source: WBRC/Steffany Means)



(Source: WBRC/Steffany Means)



(Source: Rachelle Painter)

A 12-year-old girl from Riverside in St. Clair County is battling cancer and right now she needs your help with a project close to her heart.

Mileena Painter was diagnosed with [Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia](#) this past August. She is now home bound and not able to go to traditional school. For one of her school projects she has decided to collect firefighter patches from around the world.

"She started school on August 8th and went to half a day of 6th grade and was diagnosed on the 9th and she is home bound," says Rachelle Painter, Mileena's mom. "She can't go to traditional school with her classmates. So she wanted to do a different type of project and since dad is a firefighter and mom is a paramedic she thought this would be kind of fun."

Mileena says when she gets the patches it makes her feel good about herself.

"What I think I feel good about is that some people don't appreciate firefighters and paramedics like they should and that's one of the reasons I wanted to do it too is because some people don't appreciate them," says Mileena. "And when they say they are fighting with me it makes me feel good and it makes me not want to cry."

The patches are not the only thing the young girl is receiving, either.

"So we have gotten T-shirts she is going to wear to chemo," adds Rachelle. "She likes them nice and big because they have to access her port in chemotherapy. So those are good things to wear while she is getting chemotherapy and she can kinda feel the brotherhood of the firefighters."

The family has also made bracelets that say #MileenaStrong and #FightLikeAGirl. But it is not all about getting patches and t-shirt in the mail. It is also about the bond between those working as first responders.

**"And when they say they are fighting with me it makes me feel good and it makes me not want to cry." - Mileena Painter**

"The neatest thing that I think that we get when we receive the patches is the prayers that come with them," says Rachelle. "The majority of them are sending letters or cards telling her that they are in it with her, they are fighting for her and they are praying for her. And that to me means more than the patch does."

Mileena plans on keeping the patches and sewing them together into a quilt. She wants to then use the quilt as a way to share her story and her testimony with other people.

"Mileena has about two more years of chemotherapy to go thought so as far as I'm concerned they can keep sending those patches for the next two years and we can make lots of quilts," says Rachelle.

Mileena's dad, who is a firefighter at the Riverside Fire Department, says he is very thankful to all of his fellow firefighters.

"I want to thank all of my brothers and sisters in the fire service both in Illinois and in Alabama and also the Red Knights Organization that has really helped us out with a lot of this," adds Kevin Painter. "It is a firefighters motorcycle club that goes all over the world. And some of the patches we have received are from chapters in different parts of the world. I would also like to thank our church family, God and our savior Jesus Christ who has walked us through this journey since August."

**"I want to thank all of my brothers and sisters in the fire service both in Illinois and in Alabama..."**

- Kevin Painter, Mileena's father

**If you would like to send firefighter patches, t-shirts, cards or letters to Mileena, mail them to PO Box 7 Riverside, Al 35135. You can address them to Mileena Painter or to the Painter family and they will be passed along to her.**

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