

# *Brooke's Story*

Brooke was a young expectant mother looking forward to building a new family with her husband Heath when her life ended much too soon. Brooke was a healthy young woman receiving the finest prenatal care and had a clean bill of health until an unknown genetic mutation took it all away.

The BRAF Gene is a human gene that we all have, it produces a protein that regulates cellular growth. In rare instance the BRAF Gene may change or, mutate and without specifically being tested for this mutation you may live your entire life without knowing you have it.

That is unless you develop some form of cancer. That is when the Mutated BRAF Gene rears its ugly head and signals cancer cells to grow and spread throughout the body at an alarming rate. The connection between cancer and the BRAF Gene Mutation has only been known to scientist since 2002, so research in this area is relatively new and treatment options are unproven.

The first sign of trouble for Brooke came when she was admitted to the hospital with digestive issues. They found what appeared to be cancer in her liver. A biopsy was taken, and treatment options were discussed with concern for Brooke and their unborn son, Caleb James "CJ". Within days more bad news came when the biopsy results confirmed it was cancer, that same day Brooke and Heath lost "CJ". After the liver biopsy more testing revealed a tumor in her colon, which is where the cancer originated.

More trouble came when testing revealed that in addition to cancer Brooke had the BRAF Gene Mutation. Traditional cancer treatments that could have dealt with the cancer have proven ineffective in patients with this genetic mutation. Due to rapid cancer cell growth triggered by this genetic mutation cancer that began in the colon soon spread to Brooke's liver and then in every lymph node in her body, except one.

In so short a time Brooke went from a beautiful young woman with a full life ahead of her, planning her future with a family of her own that she could only dream of as a child, to the cells of her own body turning against her and ultimately shutting down every organ in her body leading to her untimely death.

The purpose of this event is to celebrate the life Brooke lived and for the family and friends of Brooke to honor her memory so we will always remember her and the good times we've shared. We also wish to raise awareness of the affect that this genetic mutation has on cancer cell growth so that others may be tested. If you find that this mutation exists, we encourage you to take extra precautions with any possible cancer risks and get yourself tested frequently because, early detection is vital to increase your chance for survival.

Lastly, with your help if we can give genetic researchers the extra funding needed to further their research and help develop treatment options for others, so they may increase their chances to survive we would be extremely grateful. Please know that 100% of the money donated by you and raised by this event will go directly to that research. All time and labor involved in promoting this event is 100% voluntary and all costs of this event including the prizes awarded have been donated by our generous sponsors. So please show them your appreciation for their support by supporting their businesses with your patronage.

From the family and friends of Brooke, we thank all of you for your participation and generous donations.