

Deputy fights rare blood cancer

Alexander welcomes son, finds lymphoma in same week

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Curtis Alexander was the picture of health and energy.

Alexander, 29, a Polk County Jail deputy and reserve patrol deputy in Benton County, worked hard and exercised every day.

"He was perfectly healthy," Curtis' wife, Shauna, said last week. "He was running three miles a day."

Curtis had his future in mind. He wants to become a police officer some day, and his wife was expecting a son, Colton. The Dallas couple got to meet their little guy on Feb. 10. Only six days later, they received devastating news.

Curtis had what he believed was an eye injury, a bump and swelling above his left eye. He tried to treat it, but the swelling just wouldn't go down.

"I work in law enforcement," he explained last week. "Sometimes the job gets physical. I just thought I might have gotten bumped in the eye. I was feeling fine ... going about life as normal."

He made an appointment with a doctor in mid-January, who referred him to an eye specialist who examined him. Fearing the swelling was a symptom of something more serious, Curtis was told to undergo a CT scan.

The scan revealed something that shocked the young couple: Curtis had Burkitt lymphoma, a rare and aggressive form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a blood cancer.

A biopsy confirmed it and on Feb. 16, Curtis was rushed to Oregon Health & Science University to begin two weeks of chemotherapy. That was the first of what could be six to eight rounds of treatment, with Curtis spending one week in the hospital and two weeks at home in between.

The couple said that ini-



Photo courtesy of Shauna Alexander
Curtis Alexander holds his newborn son, Colton, just days before learning he has a rare and aggressive form of cancer, Burkitt lymphoma. He's in his second round of treatment.

You Can Help

A fundraising site has been set up on youcaring.com to help pay for the family's medical expenses. To find the page, go to youcaring.com and search for "Curtis Alexander." The family is hoping to raise \$10,000.

tial round of treatment was difficult. They only had days to spend with their son before having to put him in the care of a relative during the day so Shauna could be at the hospital with Curtis. She spent the nights with her newborn in a hotel in Portland.

For Curtis, the separation was worse.

"I only got to see him for one hour a day when I was in the hospital. That was tough," he said, adding he has enjoyed the past few weeks at home. "I'm trying to be as normal as I can. I'm pretty tired all the time, so usually there is a relative here, but it's pretty awesome

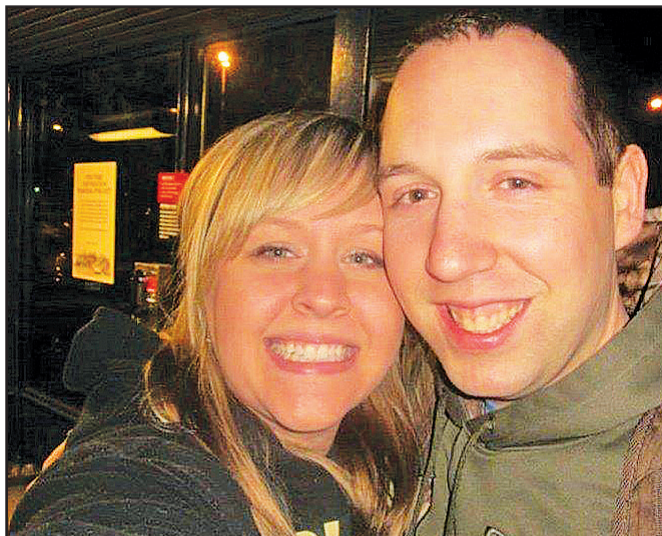


Photo courtesy of Shauna Alexander
Curtis Alexander, with his wife, Shauna, left, has worked as a Polk County Jail deputy for more than two years.

being a dad."

Doctors will carefully monitor his recovery from treatment and the fast-moving disease to keep him on a schedule his body can handle without letting the cancer get the upper hand.

Alexander has a positive prognosis, according to his doctors, about an 80 to 90 percent chance of being

cured. His general health and the fact that the cancer was found early will all help him in this battle, which continued Friday, as he checked in for a second round of chemotherapy.

"I really, really appreciate all the support of family and friends," Curtis said. "It means a lot and it just makes me fight that much harder."

Storm drains need upgrades in Dallas

No rate increases planned for now

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The city of Dallas will be creating a new storm water fund in the 2015-16 budget, but that doesn't mean an increase in rates — yet.

Costs of operating and maintaining the storm water system are now included in sewer rates. The change would simply separate the cost of current operations and put in its own fund. Currently, the city does minimal maintenance on the system. Management of the system costs \$2.57 of the average sewer bill of \$42.90.

"It wouldn't affect anybody's rates," said Fred Braun, Dallas' engineering and environmental services director.

The recommendation is part of the city's recently finished storm water master plan. The plan includes an inventory and condition assessment of infrastructure (i.e. pipes in the ground), system capacity, operational and regulatory requirements, and long-term financial analysis, including recommended improvements to the system.

Regulatory requirements and upgrades will eventually push rates upward, but when is up to how quickly the council wants to proceed with improvements.

The plan found six "problem areas" that cause local flooding during storms: West Ellendale Avenue and Wyatt Street; Douglas Street; Rickreall, Uglow Avenue, Orchard Drive drainage; Kings Valley Highway near the Dallas Cemetery; the North Fork of Ash Creek; and Hunter Street.

The approximate cost to fix those areas is \$22.9 million, but that includes a \$19 million price tag for the North Fork Ash Creek area.

The creek flows through the former Weyerhaeuser mill, and improving it would require replacing culverts on that property, widening and clearing the creek channel and replacing bridges. The city is looking at alternatives — including purchasing property to create a retention pond — that would reduce that cost by half.

Braun said he is uncertain when the system improvements will be made.

"We don't have a schedule for that," Braun said. "It depends on how aggressively the council wants to undertake these projects."

Additional federal environmental regulations on storm water systems would require more maintenance and staff, but those mandates may be up to 10 years in the future, Braun said.

The plan also recommended an increase in the storm water system development charge, to \$1,141.

The plan is available for review at the Dallas Public Library, 950 Main St., and at City Hall, 187 SE Court St., and will soon be on the city's website.

Braun said the city welcomes comment on the plan and will address it at another public meeting before the plan goes before the council for approval.

In other business, the council:

- Approved an ordinance to allow civil citations into the Dallas Municipal Court to be mailed when personal delivery isn't an option, such as to property owners who live out-of-state.

- Approved an ordinance that specifically prohibits inoperable cars to be covered by a tarp. Dallas city code has long required owners of such vehicles use car covers, but the ordinance is in response to an owner who took issue with the requirement.

Encouraging others

Matters to me

“ Take the bull by the horns, you know. See the doctor. Go and find out what the facts are, and then take care of yourself. ”

—Anne J., 50-year colon cancer survivor

Anne is our featured artist for March

Stop by the Garden Bistro for a nutritious lunch and enjoy a display of Anne's beautiful hand-hooked rugs— part of the Salem Cancer Institute's Survivor Showcase.

Anne will tell you that the science of cancer treatment has changed a lot in 50 years. What will never change are the basic principles of caring, compassion and support.

Learn what cancer care at Salem Hospital is all about at salemhealth.org/cancer.

