



angel TREE MISSION



The Russell Family

Battling: 40-year-old, Melissa

Melissa is a fighter. Now battling for the second time, she was first diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2012. Her initial fight was with a rare form of Stage IV breast cancer, Lymphoma Vascular Invasive Vessel Carcinoma. She responded to her chemotherapy regimens rapidly and well. She was able to have lumpectomy removal of the cancer in

May 2012. All margins were found to be clean, with no evidence of lymph node involvement. They believed she had simply won the battle of a lifetime and the ordeal was behind her.

In Nov. 2014, Melissa received the devastating, life altering news that cancer had returned. She was then diagnosed with Stage IV Metastatic Breast to Lung MilaR Lymphoma. Treatment with chemotherapy began immediately. Her condition remains chronic and treatment is continuous. Treatment is fierce and has taken a great physical and emotional toll on Melissa and her immediate family. Melissa's tumor has only shrunk by ten percent since the onset of treatment. Her emotional outlook has gone from one of fear, to hope and optimism, to a deep depression.

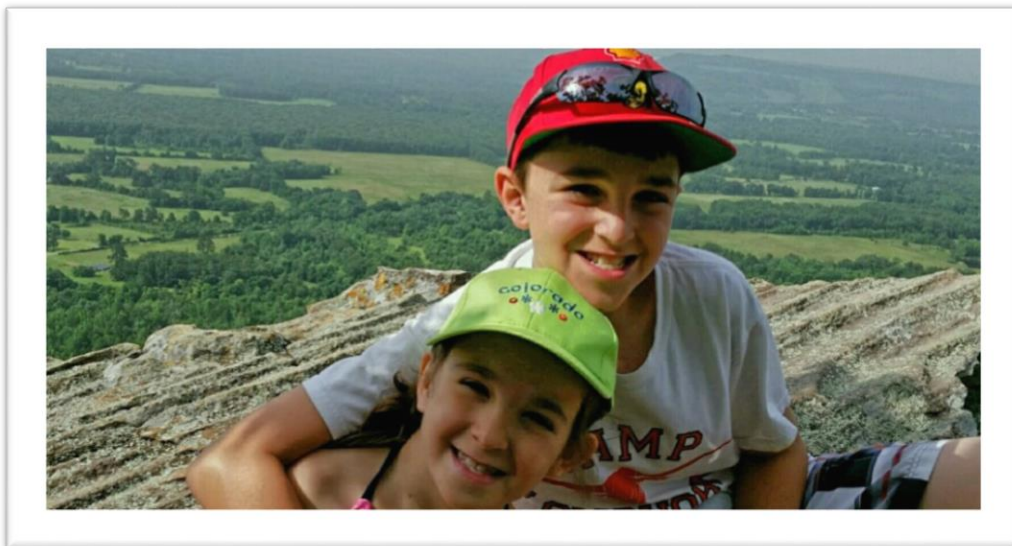
Being overwhelmed by the physical tolls of treatment, she lays in bed for days on end, refuses nourishment and has truly isolated herself from much of the outside world. Melissa remains on the waiting list for Occupational Therapy as soon as a position becomes available at MDA as she has lost many of her fine motor skills. She requires around the clock care and has for some time.

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Her devoted fiancé, Charles, has remained by her side as her main source of encouragement, care provider and helping father her children, while trying to complete his degree in Petroleum Engineering.

Melissa has two children. Her oldest, an exceptionally intelligent young man, Jake (13), who excels in school but is emotionally having difficulties handling his mother's illness; driving a wedge between them. Melissa's daughter, Violet (9), was born with a rare series of birth defects known as VACTERL and has endured nine surgeries, numerous hospitalizations and something as simple as a common cold can easily claim her life. Violet has regularly had multiple doctor visits, a great many tests performed, and is a frequent visitor at Texas Children's. Her condition will always remain medically fragile.

Because of her condition, Melissa was recently terminated from her job which she had held for eleven years. This has further added to her emotional downturn and her family, now has less income than ever before. To make ends meet, Charles has utilized as many student loans as possible to provide support their family. MDA covers Melissa's insurance premiums, but neither she nor her children receive any additional benefits.



*This year we join together to help this family
have a wonderful Christmas!*