

FLOOD WATCH



Saving Elena Desserich

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 [Elena's Website](#)

Elena Desserich is one of the best writers in her class. Her mom says she gets that talent out of love and necessity.

"We have notepad upon notepad in the house full of 'I want this' or 'I want that,'" said Brooke Desserich.

The Wyoming 6-year-old has what doctors call "intrinsic brainstem glioma." More simply put, it's a tumor growing inside her brain stem.

The cancer has taken away Elena's beautiful voice, so writing and pictures help her communicate what she wants.

In fact, her artwork so impressed the folks at the Cincinnati Art Museum that they hung Elena's "heart painting" right next to a Picasso.

Elena's parents say their first child has always excelled and always walked a straight line. But last november, things started to change.

"Elena was in my room and I had gone out of the room to get her clothes and I came back in and she just almost fell to the floor," said Brooke.

Her new loss of balance and coordination worried Brooke and husband Keith.

Dr. James Geller was one of the first specialists Elena saw at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. Doctors here diagnosed her rare cancer and told Keith and Brooke their daughter's tumor was inoperable.

"The only therapy that we know makes a difference is radiation," said Dr Geller.

Hoping an experimental treatment might work, Doctors at Children's Hospital referred Elena to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis.

"What St. Jude gave us in the beginning was clarity," said Keith.

"You would think that it would be the most sadest, most solemn place and it is the exact opposite," added Brooke.

The Desserich's say St. Jude helped them face their daughter's diagnosis. St. Jude also took away the concerns about money and helped them focus on Elena.

"You go there in a crisis mode and the last thing you want to think of or be part of your decision process is 'how much is this going to cost me?'," said Brooke.

Parents of St. Jude's patients don't ever see a bill. Instead, St. Jude gets all its money through donations and fundraisers.

Elena's three-year-old sister Grace, knew she could help. This spring, her Goddard preschool held a trike-a-thon in Elena's honor, raising money for St. Jude.

Elena now spends her time between treatments at home with her family as they all desperately hope for the future.

"There's still that hope every single day, said Keith. "If you can wake up and think we're gonna find it and the cure's gonna be there. And it's gonna start here."

Like Elena's sister, Grace, Channel 9 is also raising money for St. Jude.

We are helping give-away a dream home and all the money goes to the Memphis hospital.

The Fischer-built home is valued at more than \$500,000 and features a first floor master bedroom, a loft and a finished basement.

The home is located in the Villa Grande development in Ft. Thomas and will be raffled off here on Channel 9 in October.

Tickets are \$100 and can be bought at any area Meijer or Widmer Cleaners locations.

You can also reserve a ticket by calling: 1-800-537-1735.

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