

Recognizing New Joy

What began in March 2014 as a painful encounter with cancer has led Yankton resident Laurie Hanson to recognize new joy and inspiration she found in a strong network of support and encouragement from the Yankton community.

Recently diagnosed with both pancreatic and kidney cancer, Hanson endured and recovered from surgery to remove her tumors buoyed by a network of family, friends and many people she didn't even know. All of them diligently prayed for and surrounded her with acts of love and care.

"Even in the Riverboat Days Parade people were calling out to me and encouraging me, people I didn't know at all," Hanson says. "This has all been a confirmation to me of the power of prayer and the depth of goodness found in the Yankton community."

Hanson's speedy recovery has puzzled her doctors, who expected to find more areas of cancer in her body after identifying her initial tumors.



"At first I experienced intense pain that I thought may have been a sign of heart trouble," Hanson says. "That's been a health problem for some of my family members. To find the source of my pain, doctors did a CAT scan. That's when they found the cancerous tumors."

Hanson's pancreatic tumor was on the tail of the pancreas, an area where surgery is most likely to be effective. Doctors were also able to surgically remove the renal tumor. In an eight-hour procedure, two different doctors worked on each tumor. Follow-up test results were what surprised Hanson's doctors.

"In cases like mine they test for cancer in the lymph nodes and other parts of the body," Hanson says. "Most of the time, pancreatic cancer originates from another area of the body. I had no cancer in my lymph nodes or any other area. My doctor said, 'This is kind of a miracle.' I told him it

wasn't 'kind of' a miracle, but definitely a miracle from God."

Because she is cancer-free, Hanson didn't have to undergo any chemotherapy or medical treatment after her surgery. She credits the many people who prayed for her from the time she became ill until she recovered for the positive outcome of her surgery and recovery.

"Attending church with my family has always been a big part of my life," she says. "I never realized how much I believed in the power of prayer and importance of faith until this all happened."

Women at Hanson's church, Yankton Calvary Baptist, crocheted a prayer shawl for Hanson, which she has kept with her since she first entered the hospital for surgery.

"It was sort of my 'little kid's blanky.' I held onto it all the time and my nurses were very good to make sure it was within my reach," Hanson says. "It's a shawl the women prayed over as they crocheted. After presenting it to me they continued to pray. For me that was very comforting and encouraging. I wrap myself in it nightly and feel God's presence and continuing comfort and encouragement."

Hanson also received a flood of get well cards during her hospital stay and when she returned home. Because of her lifetime teaching career, Hanson's get well wishes came from people she had

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