During an August 1995 fundraising event, Jennifer Yeakley was all smiles.
Jennifer Yeakley's funeral procession makes its way to State Highway 183 from Irving Boulevard. Police closed the freeway from Beltline Road on the way to Bear Creek Cemetery in Euless.
Goodbye to ‘the most courageous little girl’

Citizens throughout Irving mourn death of 8-year-old leukemia victim

BY LIZABETH CARDENAS

News Staff Writer

Several hundred police officers, fire officials, city leaders, medical personnel, teachers, children and citizens Tuesday morning mourned the loss at the Plymouth Park Baptist Church of a daughter, a student, a patient or a classmate.

But to all of them, 8-year-old Jennifer Leigh Yeakley - Irving Police Capt. Mark Yeakley’s daughter, who died Saturday from complications arising from her leukemia - will always be an inspiration.

“I have never known a family or little girl with such inner strength,” says Kitty Estes, PTA president of Townley Elementary School, where Jennifer was a third-grader and whose son was in her class.

“Jennifer kept up with her schoolwork to the very end. She was such an intelligent girl. Jennifer was such a fighter and such an inspiration. I am happy that at least she passed away with dignity.”

Jennifer was diagnosed on May 8, 1995, with a rare form of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which is complicated with a Philadelphia Chromosome, which necessitated a bone-marrow transplant. Because no bone-marrow match was found, she had a cord blood transplant in...
Yeakley: Community mourns death.

“Jennifer fought a long, hard battle and lost. She may have left this earth, but she will never leave the hearts of those who knew and loved her.”

— Rose Cannaday, wife of IPD Chief Lowell Cannaday

August 1995. She was the fourth child in the family’s doctor bills was Jennifer’s strength, determination and her attitude. Cannaday says, “It was a team effort. It’s unbelievable how many lives were touched with this - how many lives Jennifer touched by her fight. In this day and age, it seems like there’s all this bad stuff, but I can honestly say there’s a lot of good stuff in Irving.”

What has been inspiring to a community that raised more than $120,000 to help foot the family’s doctor bills was Jennifer’s strength, determination and her attitude, says Rose Cannaday, wife of Irving Police Chief Lowell Cannaday, who coordinated a city-wide “county fair” type of a fundraiser that raised $11,000.

“Jennifer fought a long, hard battle and lost,” Rose Cannaday says. “She may have left this earth, but she will never leave the hearts of all who knew and loved her. Jennifer is the most courageous little girl that I have ever known and died with her family and friends at her side.”

Rose Cannaday says the hardest part for her last scheduled bone-marrow biopsy and spinal tap, which Jennifer received Aug. 9, revealed a 10 percent concentration of leukemia cells in her bone marrow. The re-emergence of the Philadelphia Chromosome also was confirmed.

“I thought that we had won the battle, and we were getting ready to celebrate her first year of being in remission when the bad news came,” Rose Cannaday says. “Jennifer made the decision to fight this terrible disease again. Her spirit was willing, but her body wasn’t strong enough to carry her through this fight. As I reflect over the events of this past year I prefer to remember Jennifer’s smile and laughter as she played with the Barbie dolls that she loved so much.”

Mayor Morris Parrish says he wants to thank all of those who offered their prayers and contributed to raising funds a year ago, because the effort helped extend her life.

“It is through their efforts, and because of her loving parents, caring medical staff and the fighting spirit of Jennifer, that she survived this long,” Parrish says. “I am deeply grieved upon the loss of Jennifer Yeakley. I hoped and prayed that she would be one of the few to survive this tragic disease. She was a real wonderl personality.

Police officers of the Tull, Irving Police Department officer, Irving felt pain through the years that was one of their own community’s support and department.

“At one point or another, every person in the department pulled together to help us. It’s been extremely hard,” he says.” We’ve tried to give a little back to the Yeakleys as we could, and we’re very appreciative of the community’s support has meant a lot to us. We keep everyone’s spirit alive.”

Tull says he is proud to be a part of Irving.

“If we ever lose another officer in our department or a community member, we’ve reached a bad point,” he says. “I am happy to be a part of the community.”

Although Mark Y
celebrates life of officer's daughter

battle and

I hoped and prayed that she would be one of the few to survive this tragic disease. She was a real trooper and had a really wonderful personality."

— Mayor Morris Parrish

Trooper and had a really hard time saying the department was gone. "According to David Tull, an officer in the department, public infirmity and feeling of loss is natural. The department has often faced similar situations and the community has always rallied around the families.

"I'm worried about the kids who follow Jennifer," Mark Yeakley says. "That's why we're requesting memorials be sent to Children's Medical Center's cancer unit."

The idea that a grieving father who just lost his little girl is worrying about other people's children may shock most people, but Estes says it comes as no surprise to anyone who really knows the Irving officer.

"I'm definitely worried about the kids," Mark Yeakley says. "I'm worried about how it affected the kids (at Townley Elementary)." Estes says. "They constantly ask 'How are the kids?' and 'How are they taking it?' I have never met a family that had so much dignity and style."

Estes says Mark Yeakley also has agreed to conduct the garage sale on Jennifer's behalf scheduled for Saturday. Estes says the proceeds from the garage, which will be held from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the parking lot of the South MacArthur Church of Christ - located at the corner of MacArthur Boulevard and Shady Grove Road - will help purchase a headstone for Jennifer.

"Mark thought that, when Jennifer's classmates would visit, they would be able to see the headstone and think they had helped in some way," Estes says.

Jennifer was born May 5, 1988, in Irving.

She is survived by her parents, Judy and Mark Yeakley of Irving; sisters, Nikki and Bridgette Yeakley, both of Irving; grandparents, Betty and Murray Yeakley of The Woodlands and Bill and Nita Barber of Lewisville; aunts and uncles, Carol Shehan of The Woodlands, Bill and Bridgette Barber of Lewisville and Sam and Nancy Ramsey of Riverbank, Calif.; and the many supportive and caring friends including staff and students at J.F. Townley Elementary, Irving and Morgan Private School, the City of Irving, the Irving Police Department and the staff, children and parents at Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

Funeral services were held Tuesday morning at Plymouth Park Baptist Church, with Revs. Ken Branam and Milfred Minatrea officiating. Burial followed at the Bear Creek Cemetery in Euless.

The family requests memorials be sent to Children's Medical Center, 6 East, c/o Children's Medical Foundation, P.O. Box 650473, Dallas, Texas 75265-9868.
Linda Sue Young

Linda Sue Young, of Irving, died Sunday, July 7, of natural causes. She was 48.

Ms. Young was born August 3, 1947 in Gadsden, Ala., to Vear and Ada Lee Quarries Amos. She worked as a manager for the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. in Dallas for 17 years.

She is survived by her daughter, Diane Young of Denton; her mother, Ada Lee Quarries Amos of Alabama; three sisters, Helen Wiggins of Alabama, Carolyn Spiva of Florida and Willodean Beshears of Alabama; four brothers, Elbert Amos of Alabama, Hiluard Amos of Oregon, Clyde Amos of Georgia and Jerry Amos of Alabama; and two grandchildren, Jeffrey and Chelsea Young of Denton.

Services were Tuesday, July 9, at Donnelly’s Colonial Chapel.
Earlene W.
Zimmerman

Earlene W. Zimmerman, of Irving, died Oct. 28 in Arlington. She was 67.

Mrs. Zimmerman was a homemaker, born on Oct. 19 in Oak Grove, La. She was a member of the Rebecca Lodge and Order of the Eastern Star.

She is survived by her husband, William “Zip” Zimmerman, and her daughter and son-in-law, Zee and Darrin Reno, of Arlington.

Services were held Wednesday, Oct. 30 at Brown’s Memorial Chapel, the Rev. Chris Allen officiating.

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