



by CHRISTINE HICKEY

# Displaying the Power of God

Sixteen. A time of high school activities, beginning college plans and perhaps even dating. Stefanie Renkema was doing none of these things. After an injury on the basketball court while playing her favorite sport, Stefanie was experiencing pain in her lower back/tailbone area. The continuing pain led Stefanie to her local doctor. Scans and biopsies later, Stefanie was diagnosed with a giant cell tumor, benign but aggressive, in her sacrum.

Stefanie underwent surgery in June 2010 to remove the tumor, and the surgeon was successful. However, her ongoing pain was consistently causing a roller-coaster of confusion and frustration. So began a myriad of doctor appointments, powerful pain medicines and plenty of travel to MD Anderson in Houston. Treatment and pain management has more than occupied the past two-and-a-half years.



When this medical journey began, Stefanie signed up for a blog on [www.caringbridge.com](http://www.caringbridge.com). She and her mother write regular updates. Reading through the entries, it is clear that the Renkemas' faith has been a rock for their family. That's not to say that they have always felt uplifted, guided and hopeful. Rather, the relationships the Renkema family has are built upon the rock. Their loved ones have shared in the tears, the prayers and the rejoicing. Stefanie and Kim both cite Asbury's children and youth leaders as strong sources of strength. Kim received a text message that read, "It's okay. Even when you don't have the words, relax; the rest of us will cover her in prayer." Again and again, Kim writes about being overwhelmed with the outpouring of compassion and commitment shown to her and her family by Angel Flight ([www.angelflight.org](http://www.angelflight.org)) staff and pilots, along with MD Anderson doctors and staff. Broken Arrow High School faculty and administration matched that commitment by allowing her to adjust to a shortened day schedule, enabling her to maintain a 3.7 GPA.

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In August 2012, the tumor returned. Despite being shell-shocked by the news, Stefanie picked herself up and started her freshman year of college as a resident at Oklahoma Baptist University. She is giving herself her own injections of medicine, with the support of her friends. When asked if she's thought about the positive influence she may be having on them, Stefanie said, "I haven't

really thought of it, but the other day I got a note from one of my friends, just telling me how glad she was that I was on the hall and how she loved that we got to talk about our faith. Then, she told me she could see God in me through the way I lived. All I see is my trying to sit through class without crying or debating if I can even go to class. To hear her say that meant a lot because that is the desire of my heart—to live completely in Christ and to show people Christ through what has happened to me."

Stefanie's parents, Greg and Kim, respect the strong, faithful young woman they have raised in the house they built upon the Rock. They remain faithful that God will use this experience for something great in Stefanie's life. "God has given me a peace about everything, that all I have to do is wake up each morning, praising and serving Him every step of the way," says Ms. Renkema. When she dreams about the future, Stefanie sees herself working with churches in other countries and forging youth ministries. She is open to new relationships, hasn't lost her sense of humor, and seems to have a special, sharp perspective on her priorities: "My friend, Hannah, told me the other day just to run as fast as I can for God. When I find a guy running as fast or faster, then I'll know that that's who I'm supposed to be with. Until then, I'm just going to work on getting healthy and try to get all my homework done."

God has made a promise to the Renkema family, as He has to each of us. "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." —Isaiah 40:31

You can follow Stefanie's story at <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/stefanierenkema>.

