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## An Update from Friends

BY ELIZABETH WHITTINGTON

Sarcoma survivor [Jillian Koluder](#) and Hodgkin's disease survivor [Dan Sprenger](#), who discussed dating after cancer in the Winter 2004 issue, were married on April 23, 2005. After the CURE article was published, the couple was featured on "Oprah." Oprah Winfrey and Colin Cowie, a nationally known event planner, threw Sprenger and Koluder a surprise wedding shower and topped it off with a honeymoon to Australia.

"The biggest surprise of all—we had a baby!" Koluder says. "We didn't think it would be possible to conceive naturally, but it happened." Although Sprenger was sterile immediately following his stem cell transplant and Koluder's doctors weren't positive her eggs were safe after chemotherapy, Aiden Roy was born in January 2006 and has "brought us nothing but joy," she says.

[Jerry Mayfield](#), the blogger highlighted in the Summer 2005 issue, is now in remission. On his website, [www.newcmldrug.com](http://www.newcmldrug.com), he chronicled his experience in a phase I clinical trial of the chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) drug Sprycel™ (dasatinib), which received accelerated approval in late June, after Gleevec® (imatinib) quit working for him. He wrote his last post to the blog in April. "With the drug having received FDA approval, it was time to end my diary," he says. "It served its purpose and now it is time to move on."

Mayfield plans to remain active in the CML community and his website, which he will update with information about CML and experimental treatments. The blog will still hold a special place on his website. "It is the most gratifying experience in my life to be lucky enough to be at the right place at the right time to help other people suffering from CML."

Since "A Mission-Driven Life" appeared in CURE's Spring 2006 issue, [Eli Kahn](#), now 15, says his fundraising efforts of collecting used printer cartridges for cancer research has grown, and orders for recycling supplies have increased. "Many of those people said they read about me in CURE," says Kahn, who has now raised almost \$26,000, which helps fund pediatric oncology research at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins. In addition to the collaboration with Johns Hopkins, Kahn is actively looking for more partnerships.

“I would love to find more businesses and organizations that will include a link to my website on their websites,” he says.

Because of his exceptional fundraising efforts, Kahn was selected as a finalist in the Volvo for Life Awards, and was invited to speak to a class of research graduate students at Johns Hopkins. “I hope that I can encourage people all over the country to help cure cancer by recycling their Cartridges for a Cure.”

The “Dynamic Duo” of breast cancer co-survivors [Kim White](#) and [Patricia Newton](#), featured in Spring 2006, are working on creating a website, which will include pink ribbon items and their cookbook, Potlucks, Parties, and Pink Ribbons, which has so far raised more than \$16,000 for both the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Arkansas Race for the Cure and the Bradley County American Cancer Society Relay for Life. “We still get orders from around the country for our cookbooks even now,” says White. In addition to the money raised from the cookbook, White and her mother will team up to participate in the Breast Cancer 3-Day, a fundraising walk/run to benefit Komen. White, a rural mail carrier, is also working to get a U.S. Postal Service team for the 13th Annual Race for the Cure in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The breast cancer support group that White and Newton helped establish in their hometown of Warren was expanded to include women with other cancers, such as ovarian and cervical. “There’s so much emphasis on breast cancer, we wanted to make other women a part of our group,” White says. Their fame hasn’t stopped there, though. White was tickled when the hospital where she was treated asked her to be in its commercial. “I’m in it only five seconds, but people still come up to me and say, ‘I saw you on TV!’ Now that’s something a country girl doesn’t hear every day.”

Newton has been busy traveling in Europe this summer, including a quick trip to Rome. “I explained to our driver that I was a breast cancer survivor and he told me the next day was Rome’s Race for the Cure. He drove us to the site where the race was to take place—posters and huge signs were everywhere,” Newton says. “Our flight back to the United States was the day of the race; otherwise, I would have raced for the cure in Rome!”

Christmas came one day late for CML survivor, [Amanda Olivere](#) and her husband Mike this past year. Olivere, who became pregnant while on Gleevec, was included in a Winter 2005 article that examined new research and issues involved for women who face cancer during pregnancy. The Olivere family celebrated the birth of Matthew Edward on December 26, 2005.

“Every day is such a gift with him, and our hearts are so full,” Olivere says. “Even now when I look at him, my eyes still fill with tears of happiness, remembering what Mike and I went through and knowing how many prayers were said for us.” Olivere resumed Gleevec treatment six weeks after Matthew was born and within two months was in cytogenetic remission, meaning doctors no longer found evidence of the cancer-causing Philadelphia chromosome in her marrow. She says that although she is not technically cured, in the sense that she will probably remain on Gleevec, she and her husband are extremely happy with her “functional cure.” “We hope that one day in the future we can give Matthew a little brother or sister,” she says. “Right now, however, we’re focusing on enjoying every moment of raising our son.”

After being profiled in the Winter 2004 issue as a cancer survivor on the dating scene, [Wendy Dixon](#) found her true love, Ron—a man she had dated on and off before her inoperable brain tumor diagnosis. “I was totally in love from the day we met,” she says, and was devastated when they broke up several years ago. “Every date I had since then was just a reminder of the one that got away—or so I thought. He was in a relationship with someone else and I thought he was gone forever, so I tried my best to move on. Still, every time I saw him while he was in town visiting his family, it would turn me upside-down.”

On a trip home to visit his ailing father, Ron called Dixon to meet him for dinner. It was the first time the two had seen each other in several months, and Dixon told Ron she was dating a lot and was more interested in having fun than finding love. “Ron saw right through me. He always did. He knew the real me—the one that wanted more than anything in my short time to fall madly in love. That was the one life experience I wanted to have before I die.”

Dixon accompanied Ron to the hospital several times over the next few days to visit his father. Although quite confused, Ron’s father kept saying something that Dixon says she’ll never forget: “Ronny, I think you should marry Wendy.” “He said it as though I wasn’t in the room and I was a little embarrassed, although, I silently agreed.”

The two were inseparable over the following weeks and decided to get back together. Dixon was soon offered a job with the National Patient Advocate Foundation working from home as the Regional Director of State Government Affairs, which she says turned out to be her dream job. She turned over Cancer World, the nonprofit she started in Portland, Oregon, to a friend and moved to Seattle to be with Ron. They eloped to Lake Tahoe two months later.

The couple spent the past year remodeling a three-story barn-shaped house, complete with a pond and cascading stream, which ultimately became the site for their second wedding, one for friends and family. “When the day finally arrived, everything was perfect. It was my dream wedding,” Dixon says.

Although initially uncertain about having children, Dixon’s doubts vanished once she and Ron were married. “I realize that having inoperable brain cancer and having a child don’t belong in the same sentence for many people, but they do for me. I have always wanted to have a child and even more so now; to see Ron and I in a child would be the most amazing gift I can imagine.”

Dixon says she now has the fairy-tale life she dreamed of. “I wake each day hoping that I will continue to be blessed with happiness and a stable tumor—and I wish the same for everyone else touched by this dreaded disease.”