

MEET SOMEONE YOU HAVE HELPED

Community Partner: American Red Cross: West Central GA Chapter

April 2009 was full of celebration for the Fussell family, with a birthday for 2 year old Isabelle, an Easter egg hunt, and a family reunion.

Just two weeks after Isabelle's 2nd birthday, the Fussell's world was turned upside down. Isabelle's mother, Melissa, discovered a mass in her daughter's abdomen. A trip to a pediatric urologist confirmed the family's worst nightmare, young Isabelle had cancer. Doctors said she would need radiation and chemotherapy to try and shrink a large growing tumor on one of her kidneys.

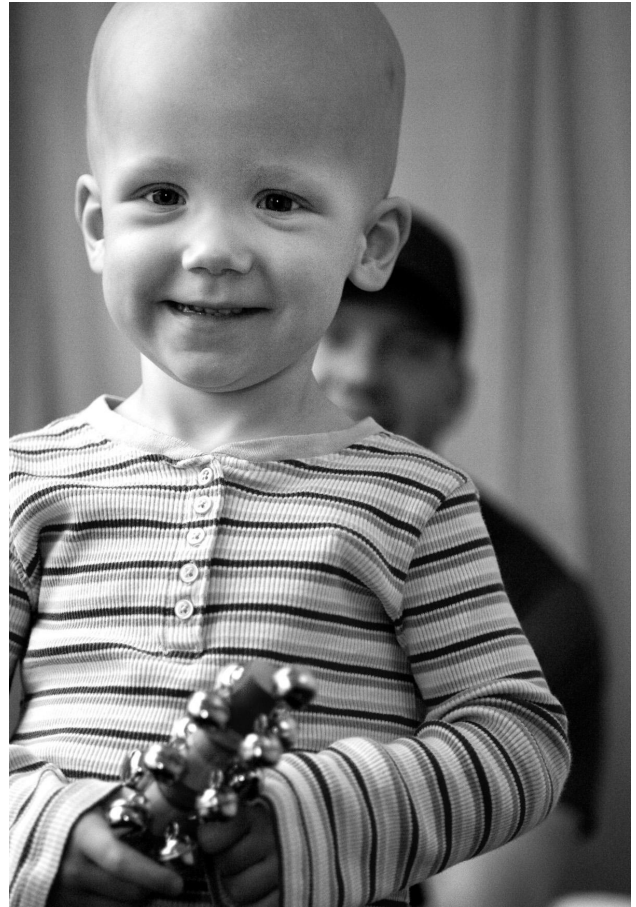
Over the next year, Isabelle underwent 11 radiation treatments and 31 weeks of chemotherapy. When her blood count dropped and she needed blood transfusions. Isabelle had 8 blood transfusions, before her treatment was finished.

"You could literally see the color return to her cheeks and lips as the blood flowed into her little body," Melissa explained, "she would be pale and lifeless and then, after the transfusion, rosy-cheeked and energetic."

The therapy also took a toll on Isabelle's platelets, causing her gums to bleed. Isabelle needed a total of 5 platelet transfusions during treatment.

Today, Isabelle is happy and healthy and has been cancer free for over a year. "Without the blood and platelet transfusions, my child would not have survived," says Melissa.

Melissa Fussell has since become a regular Red Cross blood donor because she knows that blood and platelet donations can be the difference between life and death.



Isabelle Fussell, age 2