

# Burke County Tribune

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## There's No Place Like Home

### Everlee Sem Discharged from Hospital

by LISA THOMAS

As all parents learn, kids get sick and it's inevitable this time of year especially. For Nathan and Courtney Sem's four-year-old daughter, Everlee, it started out as a typical childhood illness.

Courtney explained that Everlee had pretty common symptoms for a tummy bug, consisting of the toddler complaining of stomach pain and then throwing up and diarrhea. However, the symptoms didn't go away after a few days, and Everlee became pale and weak, and began sleeping more.

Courtney said the family was getting ready to head to her parents' home for Thanksgiving but something didn't feel right and her mom intuition kicked in.

She decided to take Everlee to the clinic just to make sure it wasn't anything more serious. That ended up being the first step in what were life-saving measures for Everlee.

Sem took her daughter to Mountrail County Medical Center and was seen by their provider. Still knowing the "tummy bug" was going around there was no need for extra concern just yet. The provider decided to do a blood draw because of the pale color in Everlee's face. Other testing was done as well. With no immediate results, they set out for Courtney's parents' home.

By the time they got to Berthold, Courtney received a call from the provider telling them to go to the nearest emergency room based on the lab results.

Still not quite certain what was wrong with their daughter, Nathan and Courtney pulled into the Trinity Hospital Emergency Center in Minot. They learned within minutes of arriving that Everlee had HUS, hemolytic-uremic syndrome. It is a rare, yet life-threatening disease that impacts the kidneys and blood clotting. It's usually a complication from a diarrheal illness caused by a toxin-producing bacteria which made sense as Everlee was also found to have contracted E. coli infection.

After the discovery and diagnosis it was just a matter of minutes before the team at Trinity made the call to airlift Everlee and her mom to Sanford Childrens Hospital in

Fargo. Treatment needed to happen very quickly to prevent further damage to her tiny kidneys.

Nathan took off, driving to Fargo in hopes to get there reasonably soon after the aircraft carrying his little girl and Courtney.

"It all happened so quickly," Courtney recalls. After the 51 minute flight from Minot to Fargo, Everlee's medical team began working diligently to get her body fighting off its attackers. They admitted her directly to the Intensive Care Unit and were making plans to begin kidney dialysis. This scared Courtney as the doctors explained that after starting on kidney dialysis the kidneys can "forget" how to do their job. Patients can sometimes become dialysis dependent for life, something that would be very taxing for someone so young.

Feeling helpless, Nathan asked the team if he could donate a kidney to his little Everlee, anything that would help in such a helpless time. They went over all of the potential what-ifs they could while they sat and waited for Everlee to get well.

Several specialty doctors were brought in to evaluate and collaborate on how to treat this tiny little girl and the only thing her mom could do was "ask for prayers." So she reached out on Facebook, asking for prayers for healing for Everlee and people responded in record numbers.

Local prayer chains were activated, and the locals started reaching out to find out how they could help. Each day in the ICU, Everlee started to improve and her "little kidneys that could," did, and started doing their job without needing dialysis, and for that Mom and Dad were very thankful.

Everlee's baby sister, Emery soon joined her in Fargo as Grandpa Merlyn and Grandma Jane made the trip to rally around the Sems, and Courtney's parents were there with them as well, providing support where they could.

Courtney said she was immediately overwhelmed with the outpouring of offers and calls to see what they needed, people just reaching out to try to help.

Day by day, and prayer by prayer, little Everlee's condition

improved.

Nathan and Courtney took turns staying at the Ronald McDonald house so someone was with Everlee all the time. When they weren't snuggling the patient, they were grateful to have a place to rest which included home cooked meals and a relaxing environment for families with kids in the hospital.

Days went by and little by little, Everlee's condition improved.

Courtney remembers the shock she felt when the nurse asked if they "were ready to go home."

She was nervous going all the way back to Powers Lake with Everlee needing so much medical care, and being so far from Fargo, but she also knew that her healing would be speedier in her own bed, with her toys.

They were discharged about a week after the battle had begun. They stayed overnight at the RMD House to make sure they were out of the woods and the next morning headed straight for home.

Everlee has been home for just over a week now and is improving quite steadily. She has checkups with doctors and they are still monitoring her closely but the Sems are so thankful to have her home with them.

While in the hospital, Everlee was visited and gifted by the Parkers Promise crew, a group started after a boy named Parker was diagnosed with the same disease as Everlee. Their mission statement explained that they are a group representing those affected by pathogenic illness, providing support for the kids and families, and they have done so well at that for Everlee. In fact she just received a gift by mail from them, filled with toys and dolls and all of the fun things a little girl needs to forget about HUS for a while.

Between the Parkers Promise Foundation and the Ronald McDonald House, the Sems couldn't be more grateful. They would request that any donations that people may feel inclined to give, go to one of those two organizations who helped them and so many others so much.

It is unknown where or how Everlee contracted the E. Coli disease. Courtney explained it could



Parents, Courtney and Nathan Sem and baby sister, Emery are thankful to have Everlee home for Christmas.

have been anywhere.

Everlee is an animal lover, always hugging her goats, playing with her kittens and running through the chicken pens so there's no definite answer other than just "kids being kids."

Thanks to all of the family being family, and friends being friends, prayers have been answered and Everlee is on the right track to a full recovery.

She is still considered anemic and will go in for more blood transfusions and is being watched closely by her care team here, but it's safe to say the worst part is over. Thanks to Courtney's motherly instinct and a fast acting

provider in Stanley, everything was caught in time and she will recover.

Courtney felt it was so important to share this story to spread awareness in hopes of preventing this from happening to anyone else and informing people what to look. She also says "thank you" to everyone who prayed, the Ronald McDonald House and Parkers Promise, and her parents, in-laws and Everlee's entire care team for getting her back to where she is slowly coming back to her old self, and home, just in time for Christmas.

## Bowbells Food Pantry Announces Planned Closure

The Society of St. Stephen Food Pantry, a mainstay of the Bowbells community for 35 years, has announced its impending closure. The decision, described by organizers and volunteers as "difficult," marks the end of an era for the pantry, which has provided vital support to countless families in need.

"It is with a heavy heart that we share this news," said Rosemary Schweyen, Chairman of the Society of St. Stephen. "After three and a half decades of operation, we have made the hard choice to close our doors."

Despite the planned closure, volunteers remain hopeful that the pantry's legacy will continue. They are actively seeking individuals or groups within the community who are willing to take over the operation to prevent its shutdown. Community members who are interested in stepping forward to ensure the continuation of this vital service are encouraged to contact one of the volunteers as soon as possible.

The closure reflects both the challenges faced by small community organizations and the profound impact they have on local residents. For now, the organizers and volunteers express their deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported their mission over the years.

A growing client base and workload are making it much more difficult to sustain the business with the current staff.

"Our volunteers have worked here for many years and are challenged to support all the activities required due to various circumstances," explained Schweyen. "We have also been unable to recruit new volunteers."

Unless or until a new crew of volunteers is able to assume responsibility, the pantry's last day of business will be on March 15, 2025. More information about events, timing and other food pantry resources in the region will be provided before the closure.

The Society would like to thank the incredible donors and staff over the years for their tireless effort and work. Many have worked and volunteered for over 25 years, and the organization is grateful for their loyalty and commitment to this effort. The food pantry would not have achieved the success they did without their hard work and dedication.

"We would also like to express our appreciation to our clients for their trust and support over the years. We are proud to have served as a reliable local Food Pantry for the community and beyond," Schweyen said. "While we are saddened by the need for closing the Bowbells Food Pantry, we are grateful for the memories, relationships, and experiences we have gained throughout the years. We will cherish these as we move forward. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our journey."



## BLESSINGS OF THE SEASON

May the spirit of the season  
fill your heart and home with love.

We wish you a wonderful Christmas and a year  
filled with peace, prosperity and good health.

### Burke County Tribune

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