

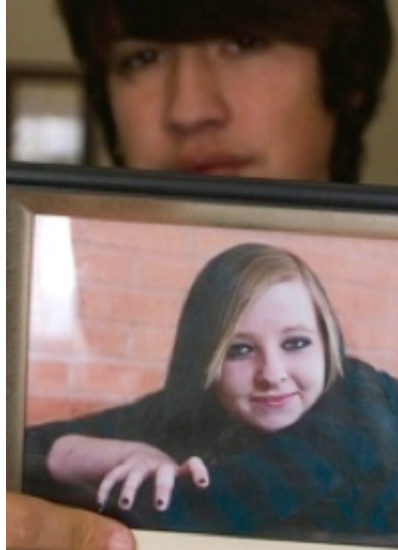


Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 2, 2012

Pregnant Teen Foregoes Cancer Treatment, Sacrifices Life to Save Baby

This Christmas season the family of 17-year-old Jenni Lake remembered the Pocatello, Idaho, teen for her sacrifice in refusing medical treatment for cancer so that the baby growing inside her would be born healthy and whole.

In October 2010, Jenni was diagnosed with grade-three brain cancer and given about two years to live. Doctors immediately began aggressive chemotherapy on the high school junior to slow down the advance of the cancer, and last March Jenni and her family got the hopeful news that the tumors on her brain and spine were shrinking.



But shortly afterward, when her boyfriend, Nathan, took her to the emergency room because she was throwing up, Jenni got some shocking news: she was pregnant. What made the revelation even more troubling to the teen was that her cancer treatment could prove fatal to the baby growing inside her.

"She was pretty scared, because the baby had been through two rounds of chemo from March and April and she was just about to start another round," recalled Jenni's mother, Diana Phillips.

Jenni's oncologist, Dr. David Ririe, explained to her that because of her pregnancy, she couldn't continue with the treatments. "So she would either have to terminate the pregnancy and continue the treatments, or stop the treatments, knowing that it [the cancer] could continue to grow again," recalled Phillips to the [Associated Press](#). But Phillips said that abortion was never a consideration for her daughter, who had always wanted to be a mother.

As the disease continued to take its toll on her, Jenni had the peace of knowing that she was doing all she could to protect her baby. Her mother recalled that as Jenni was being admitted to the hospital to deliver her baby, she pulled a nurse down to her bedside and whispered something that would comfort her family after she was gone. "She told the nurse, 'I'm done — I did what I was supposed to. My baby is going to get here safe,'" recalled Phillips.

On November 10, a day after delivering her and Nathan's baby, whom they named Chad Michael, Jenni was given the sobering news that her decision to forgo chemotherapy to save her baby's life would ultimately cost her her own. The cancerous tumors on her brain and spine had spread, and there was now nothing that her doctors could do to save her. Less than two weeks later Jenni passed away, after holding her newborn baby one last time. Jenni's father, Mike Lake, said that his daughter, who had lost her eyesight to the illness, held her son close, speaking her last words, "I can kind of see him."

The family said that Chad Michael will be raised by the child's father, Nathan, with the help of both his and Jenni's parents. Dianna Phillips said that she wants to make sure Jenni's son grows up knowing all about his young mother. "I want him to know everything about her, and what she did."



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To help her remember the courage and sacrifice of her daughter, Phillips now wears a tattoo bearing the name “Jenni” and the words to John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

To learn more about Jenni Lake and her life, log on to www.facebook.com/jennisjourney, and www.youtube.com/jennisjourney.

Photo: Nathan Wittman, 19, holds a photo of Jenni Lake, who died of cancer shortly after giving birth to their son, Chad Michael Lake Wittman, at the family's home in Pocatello, Idaho: AP Images



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