

# A Christmas miracle

## Six years later, local girl's cancer is now in remission

By **EAMONN MAHER**  
*Staff Writer*

It's going to be a Christmas to remember for the Stewart family of Georgetown.

For the first time in almost six years the Stewarts will be celebrating the holidays like most other Canadian families— spending time with relatives, opening presents, going on toboggan rides— because 10-year-old daughter Kathryn won't be in hospital or undergoing cancer-fighting treatments.

It's been a gruelling ride for Kathryn, her parents Heather and Greg, as well as seven-year-old brother Jeff, who spent months at a time away from home with relatives in Oshawa as not to pass on potentially fatal illnesses to his sister.

"It's just nice to be home," said Kathryn, who'd prefer not to answer questions about the subject at all— 24 rounds of chemotherapy later.

The Grade 5 George Kennedy Public School student did sport a wide grin while sitting alongside classmates recently, designing Christmas trees and a fireplace out of cardboard for last week's school production of *The Grinch*.

And she did admit that it would be nice to find some furniture under the Christmas tree for the backyard clubhouse that her dad, a controller for a company in Bolton, built.

"Kathryn likes being at school and the biggest thing for her was being normal. She's done a really good job of keeping up with school. Despite all she's missed, she's still at her grade level," said mother Heather, who put her law practice on hold to care for Kathryn after she was first diagnosed with neuroblastoma in Aug. 2008.

She spent the following Christmas at Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto after a radical approach to her treatment called for two stem-cell transplants.

Santa Claus did visit and

brought gifts, but they were unwrapped, again due to infection concerns. Christmas shopping with mom was also out of the question, but it's something they were finally able to do together last week.

"If you have to be there, it's really nice," said Kathryn of her stay at Sick Kids, even though she was unable to eat at the time.

"The people there were great. The best part when I was in the hospital was sitting there playing with my stuff on Christmas morning."

Upon her initial diagnosis, chemotherapy, radiation doses and multiple surgeries were performed on Kathryn and she seemed to be in the clear, until a routine scan in August of last year turned up two cancerous and inoperable lesions on her spine.

The prognosis was not good.

"We were told there was a standard of care that would give her



Kathryn Stewart, 10, (right) gives her brother Jeff, 7, a hug. This Christmas will mark the first time in nearly six years that Kathryn, who suffers from neuroblastoma, will not be spending Christmas in hospital.

Photo by Eamonn Maher

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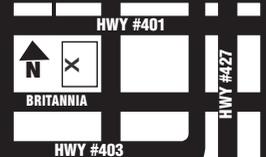
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