

## Do you believe in miracles?

We do, because we have our own incredible miracle unfolding before our eyes...Sarah Cole, our sweet little red-haired wonder. You see, Sarah Cole was born as most babies are, healthy, cute, loud and smelly but completely normal. At around 14 months, things began to change. She refused to eat. She lost weight rapidly. Her eyes literally began to vibrate at times. Because all of these things can be attributed to common toddler behavior or other medical conditions, we, along with her awesome pediatrician, were concerned and watched her closely with weekly appointments. Until the day that our normal, somewhat finicky toddler could no longer stand or walk; our pediatrician sent us immediately to MUSC and the specialists there. We knew then that it was serious...very serious.

An MRI told the story that we did not want to hear and showed the picture of the monster we most feared. Our precious Sarah Cole has a brain tumor, malignant and rapidly growing. Pilomyxoid Astrocytomas (PMA) are an incredibly nasty form of cancer. Believed to form in the womb, this tumor is actually a part of her brain. Sitting on her optic nerve, the tumor was robbing her of her sight as well as taking over her body.

Surgery was immediate, followed by chemotherapy. After three months of chemo, the MRI once again devastated us with the news that the tumor was still growing, growing rapidly and was "brighter" which means that it was very alive and active. The wonderful oncology team at MUSC conferred and decided to try a second type of chemotherapy that they hoped would keep it in check and stop it from growing. With very few treatment options for this aggressive tumor on an 18 month old baby, the outlook was grim and our future dark.

Now, you may think that this is sad story of another horrible tragedy in this crazy world we live in. But, like Sarah Cole, this is a story of hope, of miracles and of goodness.

We are a family of faith. When Sarah Cole was first diagnosed, the word was spread and prayers began, first in our family's churches and then in churches of our friends. Incredibly, unsolicited, individuals and churches throughout our community began to pray. When Sarah Cole's mom created a Facebook page, literally thousands of individuals and churches nationwide began sending up their prayers, and those prayers continue even today.

Do you believe in miracles and the power of prayer? Do you believe that our God is alive and that He is mighty? We do.

Against all odds, Sarah Cole's tumor is shrinking. She is thriving, not healed completely, still blind but thriving. The chemotherapy is designed to arrest the growth of her tumor but not shrink it. Three subsequent MRIs later, her tumor is steadily shrinking and growing less "bright". Through the grace of God, the power of prayer and the miracle of God's mercy, Sarah Cole's tumor is dying.

This Palm Sunday, we will happily and miraculously celebrate Sarah Cole's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Sarah Cole's oncology team can attest to how big of a miracle this truly is. It's amazing and appropriate that her birthday falls on Palm Sunday, right before Easter which is the celebration of the most incredible miracle of all time. Friends, our God is alive, Jesus had risen and He is mighty, magnificence and oh so very presence in our lives!

Do you believe in miracles? We do, because we believe in God and His power. We believe not because we're fabulous Christians who do everything just right. We believe, because in the ultimate irony, we have been given the gift of sight through precious little green eyes that cannot see. In honor of her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and the glory of God, we want to share Sarah Cole's gift with you so that you too can believe.

We believe in miracles, because we know that God IS alive, He is magnificent and He does hear our prayers. Not only is Sarah Cole celebrating her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, she is living well. Even though the chemo is strong and unbelievably hard on her 28 pound body, she wakes up every morning happy. We believe that Jesus holds her in His arms constantly and shields her from the pain and damage. Not only has God has blessed her with improvement, but He has also given her the amazing gift of joy. Sarah Cole isn't joyful because she feels wonderful or has a perfect life. She is just joyful! Through Sarah Cole's eyes and her incredible smile, we have learned how peaceful it is to be wrapped in Jesus' arms and filled with God's joy even when life is not as it should be.

We believe that there is goodness in people, all people, in spite of what you'll hear on the news. Through Sarah Cole's eyes, God has shown us the unbelievable goodness that He created in each of us. So many people have come forward to help in so many ways, and it's all been such a blessing. So whenever you're overwhelmed by all the horrors and tragedies that are constantly reported, do what we do. Turn it off and picture a sweet little red head with happy green eyes who shines God's love and goodness through her smile....and she smiles all the time about everything. No pity, very little whining (OK, well some whining because she is still in the terrible twos) and a heart and attitude that finds joy in every little thing she touches or hears.

Sarah Cole is a giggler whose favorite thing to do is randomly say RURR RURR. We have no idea what this means, but she giggles uncontrollably every time she says it. These days as I'm sitting through very serious and complex meetings, I suddenly find myself thinking RURR RURR and seeing her happy smile.....and it makes me want to giggle too. Because of Sarah Cole and God's message through her, we know that all people are good, life is a gift, and we would all be happier if we could learn to trust Him when things are awful and giggle a little bit more.

We believe in the incredible power of prayer. Of all the gifts you can give someone, prayer is the most wonderful and life changing, and we are so thankful for yours. We are especially touched and humbled by the pure and powerful prayers being prayed by children in kindergarten and Sunday School classes throughout the community. Through Sarah Cole's

eyes, we have seen that despite what the world tells us, the majority of people in America are Christians, they do still believe in God and they do still pray.

At Christmas, Sarah Cole was back in MUSC for a small procedure. One of her special nurses (and there are many of them) is Lauren. Lauren, along with many others, fell in love with Sarah Cole months ago. Lauren's mother and grandmother flew in for the Christmas holiday and to help prepare for Lauren's upcoming wedding. In the middle of terrible weather, they landed in Charleston from New York and came straight to the hospital so they could meet Sarah Cole. They were so anxious to see her, this child they had never met, that they didn't check into their hotel, didn't freshen up, didn't unpack.....but drove straight from the airport to our hospital room. They knew of Sarah Cole through Lauren, had been following her progress and they and their families and churches had all been praying for her. They burst excitedly into the room, all smiles, as if they were meeting a celebrity. I watched them gently approach her, speak sweetly to her so she could get to know them and then carefully gather Sarah Cole in their arms so they could love on her.

As I watched them hold her in their arms, the love on their faces for this child that they had never met was overwhelming. I realized as I watched that their prayers for her had not only saved Sarah Cole's life but had also created in them a pure and amazing love for a stranger. Through Sarah Cole's little eyes, I suddenly realized that when we pray for others, it changes us too. When we pray for others, God's love is created and grows within us. I will never forget the amazing sight of those precious, praying ladies and the love of Jesus shining from their faces as they snuggled one of God's littlest angels. That night, I saw a love that I had only read about in the pages of my Bible, a Jesus kind of love that is not earned or deserved but yet is strong and real and heart felt. That night, through Sarah Cole's eyes, I saw God's love.

We believe in faith. It's easy to say but oh so hard to do, isn't it? It's hard to have faith when data indicates the outcome otherwise. It's hard to have faith when the nurses double and triple glove just to handle the toxin, our only remedy, that is about to be administered to a 2 year old. It's hard to have faith when so many stories tell you the outcome will probably not be good. But *"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."* (Hebrews 11:1 NLT) Through Sarah Cole's eyes, God is teaching us to keep our eyes on Him and to trust Him, no matter what. Honestly, in the face of this battle, we struggle every day to keep our faith, but we're committed to keeping our hands in His and trusting Him with our sweet girl. Because even though we're not perfect and sometimes our faith wavers, we believe that He is perfect, He is risen, He is mighty and thankfully He is bigger than this PMA. We believe in the power of our God.....and we believe in miracles.

Do you believe in miracles? We do, even though we don't know how this story will end. God uses all of us for His glory, even His small, precious children, in ways we don't understand. Through Sarah Cole's eyes, God has shown us His glory, taught us to believe in miracles, restored our faith in people, shown us His love and reminded us *"...God causes everything to*

*work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28 NLT).*

At age 3, Sarah Cole’s life has already been a powerful testimony to the grace and magnificence of our God and the wonder of His miracles. We are amazed and humbled by God’s incredible plan for Sarah Cole’s life and how He is using her to lead so many people to Him. Through her story, her smile, her joy and her giggles, Sarah Cole is happily fulfilling her role as God’s little green eyed messenger. Oh yes sweet friends, we absolutely believe in miracles!

On Palm Sunday, our family will be celebrating our amazing little red haired, giggling miracle. There will be bubbles, pony rides, laughter, tears and many, many prayers of thanks to our Father for His love and mercy. And at the center of it all will be our precious Sarah Cole, God’s amazing proof that He does hear and answer prayers, He is still in control and through his grace, miracles really do still happen.

From Sarah Cole and our family to yours, we wish you a Happy Easter, a life full of miracles and lots and lots of giggles. RURR RURR!!

*Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:7)*