

Date: 09/02/2016

Head and Neck Cancer Alliance
PO Box 26188
Charleston, SC 26188


Dear Head and Neck Cancer Alliance:

Jim Griffith was diagnosed with tonsillar cancer in 2012. With very aggressive treatment of surgery, chemo, and radiation, he was in remission in early 2013. In 2014, the cancer returned. This time it had spread to his lungs and the lymph nodes around his heart. This time, surgery was not an option due to the location. So a cocktail of chemotherapies were used. After just under a year, the doctors informed Jim that this treatment wasn't working. So Jim's family searched for another answer. This led him to clinical trials. Jim and his wife, Debby, made a long trip from WV to NY to Sloan-Kettering Memorial Hospital. Here Jim was approved to begin the clinical trial for immunotherapy. At first it showed some decrease in size, but this did not last long. After a few months Jim again was informed he needed to find another options. Through testing, he was informed that he qualified for a genotherapy that was being used only for Breast Cancer. Jim decided to give it a try. After the first series, he was scanned and the tumors being tracked showed 45% decrease in size. In March of 2016, Jim became very ill and he was in and out of the hospital. On his regular trip to NY, he was admitted to the hospital and stuck in NY for over 2 weeks. During this time he lost around 40lbs. The immunotherapy side effects were finally wearing him down. Shortly after, he was released from the genotherapy trial. Again, with testing, he was informed he could try a HPV medication that in large amounts was being tested for cancer. This medication made Jim feel even worse, and at this point his body had become too weak to continue. He made the decision to stop taking the pills. His local family doctor started palliative radiation. On August 7, 2016, surrounded by his wife and three children, Jim found peace and was no longer suffering.

Jim was a big supporter of research and constantly was willing to do anything to help others. He always said, "If it will help someone else, I'll do it." He was strong and brave, and he fought a long battle. Jim was 53 years old. He passed just two weeks short of his 34th wedding anniversary. He left three children, Brent (28), Kelsey (26), and Colton (19), and a wife Debby (53) who will always carry him in their hearts and remember him for his strength and sense of humor through it all.

The families decided in lieu of flowers, that Jim would rather us collect donations for research. After searching different options, we selected Head and Neck Cancer Alliance to receive the donations. We hope that this money can help further research, and maybe give others a chance to defeat cancer. Jim would want everyone to have the best chance, and to feel like they are not fighting alone.

Sincerely,


Kelsey Griffith
(Jim's Daughter)