

JUNE 2019

Newburyport

NEIGHBORS

FAMILY, GOD & FOOTBALL

Cover photo by Amanda Ambrose Photography

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Best Version Media



Best Version Media

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HI, NEIGHBORS!

Summer is finally here! This is why we live in this great coastal town so we can enjoy the wonderful beaches on Plum Island and boat, bike and hike in this wonderful weather.

This issue we bring you the heart warming story of Paula Garrant and her commitment to honor the memory of her son Reid. Reid was larger than life and now his memory will live on through his foundation The Reid Landry Garrant Foundation (RLG).

We learn step by step how to create curb appeal with your property from our expert contributor Sandy Birkenbush at Stoneridge Properties.

Get outside in your garden and have some fun! Remember this is your magazine so send in your nominations for our next resident feature!



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To learn more about becoming an expert contributor, contact Noreen Trudel at ntrudel@bestversionmedia.com or 617-794-9205.



Family, God & Football

Interviewed by Ashley Brindamour | Written by Rob Levey

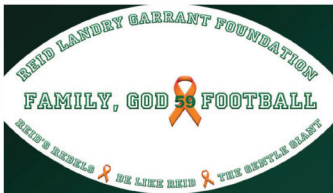
For a parent, there is nothing more difficult than a child's passing, which is precisely what Paula Garratt experienced on June 1 of 2018 when her son Reid lost his battle with Leukemia.

Her heartache, however, led to near immediate action, as Paula formed the Reid Landry Garratt (RLG) Foundation just a month after Reid's passing.

"I was eager to get going with something because you feel like when your child dies you're going crazy," she says.

The purpose behind the foundation is to not only provide financial assistance to help families dealing with Leukemia, but raise awareness about it.

For Paula, her son's passing was especially painful (and unexpected).



Reid was diagnosed with Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia (APML), a cancer of the white blood cells, by doctors at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute just one day before his death.

"We didn't see it coming -- we just thought he had the flu," she explains. "This was not a child who had Leukemia treatments for 2 years, so it was nothing like that at all. This was acute and shocking. Our lives were turned upside down."

She says his symptoms began to present themselves at the end of May of last year. Paula says these symptoms mimicked those associated with the flu. When Reid expressed doubt as to whether he could make it "five feet" to get into a car, however, she says they called an ambulance on the evening of May 31.

"I still kept thinking the flu," she says.

Diagnosed that evening with APML, but told by one doctor that it was "very curable," Paula says Reid was initially taken for an MRI to verify there was no fluid in the spine. The family was consequently instructed that they could return home, which they did with one exception.

"I stayed," says Paula.

Her decision to stay proved prophetic, as an hour and a half later she was told by a nurse that her son did not make it for an MRI. His heart had stopped, but they had him stabilized for the time being. The nurse got a doctor to speak with her, however, who said that the family should return back to the hospital.

"That's when I knew it wasn't going away," she says. "He passed at 5:05 in the morning. I was with him the whole time, holding his hand and telling him I loved him...I had the priest come and we were praying -- it was horrible. A month later, I started the foundation."

What's Next

For Paula, there is no way to look forward without first looking back at her son, a 6' 3", 300 pound former football player who graduated from Pentucket High School and attended UMass Dartmouth. His nickname was "The Gentle Giant."

"He was this larger than life teddy bear," she says. "He would give his right arm for anybody. He would give leftovers from his meals to the homeless in Boston. We would have a meal, and if he had extra he would just give it to someone on the side of the street. He was a big love."

After Reid's passing, a girl with whom he attended high school called Paula to tell her a story about her son. She described herself as "a kid with bad anxiety."

"She had just come from a different school system and she was frozen in the hallway with fear and anxiety," recounts Paula. "Reid apparently went over to her and asked if she was okay and he walked her to class. He sat with her for the rest of the year. He made sure she was okay and took care of her."

This story and others, while poignant, serve to not only remind her of her loss, but to embolden her to work through RLG Foundation in honor of her boy.

"I am fighting for awareness," she says. "I am going to schools and talking to groups. I spoke to Hunking Middle School in Haverhill in front of 1,200 kids, I spoke to the Pentucket football team and cheerleader team. I spoke to 100 people at Harvard Medical Center and had them all in tears."

In more ways than one, Reid lives on, says Paula.

"His sister was pregnant when he passed, and they have named their baby, Reid," she says.

Although Reid is gone, some things never die, including a mother's love.

"I lost my baby," says Paula, who says her son's motto was "Family, God & Football." "I will always love him so much."

To learn more about RLG Foundation, visit www.reidsrebels.com.

