

# Aplastic anemia victim keeps beating odds

By Diane Gale  
staff writer

Margaret Waldecker said she knew something was wrong in 1972 when a flu bug just wouldn't go away and she noticed bruises on her hands.

She was mistakenly told she had leukemia.

Sitting on the sofa in her Canton

home, Waldecker, now 39, raised her arms to illustrate the excitement she felt 17 years ago when the doctors changed the diagnosis. She didn't have leukemia, they said, she had aplastic anemia — a rare disorder resulting from the failure of the bone marrow to produce blood cells.

BUT THE elation turned to devastation when they said she'd be better

off with leukemia "because we can treat that."

Aplastic anemia is usually fatal within three years.

By surviving 17 years and giving birth to a son (now 15), Waldecker is breaking all the rules.

"No one else has survived that long without going into remission," she said.

Since her case is different, doctors can't predict her future. It was unusual for Waldecker to have the disease for this many years without more problems, said a spokesman for Dr. Lyle L. Sensenbrenner, a bone marrow specialist at Harper's Hospital.

"And it's very unusual for her to have it and deliver a son."

Waldecker gave birth to her son, Jimmy, even though she was warned she would likely die.

"We both survived," she said.

Waldecker keeps beating the odds. While she was hospitalized in 1987 her doctor told her she was "pretty much done in."

"I said I wasn't ready for that. Six weeks later I was back at work. Some day some facet of this will do me in. But then driving down the Jeffries can do you in."

She free lances as a paralegal with local lawyers. But she's limited to part-time work because aplastic anemia leaves her tired most of the time. For instance, walking up a flight of stairs takes her breath away.

WALDECKER MUST deal with

## Jaycees call for nominations

Nominations are now being accepted for the Outstanding Business Person and the Outstanding Citizen in the Farmington Area community. Nominees should be people who have made significant contributions to the community as an individual or as a business owner. Nominees will be judged by the Farmington Area Jaycees on the basis of their contributions to the community.

Both people selected will be honored at the Farmington Area Jaycees Annual Leadership Prayer Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 23, in Rotunda.

Nominations should be sent to Farmington Area Jaycees, in care of Matt Ratliff, 22772 Glenmore Heights, Farmington Hills, 48024.

Nominations must be received by Jan. 16.

# Group formed to help with bone marrow disease

By Diane Gale  
staff writer

Aplastic anemia is often fatal and strikes people of all ages, but most people don't know it exists.

The disease is bone marrow failure. The marrow stops producing blood cells: no white cells to help fight infection, no red cells to carry oxygen from the lungs to all parts of the body, and no platelet cells to help prevent bleeding and bruising.

"In all probability you had never heard of this disease until the time of diagnosis," reads a pamphlet from Aplastic Anemia Foundation of Michigan.

THE MICHIGAN chapter was formed in 1987 by Gary and Susan Snider of Farmington Hills. Their son, Todd Snider, was diagnosed as having the disease a year earlier.

"The main goal is public awareness of the disease," Susan Snider said.

Currently the organization is looking for cash donations for research.

Also, "We're always looking for people to be bone marrow donors," Susan Snider said.

Bone marrow transplant is generally considered the treatment of choice, the foundation pamphlet said.

MARGARET WALDECKER of Canton attended the first meeting of the Michigan chapter in 1987 and now serves on the board of directors.

On the national level, she works as a counselor to other victims. All types of people attend the meetings, including children who have had bone marrow transplants, family members of victims who died years ago and others who have been cured.

A support group is needed, Waldecker said. The local chapter can't be defined as such, because "we're still getting our feet wet," she said.

The group is aiming at making people aware of the national bone marrow donor registry and is preparing Christmas packages for children hospitalized at Children's Hospital during the holidays.

RESEARCH HAS shown that the disease is linked to exposure to certain toxins, according to Dr. Lyle L. Sensenbrenner in a letter to patients. Sensenbrenner is the national director of Aplastic Anemia Foundation of America.

Toxic chemicals, drugs and other medications, radiation and viruses have been linked as causes of the disease, he said in the letter.

He warns against high exposures to benzene and its existence in gasoline, especially unleaded; mothballs; many organic solvents such as paint and varnish removers; oil removing solvent; dry cleaning solutions and some glues.

Exposure to insecticides pose hazards, Sensenbrenner wrote in a letter to Waldecker. Hair dyes, herbicides and insect killers also should be avoided, she said.

The local group meets the second Sunday every other month in Harper Hospital's Hospitality Center.

For more information about the local chapter of Aplastic Anemia Foundation of Michigan, call the Sniders at 533-4318.

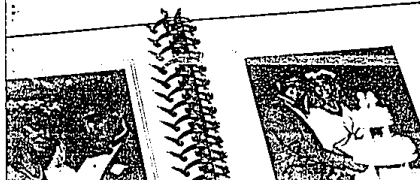
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## If you're thinking of buying a condominium, make sure it's not a mystery.

So says Sally Harlow, owner and mystery writer of Soul Play Productions. We asked her what she liked about living at The Heathers and we got an enthusiastic "Everything!" from Sally. Even though Sally is single she chose the large Stratford model in Cambridge Village. "I like space and luxury," she said, "and Cambridge Village had everything to pamper me after my days of planning murder and mayhem, make believe, of course."

"The Robertson Brothers build a first class community and that enhances my image," she continued. "I have joined The Heathers Club and look forward to the golf season. I was pleased that they accept single women memberships."

Sally enjoys the overall setting of The Heathers, as well, and the location is perfect because her business is located in Bloomfield Hills.

Finally, we asked if she was 'at home' for life. "I'll never move," she responded. Sally evidently has solved the mystery of the perfect lifestyle.

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