

making a DIFFERENCE

honoring Jill Darr Rowell

Jill Rowell is one of those people you hear about and wish you'd had a chance to meet. The people who did meet her know that she loved to talk, and she loved to listen. She loved to laugh and play jokes. Jill was special, one of a kind. If you didn't already meet Jill, you won't have a chance. The young wife, mother and teacher passed away in the Spring. Cancer took Jill, but not before staff at North Florida Regional Medical Center had a chance to care for her. They made a difference in Jill's life. And in return, she very definitely made a difference in theirs.

"Jill was an incredible woman," says Mary Piazza, RN, one of the oncology nurses at North Florida Regional who became close to Jill during the months she was a patient. "Jill loved people and getting to know them. She was also a prankster and had a wonderful sense of humor. We became very close, and she meant a lot to all of us."

Jill was just 36 years old when it became obvious that something was wrong. With a loving husband, two young children and everything to live for, Jill's home became the hospital for weeks at a time as she was treated for Acute Myelogenous Leukemia. She would wait and hope her condition would improve so that she could go home. As she waited, Jill got a lot done. She met people. She made friends. And she used paper and tape to create messages on her hospital room window that could be seen by nurses in the Infusion Suite across the way. The messages told her nurses how she felt about them and kept them updated on her white blood count.

"We loved looking at the signs Jill made for us on the window of her room," Piazza says. "We had a window in the Infusion Suite that we knew Jill could see, so we cut paper up and taped a message back to her." That sign was just three simple words. It said, 'Love you, Jill.'

[Continued on back](#)



Jill Rowell and her daughter Carlie paused for a photo with two of the nurses at North Florida Regional who cared for them – Richard Leneave and Tina Farrar.

North Florida Regional Healthcare is a strong healthcare system centered around Gainesville's only community hospital – North Florida Regional Medical Center. To acknowledge the people who are dedicated to healing that patients rely on, we bring you "Making a Difference." This is an opportunity to share stories of employees who do something that truly makes our campus and our world a better place.

If you know someone at North Florida Regional Healthcare who is Making a Difference, call us at 333-4970 or send an email to MakingADifference@hcahealthcare.com.



NORTH FLORIDA
REGIONAL HEALTHCARE

We are with you **for life.**

Honoring Jill Darr Rowell

Continued from front

Jill also loved to cook, and she told her nurses how much she missed that in the hospital. So, Mary Piazza knew what she had to do. One evening after she left North Florida Regional, she stopped off on the way home and bought an Easy Bake oven. She took it to Jill the next day. In the weeks after, Jill would invite Mary and others to come up for something fresh out of her oven. Typically, Mary says, it was something from a local bakery brought to her by family. Jill would serve it from the Easy Bake oven with her trademark smile in place.



Jill in her room at NFRMC with the Easy Bake oven Mary Piazza gave to her.

“We got to know so many of the nurses and staff at North Florida Regional, and they were so good to us,” says Richard Rowell, Jill’s husband. “They took good care of all of us and when we left, we always missed the fellowship and camaraderie of the people there.”

Jill was in remission for awhile, but her cancer returned. Two days before Jill passed away, Mary felt compelled to visit her home and delivered prayer blankets from her church for Jill and her children.

“We all had this fabulous relationship with Jill, and we did everything possible to care for her,” Mary says. “We all feel strongly about the great care we gave her. Looking back at the memories of our time with her, I think Jill didn’t just receive care. She gave us great care, too.”



Mary Piazza, RN, Kim Kleinsasser, RN and Ashley Moody, RN are three of the oncology nurses who cared for Jill Rowell and grew close to her while she was a patient.

“I would like to say that Jill was living proof that you must always make the most of your situation in life,” says Richard Rowell. “It does no good to complain, mope or focus on the negative. What mattered to Jill was the journey and the people she met along the way.”

Jill wanted to make a difference, and her husband has formed a foundation named for her that will work toward three things that meant a lot to her – supporting arts based education programs, supporting bone marrow donation and one day, sponsoring an RN who is seeking national oncology certification. The Jill Darr Rowell Foundation is a part of the Gainesville Community Foundation and is available at www.gnvcf.org.

“As for me and the kids, I am a big believer in the fact that things happen for a reason,” Richard says. “Of all the thoughts, cards and words given to me, I always return to one.”

‘It has been said that each of us must release the hand of the one we love into the hand of the one we have not seen. I hope eventually this will comfort you somewhat.’

“Jill is not alone, and neither are we. Comfort me, it does.”



Jill and Carlie can be seen standing and waving from the window in Jill’s room with a message to her oncology nurses about her white blood count.