

# The Talon

## MOM STRUGGLES WITH CHILD'S NEW ILLNESS

By Michelle Caceres

When FishHawk resident Maureen Massari first learned in December that her 4-year-old daughter Jessica Kohut was diagnosed with cancer, the mother of four crumpled to her knees, her mind unable and unwilling to comprehend the six letter word that strikes fear into hearts.



*FISHHAWK RESIDENTS ARE RALLYING AROUND MOM MAUREEN MASSARI, WHOSE DAUGHTER JESSICA KOHUT WAS DIAGNOSED WITH STAGE 4 NEUROBLASTOMA IN DECEMBER.*

Indeed, many FishHawk residents upon reading this may cringe at the thought that yet another one of our precious children has been stricken with a life threatening illness.

Jessica is diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma, a solid tumor cancer that begins in the nervous system of the neck, chest, abdomen or pelvis and affects infants and young children.

Once the shock wore off, Massari says she got up off her knees and is now learning the language of a foreign world that uses terms such as chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants, radiation and antibody treatments. Jessica underwent her first round of chemotherapy in late December and will receive two more before the surgery to remove the tumor on her kidney at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York.

It hasn't taken long for friends, neighbors, co-workers and family to rally to the family's aide. Jessica's father, Bo Kohut, flew to Tampa and came to his daughter's

side as soon as he found out about her illness. Massari's parents, who live in the area, have helped tend to her three other children while she is at the hospital with Jessica.

FishHawk resident Stacy Robinson, whose son attends school with Jessica, felt the need to lend a hand and is accepting donations of gift cards from gas stations, grocery stores and restaurants. She is

working to schedule a bunko night and silicone bracelets have also been ordered and will be sold to benefit Jessica's care. In addition, Robinson is asking for sponsors to donate gift baskets that can be raffled off.

"I know what I'm going to be faced with down the road," she says.

An account has been set up to help pay those looming bills. Donations of frequent flier miles are also being accepted on the Website, to help defray the cost of the many trips to Sloan Kettering that are in her future.

A community yard sale fundraiser for Jessica will take place on Saturday, February 3 from 8 a.m.-4 p.m. in Riverview's Southfork community. For more information, call Melissa at 900-7799.

Visit [www.care4jessicarose.org](http://www.care4jessicarose.org) for more information or to donate gift cards or items, contact Robinson at [tanta01@verizon.net](mailto:tanta01@verizon.net).