

## Young veteran fights for life

Written by Austin Benson  
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Brady man battles brain cancer.

Close your eyes and imagine the ability to enjoy a hike or to boat or waterski on Jeffrey Lake.

Imagine serving eight years in the U.S. Air Force and continuing to live an active lifestyle for four more years.

Think about having all those activities taken away from you and struggling to get through the day.

Last January, BJ Margritz experienced that change in lifestyle after being diagnosed with stage IV glioblastoma multiforme, a type of brain cancer.

The Brady resident was in Denver when he said he felt a little off balance and experienced some weakness in his right side. He dropped a plate and that's when he said he knew something was wrong.

"I called my brother to come pick me up and we made an emergency trip back to North Platte," Margritz said.

Met by his wife and parents, Margritz had a computed tomography (CT) scan at Great Plains Regional Medical Center before being life-flighted to Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney for tests and a biopsy.

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Margritz said that was when he knew he had cancer.

“I didn’t really know how to take it. The best way to describe it is shocking,” Margritz said. “I’ve had to rely on Jesus pretty hard.”

He was sent to San Francisco, CA, for surgery which removed 99% of the tumor. Margritz continued chemotherapy and radiation but after completion, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) revealed the tumor had grown back, he said.

Doctors then began a trial study of anti-cancer drug, ABT-888, to slow the tumor’s growth.

Along with the drug, Margritz said he’s using a backpack-like device by Novacure that he wears all day in conjunction with a round of chemotherapy treatment.

The Novacure system sends alternating currents through his body to try and confuse the cancer cells, Margritz said.

With the drugs, the treatment and having to wear the Novacure system all day, he said his life has changed pretty substantially.

Since losing his job in November at Nebraska Machinery Company, Margritz’s routine consists of weekly trips to North Platte for blood samples at GPRMC and physical therapy sessions twice a week.

He said he will make trips to Denver every six weeks to download information from his Novacure device.

“The more active I stay, the better I feel,” Margritz said, noting that his right side is weak which

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makes it difficult to get up and down stairs.

As Margritz fights this illness, he said he's grateful he was selected to be the beneficiary of a fund-raiser volleyball tournament.

"My wife and I are pretty humbled that someone would do that for us," Margritz said.

He and his wife, Ashly, have two children that attend Dudley Elementary. Makenzie is a first grader and Kaden is in third grade.

Although cancer has knocked him down and taken away some of his mobility, Margritz's faith remains strong.

"I trust in Jesus to carry me through this," he said. "Whether I make it through it or not, my faith is in him."

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