



## The Stephanie Vest Foundation

In 2008, Stephanie Vest was a busy stay-home mom planning for the birth of her third child. Throughout her pregnancy, she had struggled for months with a lingering illness. She thought she was just tired from being pregnant, however it was determined that she was suffering from a rare form of lymphoma. She received this diagnosis just a few weeks after giving birth to her new daughter.

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photography by rainkite photography, llc

Stephanie and her husband, Eric, dropped everything and went to the Mayo Clinic for treatment. Thinking they would be in Minnesota for only 48 hours, they were unprepared when their stay unexpectedly lasted 14 weeks. Friends, family and neighbors rallied to gather resources to ensure that the three children and household were cared for during this extended absence. Unfortunately, Stephanie passed away during her treatment at Mayo, but a foundation was created in her name to help in similar situations when a family is unexpectedly facing a financial crisis due to cancer. “My wife and I were neighbors of Stephanie and her family, and we got together and decided to do a 5K run to help with their expenses,” said Allan Gardner, CFO of the Stephanie Vest Foundation. The fundraising effort quickly became a 501(c)3 non-profit and started to help other local families. Fast forward to 2016 and the Stephanie Vest Foundation continues to “bridge the gap,” offering temporary financial support when a parent is cannot work due to cancer-

related issues. This non-profit is unique because rather than fundraising for research and cures, it offers immediate financial relief to pay living expenses during cancer treatment.

To be eligible, one must be a parent facing a cancer diagnosis/treatment, with minor children living in the home. All money stays in the Kansas City area and goes directly to vetted families in need. According to Gardner, “Quite simply, we are in the business of raising money so that we can give it away.” The foundation is managed by a volunteer board and 100 percent of donations go directly to local families.

Jennifer Johnson, an Olathe mother of two, received a grant after she was blindsided with a breast cancer diagnosis. “When you are going through something like cancer treatment, just knowing that you are not alone and having people so willing to help is sometimes the only thing that gets you through the day,” she said. “I will never forget how blessed I was by the kindness and generosity of others.”

The foundation has two major fundraising efforts each year. The flagship fundraiser is the Pink Laundry 5K, which is in its eighth year and is always held on the first Sunday in October in downtown Lee’s Summit. The second event is Pink Friday Trivia Night, an interactive evening full of trivia and entertainment, which is scheduled for March 4, 2016. **HLM**

*To learn more or to apply for a grant, please visit [stephanievest.com](http://stephanievest.com).*