

Courtney's Journey

By Linda Rosas

Courtney is a five year-old child with a terminal illness called spinal muscular atrophy type 1. There is no treatment or cure. There are many limitations to what Courtney can do; even breathing on her own is impossible. She requires the use of a ventilator 24 hours a day, along with a pulse oximeter, a feeding pump and a suction machine.

Courtney stays in her hospital bed at home, sometimes for weeks at a time, watching television, seeing children in her favorite programs doing things that she'll never be able to do: running to catch a ball at the park, learning to roller-skate or even speaking the words "I love you" to her mom. She can think and learn like any other child her age, she can feel pain and has normal hearing and vision. She communicates with her eyes by looking at things, such as which video she'd like to watch. With the help of some very special people, Courtney has had many "dream come true" experiences that most would think were impossible for a critically ill child.

On Wednesday afternoon, September 10, 2008 we arrived at the Portofino Harbour Marina in Kemah, TX to take Courtney on her miracle journey with Heart of Sailing in Galveston Bay. We were greeted by Captain Dave McCabe, owner of the *Blue Marlin III*, and his volunteer crew, Susan Levy and Manny Alaniz. With careful planning by my daugh-



(clockwise from center): Courtney, her mom Candace, grandmother Linda, aunt Sarah and sister Kendall show off their Heart of Sailing medals.

ter Candace (Courtney's mother) and with helpful suggestions from Captain Dave, we slid a backboard under Courtney and transferred her safely from her wheelchair/stroller on the pier onto the sailboat.

Courtney, her little sister Kendall, my youngest daughter Sarah, Candace and I went on this amazing sailing trip. When we were far out into the open water, the engine was turned off, the sail was opened and the tarp was rolled back so Courtney could see the endless water. The wind was blowing through her hair and she could hear the waves splashing on the side of the beautiful sailboat. Up above, she could see seagulls flying in the blue sky.

Candace and I looked at each other, knowing what the other was thinking and feeling. We had a sense of urgency to accomplish this for Courtney, never knowing how much time she has left. We could feel God's presence on our journey, feeling peace while memorizing the breathtaking view. I tried to see things as she does, seeing everything for the first time, through the eyes of an angel.

Before our trip, Candace helped Courtney make a message in a bottle to throw into the water. Candace hopes to someday get an e-mail or call from some person from far away, saying they've found Courtney's bottle with the purple paper rolled up inside with a message and Courtney's handprint. The girls received certificates proving they had indeed gone sailing, and beautiful Heart of Sailing medals to wear around their necks. I hope Kendall will remember this special day with her older sister, forever. ♦