

## **Molly DeJourdan**

### **Mother of Kentin, Who Died from Meningococcal Disease**

#### **Watertown, NY**

Molly DeJourdan's son Kentin was a vibrant one-year-old when he tragically lost his life to meningococcal disease, a potentially deadly bacterial infection.

The day after celebrating his first birthday with family and friends, Kentin began acting fussy after dinner and felt warm. Molly discovered he was running a fever and gave him Tylenol before putting him to bed for the night with a fever of only 100.2. The next day, Kentin's father was preparing to bring Kentin to the doctor for his one-year physical. When they went into Kentin's room to wake him up, he was barely conscious. Kentin was struggling to keep his eyes open and his body was limp.

Kentin was immediately rushed to the emergency room where he was diagnosed with meningococcal disease. Doctors administered antibiotics to stop the spread of infection, but told Molly that Kentin's condition was very serious. When Molly went in to the hospital room to see Kentin, she caught a glimpse of his leg through a crowd of doctors and saw that it was covered in a dark purple rash (a classic symptom of meningococcal disease). Kentin was conscious briefly at that time and made eye contact with his mother.

Shortly thereafter, Kentin was transported to a hospital better equipped to handle his condition. Once he was there, Kentin's condition seemed to improve and doctors expected Kentin to survive, but with severe brain damage. However, the next day Kentin's kidneys and other organs began to fail. On March 13<sup>th</sup>, five days after his only birthday, Kentin passed away in his father's arms, missing his cousin's birthday which was that day and the play date they had scheduled in celebration.

Molly knew that adolescents and young adults were at risk for meningococcal disease, but did not know that her one-year-old son, Kentin, could also contract the disease. She joined the National Meningitis Association's "Moms on Meningitis" program to help educate other families in New York about the dangers of meningococcal disease and available prevention methods, including immunization.

A vaccine is approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration among persons aged 2 to 55 years. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends meningococcal immunization for all adolescents 11 through 18 years of age and college freshmen living in a dormitory due to the increased risk among this age group. The CDC also recommends vaccination for children 2-10 years of age who are at high risk for contracting the disease.

Although there is currently no vaccine approved for Kentin's age group, Molly hopes that a vaccine, that is currently being developed, will be approved for use in younger children

in the near future. In the meantime, she encourages parents to be aware of meningococcal disease symptoms and urges them to speak with their healthcare provider about vaccination.

“It is important for parents to educate themselves about meningococcal disease and to be aware of its symptoms,” said Molly. “I encourage parents to talk to their child’s health care provider about vaccination and whether their children are at risk for this devastating disease.”