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WOMAN STANDS UP TO BRAIN TUMOR

BYLINE: By Elizabeth Doran Staff writer

Amy Pole, the Wellwood Middle School counselor featured in a June Post-Standard story, is making remarkable headway in her battle with a cancerous brain tumor.

The 31-year-old DeWitt resident underwent a second brain surgery in October in Boston to remove what looked like scar tissue or possibly new growth around the area where the tumor was removed in March.

Pole was on maternity leave when she was diagnosed with cancer. She'd been feeling unusually tired for a few weeks, and began waking up with such severe headaches she couldn't open her eyes. A CAT scan revealed a mass on her brain, and doctors removed a malignant tumor the size of a tennis ball.

After undergoing a trial drug program and chemotherapy, Amy had an MRI in September that revealed the possible re-growth. Her case was presented to the Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women's Cancer Center multi-disciplinary tumor board where Dr. Arthur Day, professor and chairman of the neurosurgery department at Brigham and Women's Hospital, said he could successfully remove the re-growth.

"I was really excited because I felt it was best to get it out of there," said Pole, whose son Jack will turn 2 on Christmas Day.

Amy underwent surgery Oct. 6 and was discharged later that week. "It felt like a real clean slate to have that surgery," she said.

She began another experimental drug trial Oct. 27. She takes five pills every day to prevent the tumor from recurring. The new medication, which has very few side effects, has proven successful in other trials, Pole said.

This means no more chemotherapy, but Pole has to travel to Boston every two weeks so doctors can monitor her progress, and these visits soon will become monthly.

So far, Pole said she feels a lot like her old self. She's able to enjoy basic errands like shopping at Wegmans, taking her son to tour the DeWitt fire station and going to a friend's house for Halloween and around the neighborhood trick-or-treating.

She's also looking forward to the family's upcoming trip to Disney World in Orlando.

"When things are tough and I need to go to a happy place in my mind, I go to Disney," Amy said. "Now that I'm feeling better we decided to go and we're going to stay right on the grounds. Jack loves Donald Duck."

Disney also has a special compassion program for seriously ill people who receive complimentary park hopper passes, Pole said.

What's really helped her stay positive and upbeat through this ordeal is the unwavering support of family, friends and colleagues. A group from school formed "Team Amy" and sold bracelets to raise money to help her out, and to donate to brain cancer research.

Her Wellwood colleagues performed an extreme garden makeover on her yard after the first surgery, and Pole said the group did another "fall edition" makeover after her second surgery.

"It was just amazing to see when we pulled into the driveway from Boston," Pole said. "They had taken care of the leaves, planted mums in the front, decorated all over with cornstalks and pumpkins and put up a scarecrow scene that Jack just loved. They also planted numerous bulbs that will sprout in the spring."

Her husband's colleagues at Bond, Schoeneck & King law firm also have joined to raise money to offset the Poles' expenses and donate to brain cancer research.

"Right now I'm appreciating all the simple joys, and my big thing now is hugs and giving them all I can," she said.

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To help ...

If you want to donate to Dana Farber Cancer Institute for Adult Brain Tumor research go to <https://www.dana-farber.org/how/gifts/gift.asp> and choose make a gift. Then select direct my gift to support adult brain tumor from the pull-down menu.