



**By Carolyn Lee**

### ***The Imperial Republican***

Makenna Wallin, 15, of Imperial received a surprise visitor during her first week in Children's Hospital Colorado for treatment of AML, or Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

Olympic swimmer Missy Franklin popped in on Makenna and 11 other children, making jokes, talking about musicians like Taylor Swift and Justin Bieber, and encouraging them on their path to healing.

On the oncology ward last Thursday, she was guided toward Makenna, who is also a swimmer. "She's been on the Imperial swim team for years. That's one reason she was picked," Mom Marilee Wallin explained.

When Franklin pulled out one of the four gold medals she won in the Summer Olympics and draped it around Makenna's neck, she got a huge grin in return.

The backstroke and freestyle swimmer is from Centennial, Colo., and is enrolled in the Class of 2013 at Regis Jesuit High School in Aurora.

At the 2012 London Olympic Games she took gold in the 100 and 200 meter backstrokes, the 4x200 meter freestyle, the 4x100 meter medley and a bronze in the 4x100 meter freestyle.

Marilee and husband Jeff have been constantly by Makenna's side since the leukemia diagnosis was made last week.

"We've been here a week. We know that's what we have to do," Marilee explained.

Makenna is on an aggressive round of chemotherapy. As of Monday she was on day four of a 10-day treatment. Marilee said there's also a five-day treatment.

After the 10-day treatment is complete, Makenna will be monitored for blood counts for 18 days at the hospital. She will then be discharged for a week, when she and her parents can come home.

Following that is another 28 days of treatment and monitoring, followed by another week of discharge.

All in all, four sessions are planned. "Hopefully, that will get it," Marilee said. "If not the next step is a bone marrow transplant."

The Mom said her family is taking it one day at a time. On Tuesday Marilee posted a thanks on Facebook. She also said, "Today we did get some good news. The lab reports show no more leukemia cells in Makenna's spinal fluid," meaning "she only has to do two more spinal taps during this round of chemo.

"We appreciate all the help, support and prayers," she emphasized. "We feel the love and God's comfort and peace."

The couple's three sons are remaining in Imperial with their grandmothers' help.

AML starts in the bone marrow, or the soft inner part of the bone. The bone marrow cells don't mature the way they're supposed to, turning into white blood cells. The immature cells just keep

building up.