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## Foundation turns tragedy into help for others



Courtesy of the Boarder family

Jolee Boarder and her parents, Jessica and Steven Boarder of Reading, just a few months before Jolee passed away on April 22, 2010.

**By Jason Brudereck**  
**Reading Eagle**

Jolee Boarder was born 14 weeks early on March 25, 2008. She was in neonatal intensive care for 100 days.

That battle was difficult for the girl and her parents, Steven and Jessica Boarder of Reading. But it wouldn't be their biggest challenge.

In the summer of 2009, Jolee was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, the most common cancer found in infants.

Believing the family would incur monstrous medical bills, Steven's sister, Candace Hall of Lincoln Park, wanted to help.

She and other relatives formed the nonprofit Jolee Boarder Foundation in the fall of 2009. With the help of local businesses, they organized fundraisers, including an initial bingo night that brought in \$15,000.

There were more fundraisers, but the money became moot when Jolee's condition worsened in 2010.

Family members were summoned to The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. One by one, they bid farewell.

"You know how they say people can tell if everybody's been there to say goodbye, and they wait for that and then they pass on?" Candace said. "That's what happened."

Jolee, barely 2, died in the embrace of her parents April 22, 2010.

What could have been a longer and more costly battle was over.

During the illness, Steven and Jessica's understanding employers had let them work from home, so their financial problems weren't as severe as for parents who must stop or cut back working during a crisis.

Candace barely convinced them to take money from the foundation to pay a portion of Jolee's funeral expenses.

The foundation was left with a considerable sum and is now dedicated to giving it away, usually in monthly gifts of \$1,000 to families of pediatric cancer patients from across the country.

"I know \$1,000 isn't a lot, but it can pay a mortgage, and every little bit helps," Candace said.

Jolee's family intends for the foundation to be around for a long time.

There are ongoing fundraisers and those who have been helped have been grateful, such as one woman who shared a photo and wrote to the family: "Here's my little angel, who is now with your little angel."

Amazingly, for the last three months, no families have applied for help.

Though the Boarders now have a daughter, Lilah, who is almost 1, they know time and money don't heal some wounds.

The family has said time is like a thief attempting to steal memories of Jolee's voice and how she felt in their arms.

But from the Boarders' heartbreak comes hope for other families.

"We just want to take away some of the burden," Candace said.

Those families need only apply.

For more information, visit [JoleeBoarderFoundation.org](http://JoleeBoarderFoundation.org) or contact [JoleeBoarderFoundation@gmail.com](mailto:JoleeBoarderFoundation@gmail.com).

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