

# Atwood

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though we would all have a rough time going through it all with her — that she was going to make it through and be just fine. They had lost a grandmother to cancer, so they understood what cancer can mean.

### How did they react?

They were scared and had a lot of questions about death and how did I know for sure that she was going to be OK. We spent many hours over the months talking through these kinds of fears when they came up.

### What about when she had to have a second round of treatments?

That completely took all of us by storm; it was much scarier than the first for so many reasons. The treatments were much more invasive and much longer and it was very, very rare that her cancer had even come back, based on the type of cancer she had. Her brothers were true and tried troupers — they shaved their heads on their own volition in solidarity when she lost her hair. They helped take care of her when she got sick from side effects. They held her hand during treatments both at home and in the hospital. They dealt with throw up, tears, tantrums and complete falling apart as a result of side effects. They took it all in stride and were very strong.

### Did your sons have to deal with any of the situations that the author pre-



COURTESY OF SALLY LOUGHRIDGE  
A scene from "Daniel and His Starry Night Blanket," by Maine artist Sally Loughridge.

### sented in the book, such as feeling neglected or scared?

It felt like my sons often got the short end of the stick, as they say, because she was sick so much from the treatments. Sometimes they couldn't get to things they wanted to do and sometimes everything stopped in their tracks as a result of the side effects of treatments — so they certainly suffered from neglect through this — even though we all tried very hard to meet their needs.

### What were some of the things you or family/friends did to help your sons understand and cope?

Our family and friends were invaluable during my daughter's treatments. They took the boys for sleepovers, did special things with them, came over and cleaned their rooms, and brought gifts. Whenever we could, we would go on special outings with the boys — to a water-

park, skiing, to the beach.

### Were there ways that your children tried to reach out to each other?

My kids are pretty tight knit and through this have become even closer as siblings. Her brothers were such a source of strength and support to her through this, in a way I never could have been.

### Did you learn any lessons from your children?

Enjoy each and every moment as if you were a child — just waking up each day to a whole new day in front of you — what will you do? What will you learn? Who will you play with? Who will you see?

### Could you and your children relate to the storyline in the book? What about the artwork?

[My daughter] Rowan loved the artwork and really related to the storyline. She said the little girl looked like her.

### Do you think the book could be helpful in any way?

I think this book could be enormously helpful to families and siblings going through cancer — at any stage. It would be a great therapeutic tool really at any stage in going through cancer with a child and siblings. It certainly touched us.

Diane Atwood was formerly the health reporter on WCSH6. She's a regular guest on the WCSH6 "Morning Report," a freelance health and wellness writer and blogger. Read her BDN blog, Catching Health, at catchinghealth.bangordailynews.com.

## 12-step recovery for money and debt woes

PORTLAND — A 12-step recovery program for people experiencing problems with money and debt will be held 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays at The Dana Center, Maine Medical Center, Room 9, 22 Bramhall St.

Another session will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesdays in Room 10.

Business owners and others are welcome. For infor-

mation, visit [debtorsanonymous.org](http://debtorsanonymous.org).

## Jackson Laboratory receives \$10M grant

BAR HARBOR — A five-year, \$9,971,936 grant from the National Institutes of Health will establish a new Center for Precision Genomics at The Jackson Laboratory, a major initiative involving several collaborating institutions.

The goal is to find solutions for life-threatening and

genetically complex human diseases through new approaches to developing precision models of disease.

The center will be the hub of an international, multidisciplinary team, including geneticists and genetics technology experts, molecular and computational biologists, clinical experts in specific disease areas, and world leaders in the development of precision mouse models of disease.

The grant will serve as start-up funding for the new center over five years.

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