

**Des Moines Woman Dies After Getting Her Wedding Wish**  
**News**

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(desmoineregister.com) - Mindi Jo Flanagan got the wedding she wished for but not the miracle her family so badly wanted. The 37-year-old Des Moines woman, who was suffering from ovarian cancer, was able to marry her long-time boyfriend on Saturday.



She passed away from the disease Sunday.

"It's bittersweet," said her sister, Shellie Bridges, on Monday. "She was so happy. She got to get up and dance with Dad and her husband. It was beautiful. We thought maybe it would give her a push, we've had so many miracles with her. But it wasn't meant to be."

Flanagan was diagnosed with late-stage ovarian cancer in 2009, a year after a breast cancer diagnosis that led to a double mastectomy.

She underwent surgery, then chemotherapy and an experimental study.

Five times, the cancer was successfully treated. When it returned for a sixth time, her family hoped for a sixth miracle.

On Easter weekend, Joe Bakalar, her boyfriend of seven years, proposed. The two have a 6-year-old daughter, and Flanagan was raising 9-year-old twins from a previous marriage.

At the end of April, Flanagan's home hospice care worker told her she had six to 12 weeks to live.

Bridges took over the wedding planning and on Saturday, the couple's families and friends gathered at Bridge's northeast Des Moines home.

Flanagan rolled down the aisle in a wheelchair but stood to greet Bakalar at the altar.

Bridges said the family is coping with Flanagan's death but it's difficult.

"We were still kind of hoping for a miracle," she said. "There had been the catalyst of getting ready for the wedding. I think she was at peace, ready to let go. That's what she did. It's tough for those remaining but she's where she needs to be."

Flanagan had written birthday cards for her daughters every year until they turn 18. She prepared videos for loved ones. And Saturday she checked off the last thing she wanted.

"She was a beautiful spirit, a beautiful human being," Bridges said. "Through the entire process of this evil, horrible disease she had dignity and grace. She never once complained and always had a smile on her face. She continued to be a bright light to everyone around her."