

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Brad Hruska

A Harvest of Hope...

I look forward to the summer months for a number of reasons. One of them being that it allows me the opportunity to read books that I would not normally pick up. “The Goodbye Cancer Garden” by Janna Matthies was one such hardback that I have had chance to read.

In this text, readers are introduced to Janie; her parents; and her brother, Jeffrey; a typical nuclear family until one cold January day when Janie’s mother is diagnosed with breast cancer.

After weeks of fears and questions circulating between Janie and her brother, Janie’s mom and dad decide to schedule a family visit with Mom’s cancer specialist.

During the appointment, Jeffery asks, “Is Mom better yet?” The kind doctor gently replies, “Not yet...but we’re working very hard to make her better.” The doctor goes on to say that their mom’s condition should hopefully look more positive around “pumpkin time” (October).

The doctor’s answer gives Janie the idea for a garden that would allow the family to eat “healthy veggies,” while reminding them that Mom is getting better.

One Saturday in March, Dad and Jeffrey go out and prepare the spot for the vegetable bed while Mom and Janie begin organizing the “Goodbye Cancer Garden.”

Each family member selects two vegetables to plant. Janie chooses tomatoes and cucumbers. Jeffrey decides on carrots and green beans. Dad elects for lettuce and potatoes. Mom plants peppers and of course, pumpkins.

All summer long, the family tends to their garden. Weeding arises about the same time that Mom’s hair begins to fall out because of her chemotherapy, so the family host “a head-shaving party” to embrace the event.

In August after most of the vegetables have been picked and to celebrate Mom’s last chemotherapy treatment, Janie’s family hosts a picnic. They invite everyone over who helped the family work through this tough time.

By mid-October after Mom’s radiation treatments subside, Janie notices “a new crop of fuzz growing on Mom’s head.”

While retrieving a foul ball hit by her brother on a cool November day, Janie discovers two ripe pumpkins. The family comes to see the wonderful discovery. Janie and Jeffrey each pick one of the while Dad hugs Mom, who is blinking away happy tears as the family stands tall in the middle of “The Goodbye Cancer Garden.”

I sincerely pray that your family is never affected by cancer, but should you face this difficult condition, I strongly recommend “The Goodbye Cancer Garden” by Janna Matthies. Matthies does

a wonderful job explaining difficult terms like “chemotherapy” and “radiation” and also gently tackles tough situations like losing one’s hair because of treatment. Readers are sure to laugh, cry, and enjoy reading this beautifully illustrated, well written text.

If you have any questions regarding the featured book “The Goodbye Cancer Garden” or would like other books on such topics, please contact me at (402) 564-7116 opt. 4.

And remember, while you are your loved ones enjoying the many activities of summer, make time to read. You never know what great books you’ll discover!