

# Orcas Infant Diagnosed with Cancer

By [COLLEEN ARMSTRONG](#)

Islands Sounder Publisher, Editor

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Isabella Morillon-Garcia is just eight weeks old, and she is already a fighter.

Born with neuroblastoma, a cancerous tumor that develops from nerve tissue, Morillon-Garcia has been undergoing chemotherapy in Seattle for the past few weeks. Her parents, Jose Morillon Alonso and Lizbeth Garcia Guzman, have lived on Orcas for a year. Alonso says she has been responding "very well" to the treatment, and her medical team is hopeful the tumor on her spine will shrink. Neuroblastoma is the most common extra cranial solid cancer in childhood and the most common cancer in infancy.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO  
Isabella Morillon-Garcia.

"The doctors think we'll be in Seattle for six months," he said.

The family, which also includes Clever, seven, and Alejandro, five, has been staying at the Ronald McDonald house, an organization that provides a "home away from home" for seriously ill children. It is located two blocks from Seattle Children's Hospital, where Morillon-Garcia is being treated. Alonso is a handyman, and he has taken time off work to be with his family in Seattle.

The couple moved to the U.S. nine years ago from Mexico. Prior to Orcas, they lived in North Carolina. Alonso says the Orcas community has rallied around their family since his daughter's diagnosis.

"We feel much better because we are talking a lot with the doctors and the people from church, and they are praying for us and the baby," Jose said. "We are feeling much better than on the first day."

Erin O'Dell of Orcas Family Connections arranged for OPAL to pay the family's rent for the month of September. She has also been working with Pastor Grant Myles-Era at the Orcas Community Church, who arranged for churches in Seattle to provide meals.

"If anyone wants to donate, gift certificates to Fred Meyer, Target, QFC, Safeway, Chevron, and 76 are welcome," O'Dell said. "They are going to need support for the next six months."

Orcas Angels is helping pay their utility bills and Country Corner is providing a storage unit for their belongings.

Lisa Trifiro is organizing a garage sale at Children's House on Saturday, Sept. 18 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donations can be dropped off at Children's House on North Beach Road. For larger items, call Trifiro at 376-1489 to arrange for pick-up, or bring them by the morning of the sale before 10 a.m.

Clever and Alejandro are planning to stay in Seattle for the duration of their sister's treatment. They are attending Hutch School, a K through 12 educational program for cancer patients and their siblings offered through the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. The boys' Orcas teachers have sent their schoolwork to Seattle, so they can stay current with their curriculum.

"As soon as their teachers heard the news, they sprang into action," O'Dell said. "They all said, 'what can we do?'"

### **To donate**

An account has been set up at Islanders Bank through Orcas Family Connections. To donate, specify that the funds go to the Isabella Morillon-Garcia Medical Fund.

For more information, contact Erin O'Dell at 376-5780 or 298-2456.

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