Dear family, friends and co-workers,

Its that time of year again when I start my quest for a cure. I guess you could say I am taking the easy way out this year by not saying a speech as I am writing this letter as it gets harder and harder every year to get up in front of you all without crying as Natalie has been getting worse right before our eyes.

Because it is that time of the year people are always asking how Natalie is doing. I tell you fine. I am not sure what you want to hear. If you want to hear she is fine, please stop reading this letter and leave it at that. I try to stay happy and positive for Natalie but the truth is she is not fine. She has deteriorated so much in the last year, its unbelievable. Natalie has been hospitalized 3 times in the last year, first 1 night then 2 and last time 4 nights, every time we go in it takes twice as long to come out. We now have our own oxygen machine at home to administer her medication, with a steroid to keep her lungs strong and the other one to help keep them clear. With the deterioration comes the weakness of the muscles, Natalie cannot sit up straight any more and requires an upper body brace to further prevent the damage that scoliosis (a curve in the spine) has been causing. Natalie has even stopped bum sliding as it gotten to be too much of a task, and now totally depends on her wheel chair, now fully loaded with side supports and a chest harness.

Natalie is a cute 5 year old who's favorite colour is pink, she loves to fish, camp and play with her dolls. But she is starting to figure it all out and wants nothing more then to walk and play with her friends. Natalie knows she is different, but doesn't realize how different. She dreams about what she wants to be when she grows up and the boy the she wants to marry and how she wants to be a mommy just like me. But what she hasn't yet figured out is that her life expectancy is her adolescent years and were told if she is lucky her early adult years.

I am the kind of person that doesn't like to ask for help, but finding a cure is something I know I can't do on my own, so I am asking for your help. Please help support one of the many SMA fundraising efforts. By buying raffle tickets/angel wings (on sale until July 7th), sponsoring us to walk in the 4th annual Rebecca Run for SMA in Newmarket July 9th and 50/50 tickets ($2 each/3 for $5.00 on sale July 25th until Aug 20th) for the Johnny K 6th annual charity golf tournament for SMA (Stone Tree golf and Country Club, August 20th).

I have come to figure out that if life were perfect no one would be grateful for what they have. I know as a "SMA" parent that I am very lucky that Natalie is still here and has lived as long as she has. I cherish her as so many people we meet every year have already lost their children to this disease.

I want to thank you all for your continuous love and support though the last few years, and hope I only need it for a little while longer as they are doing clinical trials and believe this is one of the diseases they think they will find a cure for in the next 5 years.

Thank you,
Sincerely Christina McDonald

A quote borrowed from another mother

"Most people never have the opportunity to see an Angel, or simply do not look well enough to see them walking among us. This, however, does not mean that they don't exist. Me, I'm one of the lucky few. Not only have I seen an Angel, I call her my daughter. She is my "Angel-on-loan."