Likeness of child’s forearm preserved preceding surgery

By UW-Stout News Bureau

MENOMONIE — Delainey Hayden was leery of having her left arm put into a tall plastic cup filled with thick, cold molding material.

As she wiggled, her parents, Shianne and Adam, held her. UW-Stout art professor Susan Hunt, dean of students Joan Thomas and Hayden's grandmother, Jeanne Bowe, tried to entertain and distract the 18-month-old girl.

Before long, the blonde, blue-eyed Delainey was calm. Then her arm suddenly was free again and a smile returned to her face.

It's not everyday at UW-Stout's Furlong Gallery that a model is made of a little girl's arm. Delainey isn't just any little girl, however, and it wasn't just another day.

Her parents and grandparents coordinated a one-day trip from Sparta to Menomonie because time was running out. On Nov. 15, three days after the mold was made, Delainey's forearm was amputated as scheduled at American Family Children's Hospital in Madison.
In August doctors discovered a lump on Delainey's arm, and tests revealed she had a rare form of cancer, synovial cell sarcoma. The soft-tissue cancer is rare, striking one to three people out of one million each year. Its victims often are teenagers and young adults.

On Sept. 24 the tumor was removed at American Family Children's Hospital, part of UW Health.

Afterward, tests showed some cancer cells remained. Delainey either would need radiation or amputation to improve her chances of survival.

"Once we had a meeting with the radiologist and learned what would happen to her arm with radiation, we pretty much decided that night," Shianne said. "Amputation will ultimately keep her the healthiest the longest and alive the longest. In that respect it was an easy decision."

Radiation would have destroyed the growth plates on Delainey's arm. She would have been left with a forearm with significant scar tissue and a hand that would lose most of its function over time.

The week before Thanksgiving was emotional for Adam and Shianne, who originally are from Menomonie and Chippewa Falls, respectively; both are Menomonie High School graduates. Shianne is a UW-Stout alumna. They also have children ages 7, 5 and 3.

Delainey's grandparents are Galen and Jeanne Bowe of Sparta and Don and Dottie Hayden of Menomonie.

The family, in the midst of helping Delainey recover from one surgery while preparing for another, hadn't planned to have a mold made of Delainey's arm until a friend mentioned the idea to them.

"At first we thought it was strange, but the more we thought about it we thought we might regret it if we didn't do it. It's something she might be interested in seeing when she gets older," Shianne said.

The mold will be a tangible keepsake for Delainey and her family.

"Emotionally, it might be hard for us to see it," Shianne said.

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After the Haydens headed back to Sparta, Hunt began the process of preserving the three-dimensional memory of Delainey's forearm.
Hunt poured molding plaster into the hole in the cup where Delainey's arm had been. When the plaster hardened the original molding material, dental alginate, was peeled away.

The arm and hand appeared in fine detail - her tiny fingernails, the texture and folds of her skin and the tips of her mother's fingers as they held the arm.

Clearly visible was the surgical scar that ran from Delainey's wrist to her elbow on the soft underside of the left arm.

An alternate impression of Delainey's arm also was made the day the Haydens visited, using a different alginate formulation.

Hunt is touching up the two casts and preparing to give them to the Haydens.

She has taught art at UW-Stout for 34 years and uses the molding process in metalsmithing. She taught the process to students who needed to capture detail in small, delicate objects for casting in metal.

Hunt volunteered to help the Haydens after hearing about the project from School of Art and Design Director Maureen Mitton, who passed on the request from Thomas, a friend of the family.

The opportunity to help the Haydens elicited a discussion about how to approach the delicate project. Hunt volunteered based on her experience with the flexible, quick-setting alginate material.

Having had cancer herself, Hunt understood the Haydens' request, although she said it's the first time she has worked on such a project.

"When you have something tragic going on, what's important is what you think you need at the time," Hunt said.

The Haydens are thankful that "through the helping hands of many people" they were able to cast Delainey's arm, Shianne said.

"Everyone at UW-Stout who assisted was fantastic. All it took was one email to Joan and she ran with it, coordinating everything and making it happen quickly."
Delainey and her parents returned home to Sparta two days after the amputation in Madison. Once Delainey is fully recovered, the next step will be to take her to Shriners Hospital in Minneapolis to begin fitting her for a prosthesis.

"Hopefully by mid-February she'll be all set with a new arm," Shianne said.

And Delainey and her family will have more than just a memory of the arm she was born with.