

**BRAVE**  
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emergency, was unable to travel with her newborn immediately. Physicians quickly diagnosed Mariah with a cloacal malformation, an extremely rare condition in which the digestive, urinary and reproductive tracts form a single channel. In her first days of life, surgeons created a colostomy and a urinary diversion, and she has relied on a feeding tube ever since. Because her case presented several unusual features, doctors ordered genetic testing early. Those results revealed an RB1 mutation, prompting further examination and the discovery of a tumor behind her right eye. When cancer

was later found in the left eye, Mariah was diagnosed with bilateral retinoblastoma and began chemotherapy. Although treatment initially slowed the tumors, the effects on her immune system were severe. Mariah suffered repeated infections, including a life-threatening episode of sepsis. The chemotherapy also caused significant kidney damage, leading to renal failure and forcing doctors to halt cancer treatment. Mariah now undergoes dialysis three times each week at Cincinnati Children's. Each visit requires a six-hour round trip, and missing even one appointment poses serious risks. Between dialysis, oncology procedures and other specialists, Way drives more than 800 miles every week to maintain her daughter's care.

"As a parent, you do everything you can," Way said. "But it's a lot. Every trip, every appointment, every emergency — it all adds up." Additional complications emerged as Mariah grew. She was diagnosed with severe hip dysplasia, which will require major reconstructive surgery and a full-leg cast expected to remain in place for one to two years. Before surgeons can repair the hip, however, they must reverse the colostomy — a step that cannot happen until specialists complete a technically complex series of procedures to separate the cloacal malformation. Recent imaging revealed that several of Mariah's internal organs are positioned atypically, complicating the surgical plan. A kidney transplant is expected in the future, but Mariah is currently too small. Growth therapy may begin in 2026 if her other conditions stabilize. The family's financial strain has intensified with each new medical hurdle. Their aging vehicle has broken down three times on medical trips, creating risks on the road and costly delays in care. A reliable van or midsize SUV with space for a specialized medical-grade car seat and equipment has become an urgent need. The Ways also face ongoing costs for fuel, car maintenance, medication co-pays, utilities and overnight lodging during winter travel. Because outpatient dialysis patients do not qualify for Ronald McDonald House during weather-related concerns, hotel stays must be paid out of pocket. Way also cares for her 4-year-old daughter, Alilah, and cannot return to work while managing Mariah's demanding medical schedule. Despite the challenges, Way says her daughter continues to defy expectations. "Doctors told us early on that most children with her conditions don't make it past a year," she said. "But she's here. She smiles. She fights. She shows us every day that she's not done." Community members who wish to support the family can donate directly at <https://gofund.me/a3e1f7e1>. Way said Mariah's journey is far from over, but she believes continued support will help her daughter keep beating the odds.

**SHERWOOD**  
*Continued from 1A*

series of farm activities designed to recreate the nostalgia of a traditional tree-cutting trip. Central to the experience was The Christmas Shop, a restored and climate-controlled tobacco barn filled with handmade gifts and decor created by local artisans. Complimentary hot chocolate and cider were available, and children had access to free crafts in a designated activity area. "We really wanted to support local artists," said Karen Bednarski, who managed the shop. "We searched for products made in Kentucky, and we were excited to offer everything from woven baskets to hand-blown glass ornaments." The farm's restored 1935 red truck quickly became a favorite photo backdrop. Bednarski often took pictures himself for visiting families. "Some places sell

photos," he said. "We just used your phone and took the picture for you. We wanted people to feel welcome and remember that they came." Looking ahead, the family planned to expand Sherwood Acres into a year-round venue while continuing to increase its tree inventory. The renovated barn can seat 80 to 90 people and is fully heated and air-conditioned, making it suitable for off-season events. The family's beef cattle operation also remained active on the property. "We wanted people to see where things come from, whether it's a Christmas tree or beef," Bednarski said. Launching the Christmas tree farm required navigating challenges, including learning the complexities of planting and maintaining several thousand trees. Drip irrigation was installed across all fields, and the family maintained an additional 1,000 trees on a nearby property owned by Bednarski's sister,

along with 700 seedlings in a greenhouse. "One of the best decisions we made was joining the Kentucky Christmas Tree Association," he said. "The growers were small producers, and they shared everything — what to plant, how to care for trees, what varieties grow well in Kentucky." Sherwood Acres also benefited from chamber partnerships and local advertising. "We joined both the Mercer County and Danville-Boyle County chambers," Bednarski said. "Networking with local businesses was huge for us. Print advertising through the chamber brought a lot of people out." He also credited mentorship from longtime grower Tom Neenan of Neenan's Christmas Tree Farm near Lexington, who advised him on planting, irrigation and managing deer damage. Sherwood Acres completed its opening season after hosting visitors from



SUBMITTED

A restored 1935 red truck sits beside the renovated tobacco barn and silo at Sherwood Acres, a centerpiece of the farm's new holiday experience.

farm was open Nov. 28-30 and weekends from 9am to 4pm in December at 1263 Paradise Camp Road. More information can be found at [sherwoodacreschristmastrees.com](https://sherwoodacreschristmastrees.com).

**DANVILLE**  
*Continued from A1*

emphasizing that the synthetic slate would not alter the church's architectural character. The board agreed that the material met its design guidelines for appropriate alternative materials. Following discussion, the board voted to approve the church's request without conditions. Board members also asked the contractors to document any original materials uncovered during removal so the city can update its historical records. Beyond the church's request, the board received an update on 204 West Main Street, a historic property currently in foreclosure. The city is attempting to contact the responsible bank to ensure no historic windows are removed during the legal process. The building, believed to contain original wavy glass panes, is considered one of the most significant historic structures in Danville. "This is one we have to draw the line on," House told the board. "We cannot

let those windows go." The board discussed the potential for state and federal tax credits for the future owner, as the structure is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Members also spent considerable time debating how the city should handle signage regulations. Several voiced concerns that strict rules for businesses downtown have become burdensome, while illegal yard and roadside signs across the city are not being enforced. Board members suggested exploring a shift toward clearer standards and incentives rather than stringent permit requirements, particularly for temporary or minor signage. They also discussed adding a new category to the city's preservation awards to recognize exemplary business signage. The board will continue its review of signage guidelines in January during a scheduled walk-through with a consulting firm hired to update the city's design standards. The meeting adjourned after routine business.



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