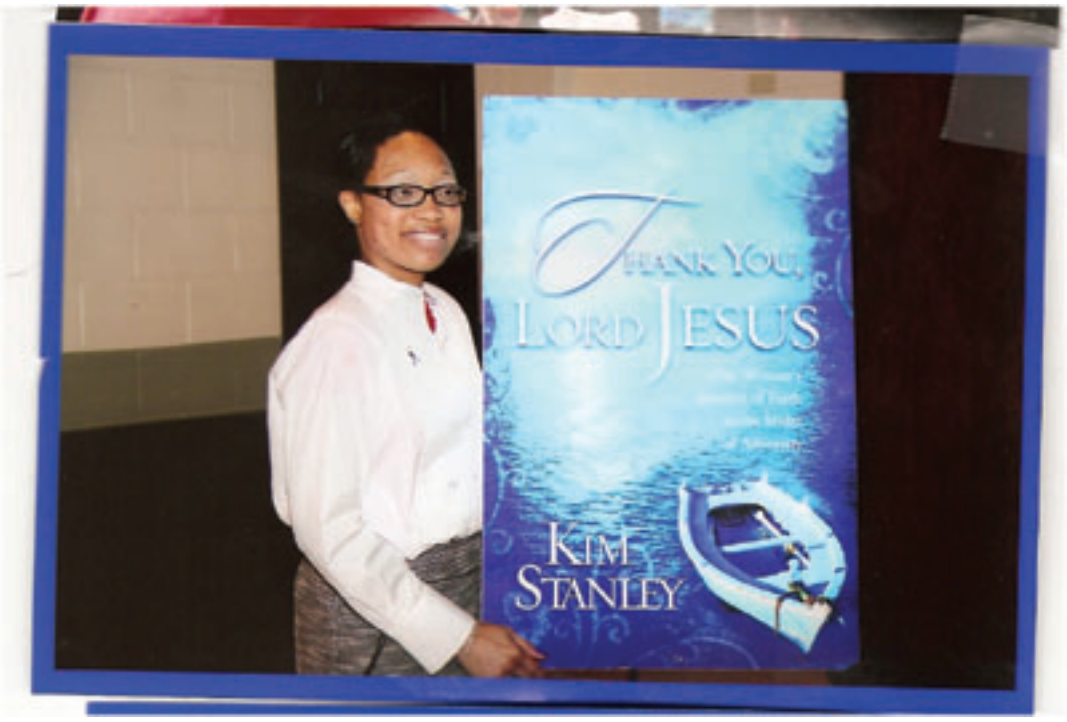

Twenty-five years ago, at the age of 15 and in her final stage of Hodgkin's disease, Kimberly Stanley was given 8 months to live.

By RHONDA CROWDER

Staff Reporter

Twenty-five years ago, at the age of 15 and in her final stage of Hodgkin's disease, Kimberly Stanley was given 8 months to live. But, by the grace of God and support from her mother, grandmother, other family members, medical providers and the community, she recently celebrated her 40th birthday.

Her mother, Bettye Hines, and her sister Tasha Stanley-Gianzero, planned the event that was held at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Wickcliffe, Ohio.

Over 150 people, including out-of-state guests, attended. Stanley received letters from all of her

physicians, and First Lady Michelle Obama.

Congressman Louis Stokes, who attended a surprise party for Stanley and presented her with a tribute when she miraculously turned 17 years old, sent his regards.

Everyone in attendance received awareness ribbons of different colors, representing the different types of cancer.

The program included a variety of speakers, from pastors to physicians, who have come to know Stanley over the years, in addition to song and dance tributes.

Hines believes some of the warmest moments of the evening was when Stanley's son, Christian, presented his mother with roses and when Dezarae Albert performed to Marvin Sapp's "Never Would Have Made It."

During an interview with Stanley, she spoke of her first response to the death sentence doctors gave her many years ago.

"Initially I was shocked. I thought I was being punished," she said, remembering how she wasn't supposed to have chocolate chips cookies and ate some anyway. She thought it to be the consequence of her disobedience. The words she used to describe her feelings at the time are shocked, disbelief, and anger toward God. She fell into a state of fear. However, her mother refused to accept it and she became determined to beat it. Others attempted to make her days as comforting and memorable as possible. For example, the Make a Wish Foundation granted her the opportunity to see a live taping of the Cosby Show, in addition to meeting the entire cast.

Then, as more time passed, she had reoccurrences.

Stanley said every time she'd overcome a stage of her illness, she developed more strength to

move forward. "It gave me an attitude of endurance."

As she continued to discuss her life since the diagnosis and outliving the death sentence,

Stanley discussed working as a radio personality and production director for WABQ.

"I loved being on the air," she said. She also considers her first born son, Christopher, to be her first blessed miracle since she was told she couldn't have children because of the treatment. She had two miscarriages prior to that birth.

Unfortunately, he died in a tragic car accident at the tender age of 6 weeks old.

At the same time, Stanley who held her son in her arms at the time of the incident, survived with major injuries.

"The hardest thing in life was saying goodbye to my son," she said.

After coming out of a coma, she suffered amnesia – only knowing her mother. A part of her therapy was to see a psychologist. In an effort to regain her memory, she wrote.

Despite having no intention to do so, two years later she realized she completed a book. "It helped me regain my memory. It was like a key opening many doors.

Today, she's promoting her book "Thank You Lord Jesus" and it's doing well.

She said there were many times she wanted to give up yet remained steadfast in faith.

"Being told at 15 years old, that you're not going to live, regardless to never drinking or smoking, was a hard pill to swallow. I am grateful to be here today," she said.