

Your Child Has Cancer

“Your child has cancer.” Not something you want to have in your home and especially not with your child. You ask yourself how did this happen? Why is it your child and not you. This is NOT supposed to



Aubrey Reichard-Eline and daughter Grace

happen to a child, yet here you are navigating this whirlwind you have just been thrown into. And so, your childhood cancer journey begins. This was our family in April of 2018 when an MRI detected a mass around our 9-year-old daughter Grace’s pituitary gland. She didn’t have any major symptoms that you hear about associated with finding a brain tumor. She drank more water than an expeditionary to the desert and her once height dominance in her class had somehow disappeared but there had to be another explanation. From the moment the tumor was found the next 4 weeks consisted of meeting all sorts of doctors, scheduling a wide variety of tests and learning to handle the most powerful phrase I have ever encountered in my life, “Grace has brain cancer”.

Grace was diagnosed with germinoma, a germ cell brain tumor, that required immediate action. Your primary responsibility as a parent is to keep your child safe. Your child should be playing with friends, hitting a softball at a game or planning to swim at summer camp. Instead we were grasping with the fact that all of that would be stopping for Grace and our family. Grace would be trading in the softball glove and gymnastics leotard for a PICC line, chemotherapy and radiation. This is not something that a parent can prevent or prepare for. You are overcome with emotion but you rally. You cry in private and put your best game face on to help your child stay calm and not be afraid. You inwardly struggle with the magnitude of the situation and try to maintain as much normalcy in your home as you can for the sick child’s sake and for their siblings and for all of you. You watch as they go through things that you have not encountered yourself and you are decades older than they are. You want to take this pain away.

When a child gets cancer, the entire family gets cancer. When treatment ends, and you are the lucky ones that get to keep going with your child, your cancer journey is not over. There are side effects and still more testing. The days may increase between each blood draw or scan, but the fear is there regardless. Will it come back? Will it be something different? Your life is forever changed. You choose, yes, it is a choice, to not get angry at the innocence and childhood that has been taken from your little one. You push the “what ifs” away and focus on the “what is”. She made it. Grace is here, functioning and showing no evidence of disease. You stay diligent and forever thankful that you get this chance as sadly not everyone does.

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