

My Life

By: Brett Menkhaus

I had cancer. Those are words that I have never written before but, it happened to me when I was 5 years old. It all started with a “golf ball” in my head or as I was told but learned was a brain tumor when I got older. As you can see, I survived and have been living cancer-free for 13 years. It has been long road to finally be thinking about college.

When I was 5, I had ATRT (Atypical Teratoid Rhabdoid Tumor) and was given a 30% chance of survival. I never knew that until just now in working on my essay. I am the 1st survivor of this type of cancer at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. I had to be in the hospital for a long time but watching movies and getting toys everyday wasn’t bad. I went through brain surgery, 4 rounds of high-dose chemotherapy, 30 days of brain and spine radiation which was scary with a big mask, and stem-cell therapy. After that, I suffered a lot of side effects from the radiation like it’s hard for me to walk independently. Over 13 years, I have had spine surgery, leg surgery, foot surgery, and hand surgery just to name a few. But, none of that stopped me from living and trying to do my best.

At 6 years old, I started kindergarten and never let my disabilities get me down. It may take me a little bit longer to learn and do things, but I will get there. This is why I have never given up. One of my favorite things to do is play video games so I am excited that MSJ has E-sports Club.

Video games are challenging just like my life. It makes me determined to keep trying to succeed to the next level. I also like that they have great graphics and stories for all the comic heroes.

Even sometimes the heroes struggle in the game, but they continue to work at it to win. This is what I do every day. Some say that I’m a hero but, really, I’m just a kid living after cancer.

Moving forward, I want to either study Computers, Marketing, or OT/PT aide. Since I was unable to play traditional sports, I spent most of my free time with computers and going to therapy. I think I can use that to my advantage. Your Special Needs program will help me get there. I want the same opportunity that a “normal” kid gets, so I’m hoping you take a chance on me! Who knows, I could be your 1st childhood cancer survivor graduate!