

My Journey with Cancer

By: Eli Thompson

It was eleven weeks into my sixth grade year. First year of middle school. I had joint pain in my wrist, so my mom took me for x-rays. They didn't show anything. A few weeks later the pain was in my knee, but again, the x-rays were clear. My mom insisted on blood work, and from there I was sent to a rheumatologist. A couple weeks after seeing Dr. Schmidt I couldn't walk. After no one could find out the problem we went to Norton Children's Hospital and that's where it all started.

November 2nd, we get to the hospital and go to the fourth floor, and we end up spending quite a bit of time there. I was looked at by so many doctors but one was someone I would never forget. Dr. Kaslow, a senior resident that I went on to know really well, was one of the first doctors I interacted with. He made my experience so much easier. He was great to everyone in my family and tried to make me as comfortable as possible.

On November 3rd, 2016, I was told the news that I had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. It was super hard to take and I honestly couldn't tell you anything that happened in those first couple days other than the fact that the Cubs won game seven of the World Series that night in the 18th inning. When I think about it now I still can't fully grasp the situation I was in. For two weeks I laid in that hospital bed with lots of visitors from friends, lots of free toys, and most importantly, the McDonalds that was deconstructed right after that first hospital stay. Through this experience it was hard and frustrating. I couldn't do anything with my friends, no school, no outside... nothing. Along this journey though I had many people that had a sensational impact on my life.

First is Dr. Panagrahi, The smartest guy I've ever met, but had the ability to explain the hardest concept in the world to a four year old. He was tall, nice, laid back, and full of helpful information considering my dad asked about 100 questions a day. He was my diagnosis doctor as well. One time in the hospital I gave him the nickname Pimpin Panagrahi, and he will forever be known as that by me. He was the one who told me and my family the news. He impacted me the most with how he didn't care how smart I was or the way I handled a situation. He made sure I understood everything and why it was important. He also always made sure me, Mom, and Dad understood before he left the room.

Second is Dr. Farge, He was a big jokester and made everything more funny and always put a smile on my face even on the worst days. Dr. Farge was only in his fellowship so he was always with a supervisor. Dr. Farge really impacted me because he showed me that no matter who you are or the situation, you can have a good time. I always make sure to have fun no matter what I'm doing whether it's at school or it's at a football game, I make sure to enjoy every moment of it. He showed me that while I was going through treatment to keep my life normal and don't think that I'm different from anyone else, and that's exactly what I did. It's super hard to live a boring life when you're around Dr. Farge.

Third is Dr. Barbour, my current doctor. He is the most laid back person I've ever met. He is always curious about what I'm up to and asks me lots of questions about school and sports. He showed me to not take everything seriously because one little thing isn't going to make you a failure, but rather show you how you can grow on it. He helped

me to realize to not always get upset over something or someone because you never know the circumstances of the other side of the story.

Fourth is the nurses. They were so nice to me and made me feel like I was their number one priority. Anything I needed they would get to do for me. Many times I would be on my Xbox and they would make sure to not interrupt my game for anything they had to do. Even if it was the middle of the night I could ask for a cup of water or some food and they would get it for me. I would even be standing on the bed singing with a cup microphone and they would just make me feel at home. They showed me that being kind and helpful will have a lasting impression. Now, I always try to be nice to anybody that may need help or might be struggling and having a bad day so that way I can maybe make their day better.

Last is my friends and family. They made it easier for me to get through this because of their support. They would make sure I was doing ok and if not they would help me out. Anytime I was feeling bad, My mom or dad would do anything I had to do for me or would get necessities for me. It would have been a struggle to do some of the things they did for me if I had to do them myself.

The impact that these people had on me will last forever and will continue to make me a better person. I live my life by the role models that were with me throughout the last five years, make sure I always remember how I became who I am today, and how I can pass these skills onto other people around me.