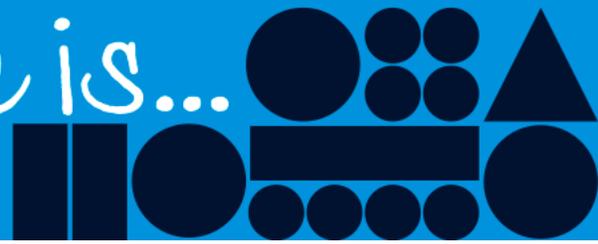




Courage is...



MARKUS LOST HIS LEG AND GAINED A COURAGE HE NEVER KNEW

It took one phone call to change Angel and Mark's lives forever.

The days leading up to that phone call had been brutal. Their son, Markus, was experiencing persistent pain in his leg, and an MRI had revealed a suspicious mass. Markus and his parents had spent four excruciating days awaiting the results of a biopsy performed at another hospital.

When the call finally came the evening of April 21, 2017, nothing could prepare the family for the devastating diagnosis. Markus had osteosarcoma, a rare and potentially fatal form of bone cancer.

"We stayed up for hours crying that night," said Angel. "Markus was terrified. He kept asking if he was going to die."

FROM FEAR TO HOPE

After evaluating their options, Angel decided to bring Markus to Children's Hospital Colorado. As caregivers explained his diagnosis and treatment options, the family's fear began to turn to hope. The team at Children's Colorado assured the family they had options, and together, they were going to do everything they could to help Markus beat cancer.



Not only would Markus have to undergo months of chemotherapy, but to fully remove the cancer, doctors would have to remove his leg above the knee.

After talking to other cancer patients who had walked the same path, Markus decided to undergo a groundbreaking surgery known as a Van Nes Rotationplasty. This novel procedure removes the leg above the knee, and then reattaches the amputated foot where the knee used to be. The ankle can then function as a knee joint, which allows patients to retain more mobility.

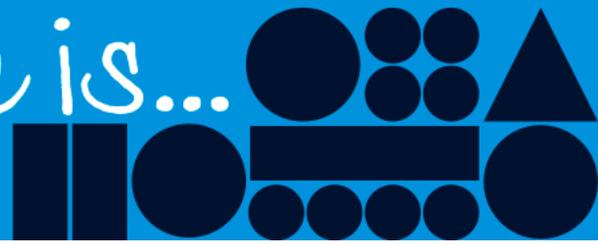
With a world-renowned team of pediatric medical experts, Children's Colorado has performed more than 100 of these complicated surgeries with great success. Children's Colorado also conducts research to identify ways to maximize function and mobility for these young patients and improve their quality of life post-amputation.

ABOUT THE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Every year since 1989, the Children's Hospital Colorado community has nominated hospital patients to serve as ambassadors. These patient representatives have courageously faced tremendous medical challenges while displaying strength and perseverance. Throughout the year, the ambassadors and their families share their stories and represent Children's Colorado at community fundraising events.



Courage is...



AMPUTATION DAY

Markus' surgery took place on July 31, 2018. Angel recalls being in the waiting room with her son just before they took him into the operating room.

"I remember he was running up and down the hallway as fast as he could," recalled Angel. "It was heartbreaking to watch, because I knew it was the last time I would see him run on his own two legs."

Although painful, the procedure was a success. Markus' recovery was one of the most difficult parts of his journey, but he also remembers this time fondly. He was thrilled to wiggle his toes for the first time, and he passed the time by finding new ways to make his nurses laugh. After four days in the hospital, he was discharged the day of his 13th birthday.

NEWFOUND STRENGTH

Markus continues to come Children's Colorado for regular check-ups. During his many appointments, Markus loves meeting other cancer patients. He even formed an unofficial support group of fellow osteosarcoma patients, fondly nicknamed the "Osteo Club" by his nurses.

"Markus was transformed by this experience," said Angel. "He became so strong, and he started helping other patients. It was amazing to see."

Today, Markus' caregivers often ask him to speak to newly-diagnosed patients who are feeling helpless and afraid. Markus hopes to give other kids the same kind of courage he found at Children's Colorado.

"I love talking to other kids who are contemplating the same surgery I had," Markus said. "Hopefully they can see me, and it won't be quite as scary."

Once fearful, Markus is now stronger than ever.

Markus will soon be fitted for his prosthetic leg, which will enable him to walk without a walker. With practice and physical therapy, he hopes to soon be able to play flag football with his friends again.

"It takes a lot of courage to keep on going, especially when you're sick and don't feel well," said Markus. "I always told myself that ahead of chemo, ahead surgery, ahead of all this, I will be able to live as close to a normal life as possible."

DONORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

During his many rounds of chemotherapy, Markus would get extremely nauseous. It got so bad that even walking into Children's Colorado would make him feel sick. Then Markus' family discovered Child Life, a program dedicated to reducing patient anxiety and helping kids to cope during their time at the hospital. To distract Markus during his infusions, child life specialists would provide him with virtual reality glasses. Whether he was flying an airplane or hiking through the jungle, the glasses transported Markus to a different world, far beyond the walls of the hospital. "It made a world of difference for him," said Markus' mom. Thanks to donor support, Children's Colorado is able to provide these services free of charge, so more kids can feel at ease during difficult procedures.

