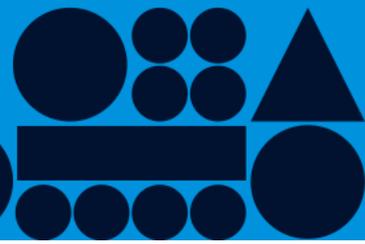




Courage is...



NINE-YEAR-OLD TOM BEAT CANCER. FIND OUT WHY HE STILL NEEDS YOUR HELP.

This fall, 9-year-old Tom headed back to school in Colorado Springs for fourth grade. Like many boys his age, he loves Lego® sets, playing Minecraft and showing off his swimming skills.

But unlike most of his classmates, Tom can't fend off many of the bugs and germs that lurk in elementary school classrooms, such as chicken pox or whooping cough. He also can't risk serious crashes on the playground or big falls on the soccer field. And he'll likely have to miss multiple days of school for doctors' appointments.

That's because Tom is still recovering from more than three years of treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common form of childhood cancer.

REMISSION AND SIDE EFFECTS

Tom was diagnosed with ALL when he was just 3 years old. Today, after several rounds of chemotherapy and steroids, Tom's cancer is in remission. While these aggressive therapies got rid of his cancer, they also caused side effects for which he continues to undergo treatment at Children's Hospital Colorado – something that is still all too common among pediatric cancer patients and survivors.

During treatment, Tom was in such intense pain from the steroids that he stopped walking for a month. Now, his immune system is compromised, making him more susceptible to illness. To boost his ability to fight disease, he receives monthly infusions at Children's Colorado in Colorado Springs. His liver is also damaged from chemotherapy, which caused his spleen to enlarge, putting him at higher risk of organ rupture.

Sofia, Tom's mom, is relieved that her son's cancer is gone, but there is worry in her voice as she talks about sending Tom off to school. Doctors at Children's Colorado do their best to allay her concerns, but she is nonetheless anxious about the possibility of something happening to her firstborn child again – a fall, an illness or even relapse.

THE NEED FOR BETTER TREATMENTS

Right now, doctors don't know what causes ALL, which strikes about 3,000 children under 20 years old in the United States each year. However, what was once a fatal disease – before 1962 no children survived an ALL diagnosis – now has a survival rate of more than 90 percent. This is one of the best rates among pediatric cancers, thanks to research and new treatments being developed at Children's Colorado and across the country.

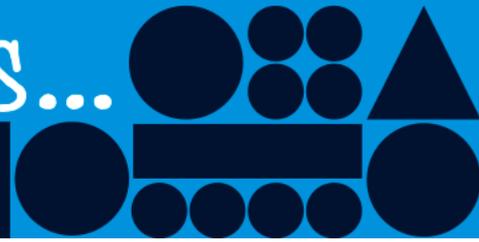


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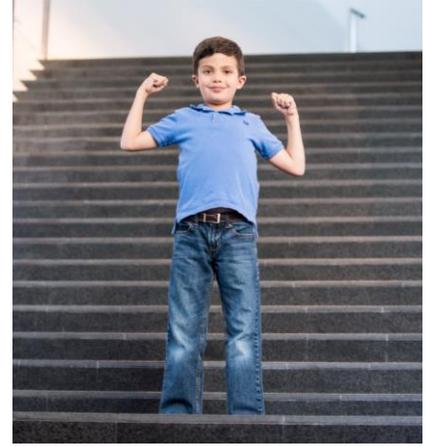


Courage is...



Still, there is much work to do to help kids thrive long after surviving cancer. Donations from the community have made it possible for Children's Colorado to recruit the top physician-scientists in the world, such as pediatric hematologist-oncologist Dr. Terry Fry, who are seeking to better understand this disease, determine what causes it, eliminate its recurrence and, importantly for kids like Tom, discover new therapies with fewer complications.

Dr. Fry is currently working on targeting leukemia cells more effectively while reducing side effects. These new therapies not only will help treat ALL, but possibly other cancers, such as brain tumors, and even autoimmune diseases down the road.



CARE CLOSE TO HOME

Tom was about to turn 4 years old when his family, stationed with the U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom, got the devastating news about the cause of Tom's severe hip and stomach pain.

He was hospitalized for nine days and treated abroad until his dad was transferred to Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, where the little boy could receive long-term maintenance treatment at Children's Colorado in Colorado Springs and the Anschutz Medical Campus.

Being from the East Coast, Tom's parents didn't have family nearby to support them, but they were grateful to be located near one of the country's top children's hospitals.

"It was hard to be stationed so far from our families, but the upside was that we were near Children's Colorado," said Sofia. "It's such a fantastic hospital that is providing help for our whole family."

Children's Colorado is building a new hospital in Colorado Springs, set to open in 2019. The chance to get expert pediatric care closer to home will ease the burden on Tom's family as they continue to cope with his recovery.

"If his liver damage worsens, or he gets an injury to his spleen, we will be able to take him to the Emergency Department at the new hospital," Sofia said. "His cancer doctors will be in the same location to monitor his situation and coordinate with his doctors in Aurora. It will be such a relief."

HELP KIDS THRIVE AFTER CANCER

Kids shouldn't get cancer. Moms and dads shouldn't have to worry about letting their children do regular kid activities, like playing and going to school. And if cancer can't be prevented altogether, caregivers need new and better treatments that have fewer side effects for young patients. Families should be able to access those cutting-edge treatments and pediatric experts without having to travel hours from their homes.

All of this work is being done right now at Children's Colorado. You can be a part of the solution by donating today.

ChildrensColoradoFoundation.org/donate

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.