

30 Days/30 Stories®

Cameron Wakeley

Diagnosed with Ewing Sarcoma
at age 6 in August 2018

Cameron Wakeley was out with his family, walking around Arts Alive in May of 2018, enjoying the spring weather and excited for school to be letting out for summer. Annoyed by what appeared to be a bug bite on his leg, he complained to his mother: "It hurts, mom." His mother, Kristina, inspected the area and determined it was probably, indeed, a bug bite. And so they went on with their day of fun and family. Little did they know, life was about to change, and their world turned upside down.

The bug bite didn't go away. And Cameron, a fun loving, carefree six year-old, was not one to let anything get in his way of fun. After wrestling camp one day, Kristina noticed the bump getting larger. So off to the pediatrician they went. By now, a few weeks had passed and Cameron, having become quite used to "the bump", named it "Sparky." A referral to pediatric surgeon Dr. Nance at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) resulted in the decision to surgically remove "Sparky" from Cameron's leg on August 14, as some of "Sparky's" edges had started to change in color. Still, neither pediatrician or surgeon believed "Sparky" was anything to be concerned about. "Sparky" didn't belong there so off "he" would come. All this only two weeks before the start of school, as the incision should have been healed well enough for Cameron to make his big debut in first grade at St. Isidore's with his friends.

That was Tuesday. On Friday, August 17, 2018 at 3:14 in the afternoon, Kristina would take a phone call from Dr. Nance that would change her life and the life of her family. A shocked and stunned Dr. Nance told Kristina that against all odds, "Sparky," a tissue born tumor, was malignant. Her six year-old son and middle child had Ewing Sarcoma. "Sparky" was cancer. There would be no "first day of first grade" this year for Cameron. Instead, he would undergo several surgeries and begin a rigorous series of 14 rounds of chemotherapy treatments over the next nine months. Cameron was in for the fight for his life.

Kristina and John, Cam's dad, Caidyn and Cavin, his older sister and younger brother, would become part of an extended family of childhood cancer families that they certainly never signed up for. They learned to reach out, ask questions, and to support one another in the face of the unthinkable. They would face this demon and stare it down with the courage and dignity and strength that they never knew they had. One thing they learned from this network of families with children fighting cancer is that giving up was not an option. And so, that day, with that one phone call, the fight began.

From the very first moment, the Wakeley family was undeniably #CameronStrong (the hashtag would become a mantra of support as Cameron fought his good fight). They found a family of support in their hometown of Quakertown, in their school of St. Isidore's, in the athletic organizations in the Quakertown school district, in childhood cancer foundations, particularly the Pediatric Cancer Foundation of Lehigh Valley and Alex's Lemonade Stand, who would stand by them and fight with them, cry with them, celebrate with them, whatever it took, to see Cameron through the other side of these dark days.

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At first, the chemotherapy went well. Cameron was pretty upbeat and seemed to be handling things well. His teachers would come to his home to work on his lessons. He was afforded opportunities to do the things a seven year-old should do. (He had turned sever in October just after his diagnosis.) Kristina and John made some pretty valuable connections with PCFLV and Alex's that were so helpful and supportive, especially in the first days. Friendships were forged in the worst of circumstances. Then, after the third treatment, the poison that chemotherapy is started to make its presence known. His little leg, with the incision from the surgery, couldn't heal completely because his blood counts were too low. He was tired, suffered from headaches, lost his taste for his favorite foods. He didn't smile much anymore. But he didn't complain. Not once. He didn't whine. He would tell his mother "I'm strong. I've got this."

However, he was struggling. And as the months went on and December turned into January, then February turned into March, it really seemed like he was going to be ok. He was going to make it relatively unscathed, through these treatments. April and May, his last two months of treatments were the worst. He was sick. His little body was tired. He was feverish and he had persistent headaches. He couldn't eat or really drink too much. His leg would get infected. Treatments were continuously delayed because of low blood counts. More than once, the threat of an overnight ambulance ride to CHOP wasn't off the table. Then there would be a good week and another treatment was down. A bad week would force another delay. This went on for the last two months.

But, by the Grace of God, it did come to an end. On May 17, 2019, 9 torturous months to the very day of the phone call that any parent would dread, learning that Cameron had cancer, he completed his final chemotherapy treatment. He did it. Our little hero did it! Initial scans were clean, revealing for now that the treatment worked. First indicators are that the cancer is gone. More scans and check-ups are in his future. He still suffers from some lingering effects which fade more and more with each passing week But he is back to living the life of a seven year-old boy, to the joy of his parents and his sister and brother. He will start the second grade this September at St. Isidore's with Caidyn and his friends. He is playing baseball, his favorite sport. His smile is back and brighter than ever. There isn't anything he can't do.

He is #CameronStrong.

Written by Cameron's Aunt Karen

If you would like to donate in Cameron's honor Click Here

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