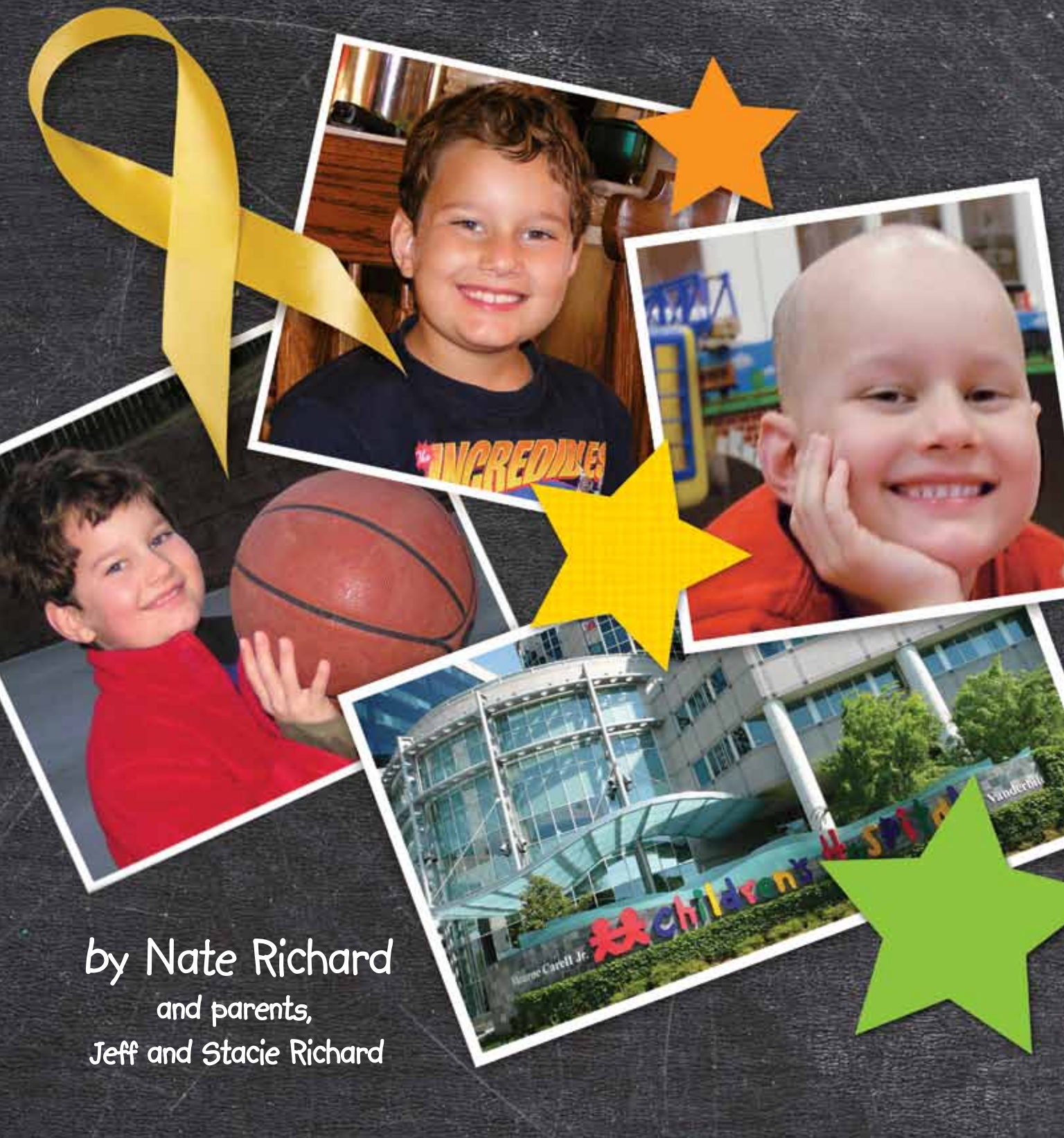
Nate's Story:

What It's Like to Have Leukemia



by Nate Richard
and parents,
Jeff and Stacie Richard

A finger prick test during Nate's five-year-old checkup at the pediatrician's office revealed that Nate's hemoglobin was low. His doctor had more blood drawn to determine why. Days later, we were called in and given the devastating news that Nate had cancer. He was diagnosed with ALL (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia), the most common form of childhood leukemia.

As we returned home and drove over the hill to our house, we saw Nate playing in the yard with his friends. It didn't look possible for him to have a serious illness. In fact, he was the picture of health. This news was so hard to absorb. Nate's pediatrician helped make arrangements for Nate at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. We prayed the whole time for God's help and the miracle that we would be told his diagnosis was a mistake.

Within days, Nate's illness was confirmed. Nate immediately began chemotherapy treatments for a disease for which he had shown no outward symptoms.

After the shock and fear began to settle into reality, we began looking at books about leukemia with Nate to try to help us deal with cancer. It was then that Nate asked, "Why can't I have my own book?" Nate's question set in motion his story of what it is like to have leukemia. In his book, Nate shares his life with leukemia through pictures of his treatments and of special moments shared with family and friends after his diagnosis.

Nate's faith is shared in his book by including some of his prayers. Our faith in God has been a big part of our journey. It is our desire that children from all faith backgrounds and traditions find value in reading Nate's story. May getting to know Nate through his life with leukemia be a help and an encouragement to each of you.

So here is Nate's story of his challenges, his blessings, his hurt, and his hope.

God bless you,
Jeff and Stacie Richard, Nate's parents

Summer

Dear Lord,

Thank You for
people praying for me
to get better!

In Jesus' name,
Amen

About Me

Hi, my name is Nate. This is me riding down the hill on my big dump truck before I was sick. I was 5 years old. Me and my friends took turns zooming down the hill. We played all sorts of fun things almost every day.

I went to the doctor for a checkup because I was going to start kindergarten soon. That's when I found out something was wrong with my blood, and I had to go to the hospital instead. After I got to go home from the hospital, I asked my mom and dad if I could make a book about what it is like to have leukemia. I hope that seeing me have treatments helps other kids who have to get treatments, too.

My First Time in the Hospital

I was really scared in the hospital. I didn't know what was going to happen. First, I had to get an IV in my arm. Doctors gave me "sleepy medicine" so they could do a test to figure out what was wrong with my blood. We found out I had leukemia. But I didn't even feel sick.

There were lots of pills to take. My nurses said I was good at swallowing pills, and I should help some kids by showing them how I did it.

I made a new friend, Cody. He was zooming around in a wheelchair and he stopped by my room to say, "Hi". Every time a doctor came in my room, they named something I had to have done. They tried to talk to me, but I didn't want to talk. My mom and dad were afraid, too.
They let me eat all the junk I wanted.

Tip

Taking My Pills

I put the pills right behind my teeth then take a big drink of apple juice.

Me With My Port Accessed

I had surgery to get a port-a-cath. A port is kind of like a button they put under my skin to make it easier to get medicine and have blood taken. You can only see a small bump on my chest where the port is.

When the port is "accessed", a tubey hangs down and is easy for the nurse to use. I was afraid the needle for accessing the port would hurt. I put "magic" cream on my skin where the needle goes in so it doesn't hurt but feels more like a push. I still don't like it, but I do what I have to do.

My Friend Slater

1

My puppet friend, Slater, has a port-a-cath and I am practicing accessing it. I feel his port then press the needle right in the middle of it.

Once the needle is in, the butterfly tabs are pressed out to hold it in place.

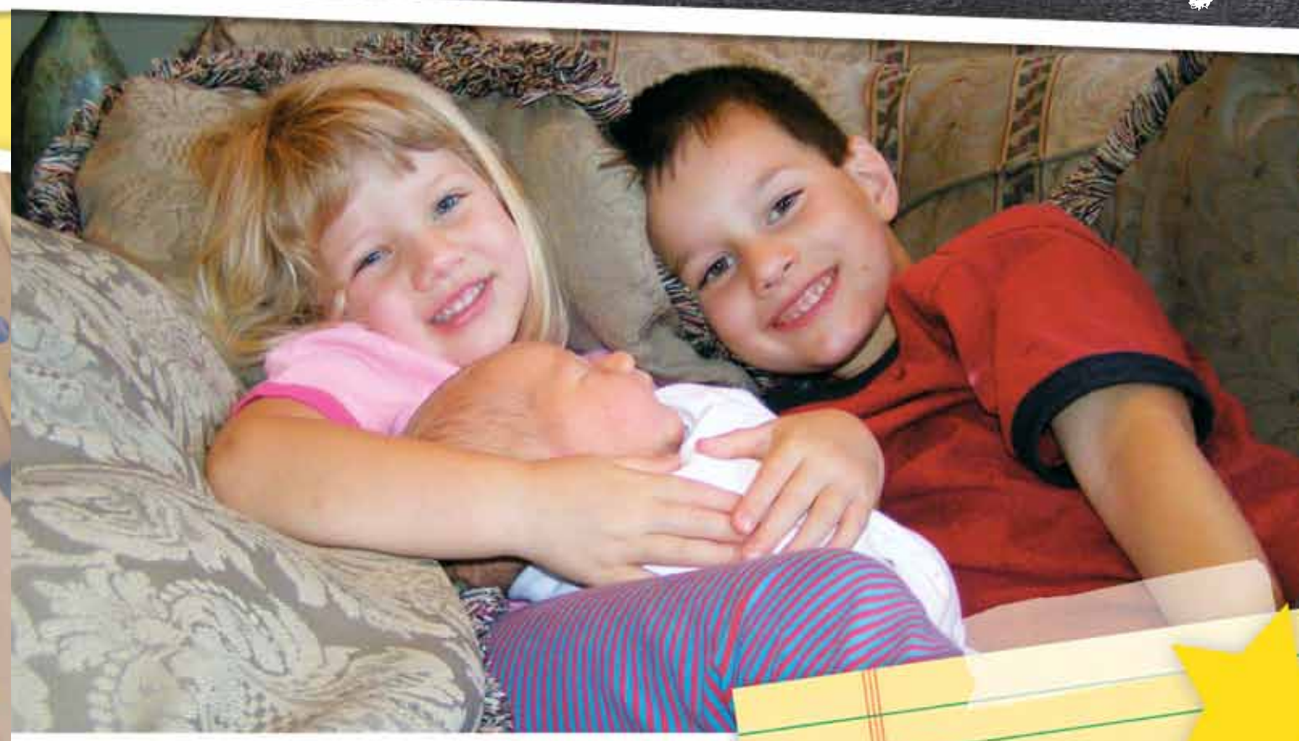
2

3

Now it's easy to give Slater the medicine he needs.

When my sister, Ali, came to visit me, I showed her my Chemo Duck. Chemo Duck has a port like me. And he has a lucky cast like the one I had when my IV was in my arm. Once I got home, I let Ali have Chemo Duck since she liked playing with him so much.

My baby sister, Audrey, is the sweetest baby in the whole wide world! All of my nurses thought she was a doll at first because she was so good. They brought her a baby bed so she could stay in my room at the hospital.



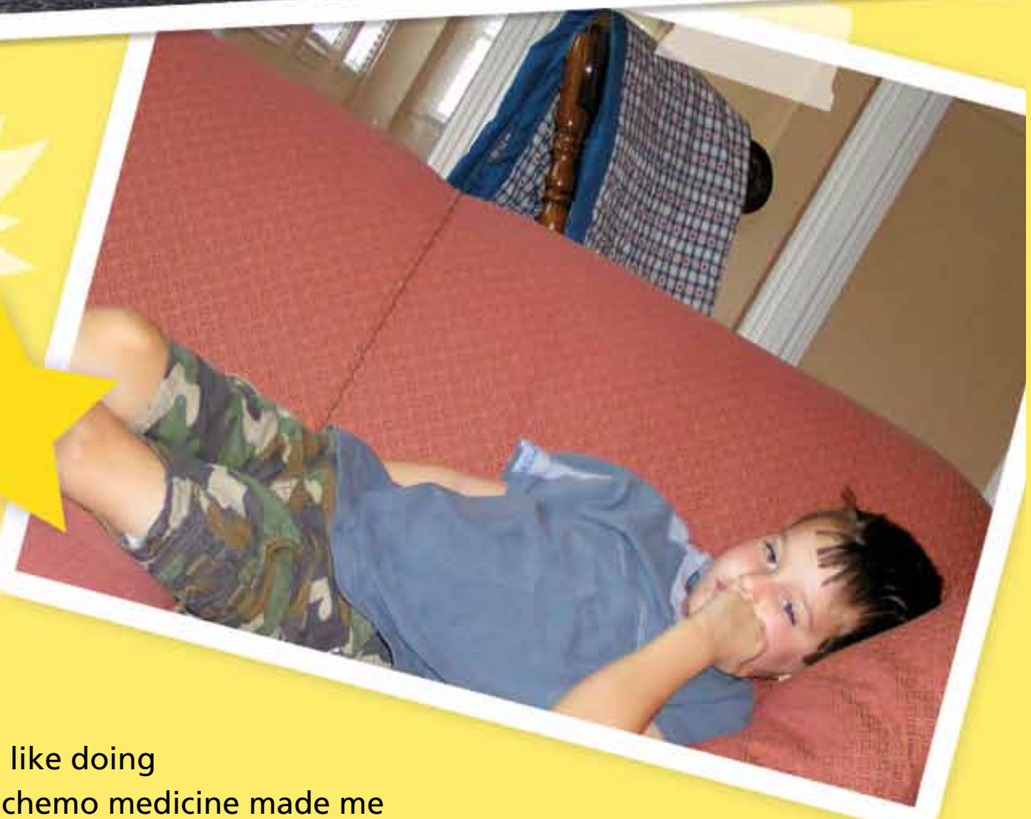
My doctor said I could get out of the hospital, but I had to stay close for checkups. Me and my whole family went to stay at the Ronald McDonald House. It felt much more like home.

My sister, Ali, stayed with our Nana and Poppy while I was in the hospital. We missed her very much. Now she could be with the rest of our family. She called it the "hamburger house" even though we didn't eat any hamburgers there.

Dear Lord,
Thank You
for my
WHOLE
family!

In Jesus'
name,
Amen

Me on the Couch



I didn't feel like doing much. The chemo medicine made me really tired and made my belly hurt. Still, I was so hungry! I ate Ramen noodles, chicken noodle soup, pretzels, and potato chips. Dad said I wanted salt, salt, salt!

My dad started a CaringBridge website so Mommy and Daddy could tell people how I was doing. They read to me nice words people wrote to me. I liked hearing them. The knock-knock jokes some of my friends sent were very funny. The cards and presents I got in the mail were fun to open and were very nice, too.

Having Fun

What do you do when a truck runs over your toe?

Call a toe-truck!

Knock-Knock
Who's There?

Who
Who, who?

Do I hear an owl in here?

Knock-Knock
Who's There?

Radio
Radio Who?

Radio not here I come!

Knock-Knock
Who's There?

Police
Police who?

Police stop telling these awful knock-knock jokes!

It's My 6th Birthday

We were all glad when we got to move back home. We still had to travel every week to the hospital clinic where I got my treatments. I was at the clinic on my 6th birthday. The workers sang "Happy Birthday" and gave me a lot of presents. When we got back home, I had balloons on the porch, and one of my best friends sang "Happy Birthday" on our answering machine!

We got great news that there were no more signs of leukemia in my blood or bone marrow! This is called remission and is the first step in getting well.

My favorite stuffed animal, Bob Dog, has been with me the whole time.

I love hearing the Bible story of Jesus healing the man who couldn't walk. Jesus said, "I say to you rise, take up your pallet and go home." And the man did!

Mark 2:1-12

Fall

Playing Again!

It feels awesome to be riding my bike again! I've been outside playing with friends for the first time since I got sick. My first month of treatments made my legs very weak. I was really upset when I kept falling down just walking across the room. But it didn't last. I'm better and playing again!

Dear Lord,
Thank You for the
BEAUTIFUL day.
Help me to
have fun in it.

In Jesus' name,
Amen

Losing My Hair

Dr. Adam said some of my medicines would make my hair come out. He was right! I showed my mom how my hair was all over my pillow. I could pull it right out. My daddy said we would shave our heads together. He gave us crazy mohawks...then he shaved the rest off. I wasn't sure if I would like it at first, but I decided it was cool. Dad promised to keep his head shaved until mine grew back. He was all the time shaving his to keep it smooth, but mine stayed smooth on its own. We were bald for seven months.

School Days

We had to be out of town several days of every week for my treatments. Instead of going to school for kindergarten, I had school at home with my mom and sisters. A nice teacher came to our house to work with me some every week. My mom was always helping me practice reading and doing math games. I had time to play when I felt up to it. Recess was my favorite!

Looking Out

This day I was wishing I could play outside with my friends. Mom and Dad said I couldn't because my blood work showed I was "neutropenic." That means I could easily get an infection and have to go to the hospital. I had to stay away from almost everyone except my family until my counts were good. Some of my favorite foods I couldn't eat because of low counts. My family was careful to wash our hands all the time. I wouldn't know until the next week if my counts were good. Once, my counts were low for three weeks. It felt awesome when I got to play with friends again.

Dear Lord,
Help me to do good today
and not be afraid.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

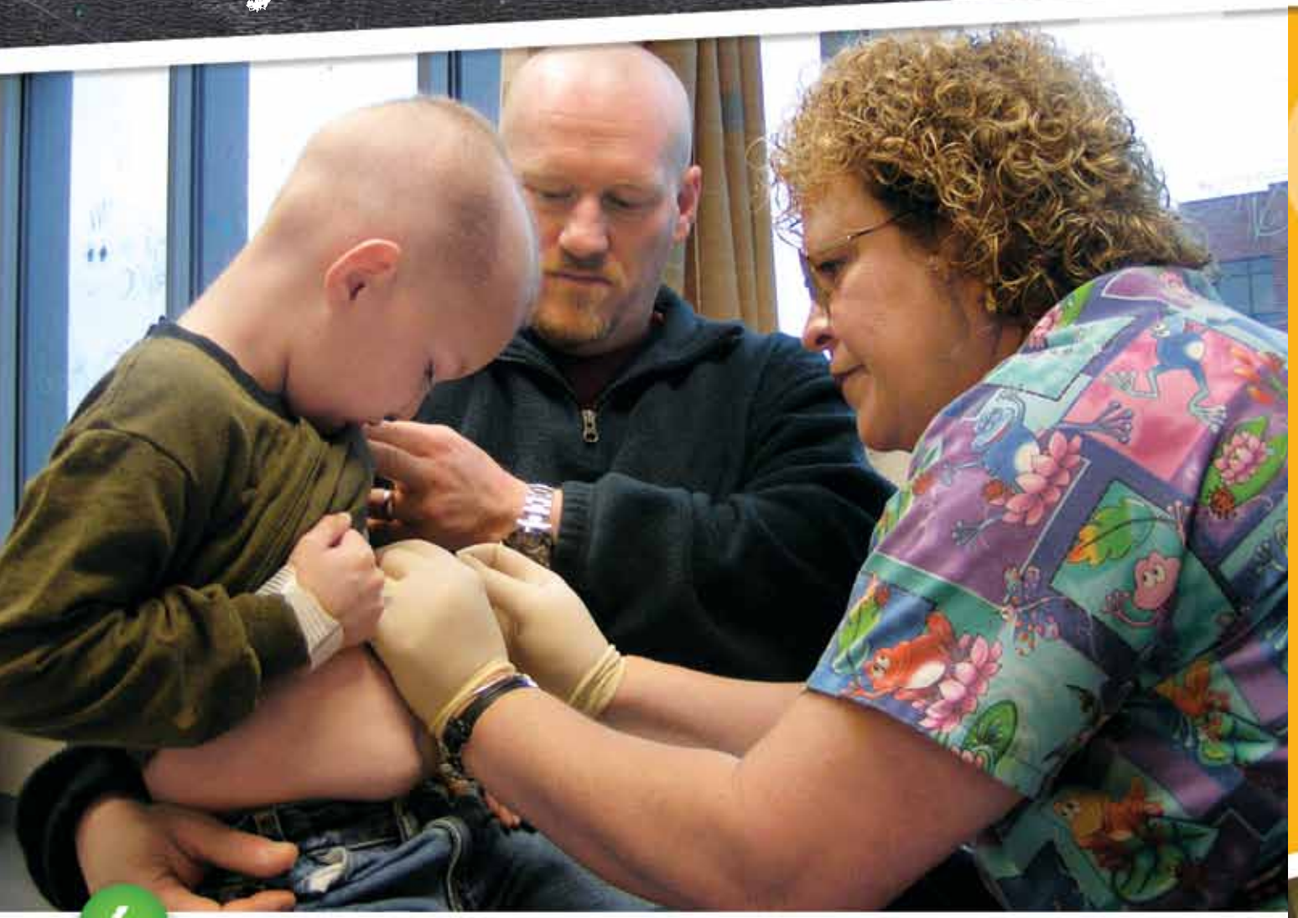
1 Let me show you what a day at the clinic is like. It is 8 a.m. and we are leaving the Ronald McDonald House to go to the hospital. My whole family is with me. Before we leave, I always make sure my dad puts "magic" cream on my chest where I will have my port accessed in a little while.

2 Here I am with Mr. Harold. He always says hello to us at the door when we get to the hospital, and he's always wearing his hat.

3 They've called my name. Now it's time for "vitals." Ms. Mandy checks my blood pressure with the blue cuff. The cuff gives me an arm hug by squeezing tight.

4 Checking my weight is always important to see how well I've been eating. And the amounts of medicine I take might be changed depending on how much I weigh.

5 Here I am hoping I have grown taller! If you can't tell from the picture, I am REALLY stretching. Dad says standing on tiptoes doesn't count!



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My favorite nurse, Mrs. Donna, accesses my port. I always sit on my dad's lap and watch everything. I always pull off the clear patch and wipe off the "magic" cream myself. Mrs. Donna counts to three then pushes the needle into the port. She draws my blood and puts it in tubes to check my counts. When the needle is in my port, I walk a little bent over because the needle pulls. The needle stays in until all my treatments are done for the day.

7

My doctor, Dr. Adam, checks my ears, my lungs, and my throat. Then we play a game on the DS!

Playing the DS is how me and Dr. Adam got to be friends. He said he would buy a DS if his wife would let him, and we would play a game every clinic visit.

If he forgets to bring his DS, I win by default! If I forget, he wins.

8

A Day at the Clinic

Mrs. Donna gives me a chemo treatment in my port every week. This time I had to get blood, too. It takes a LONG time for the blood to go in, long enough to watch one movie and part of another. It doesn't hurt, though, and it gives me more energy right away. Thanks to whoever gave their healthy blood for me!

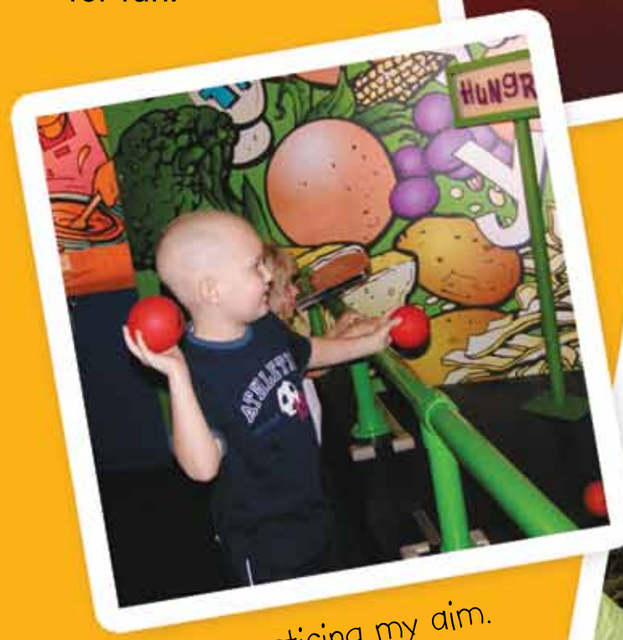
Finally, Mrs. Donna takes the needle out of my port, and the clinic day is done. Maybe I can be back home in time to play with my friends!

9

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Phil. 4:13

Trip to the Science Museum

While my counts were good, we took the chance to go to the science museum for fun.



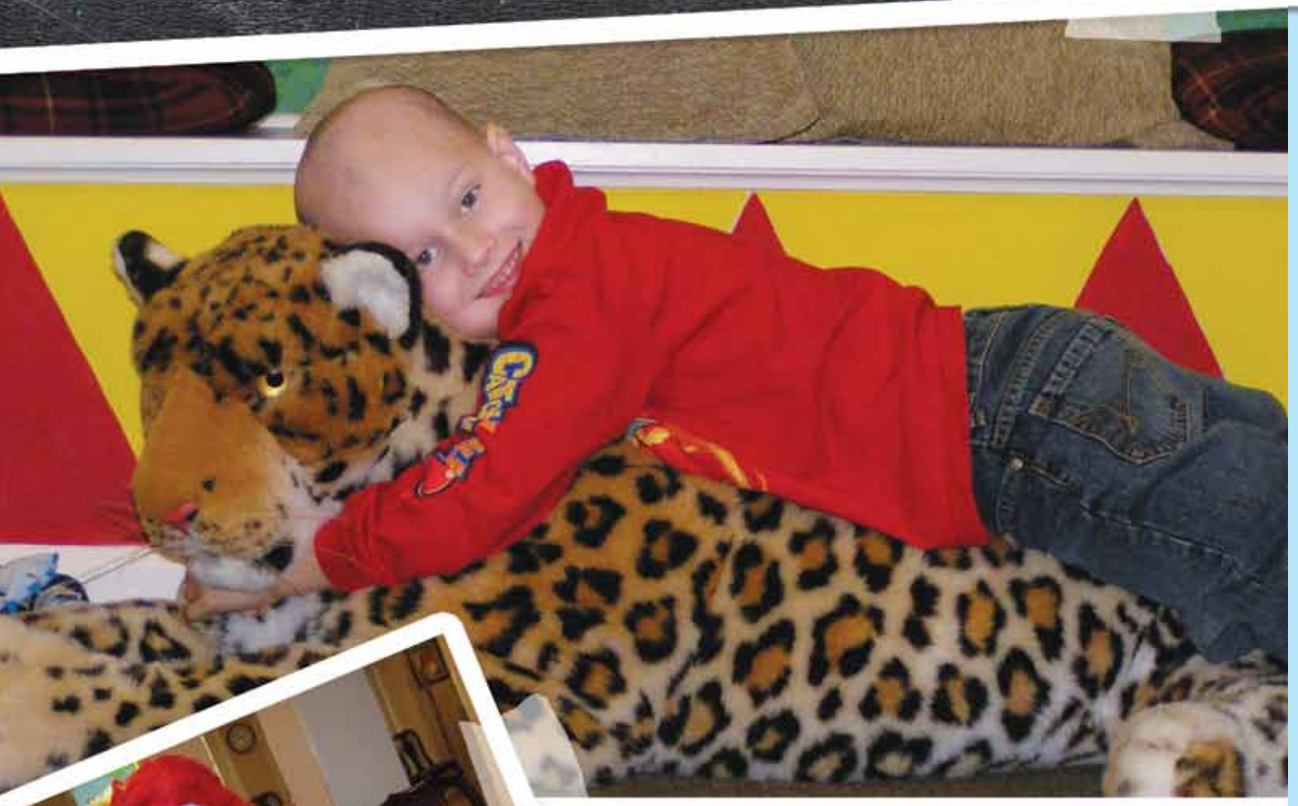
I'm practicing my aim.

My sister, Ali, was acting afraid of the T. rex.

Thanksgiving

I am thankful that they have medicine so they can fix my disease. I am thankful for my family and my friends.

Winter



Me and my family stay at the Ronald McDonald House a lot. It's a great place! It has bedrooms to sleep in and a kitchen with lots of food. My family sleeps in the same room together. All our beds really fill up the room! The house has a playroom with toys. Ronald McDonald doesn't live there, but he did visit and we got to meet him!

The Ronald McDonald House

This is Mrs. Amy. We play games and laugh a lot.

Someone brought my favorite meal, spaghetti!

We love our Ronald McDonald House friends.

Mrs. Amy and Mrs. Kaye had parties for us on our birthdays.

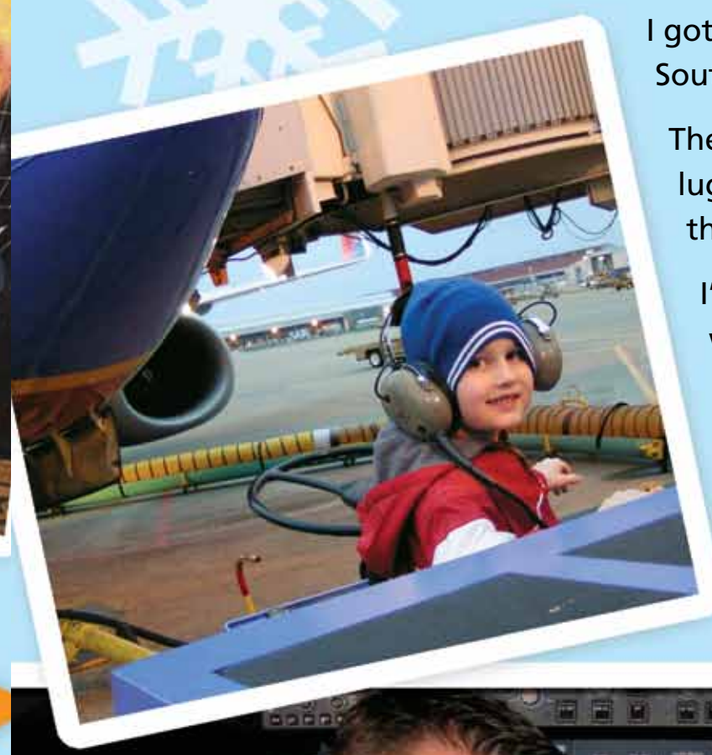
Mrs. Kaye loves on my baby sister, Audrey!

My family met Mr. Mark when Southwest Airlines served spaghetti at the Ronald McDonald House. Mr. Mark took my dad, Ali, and me to Tampa, Florida to see a really good musician, Keith Urban, in concert. We got to fly on a plane and stay in a motel, too! The concert was awesome!

We even got to meet Keith Urban! He told me he started playing the guitar when he was about my age. Ali had plans to tell him his wife was pretty. She ended up not saying a word. See her face!

My mom stayed home with my baby sister, but she sent big, blue earplugs for me and my sister to wear during the concert. I was not a fan of the earplugs.

Our Friends at Southwest



I got a VIP behind-the-scenes tour with Southwest Airlines.

They showed me how they load luggage, and I even got to get in the belly of the plane and help.

I'm in the cockpit of an airplane with the pilot. It has two big steering wheels and lots of buttons! It was awesome! The pilot told me he had just finished treatments for cancer. I think God set up that meeting just for me.

Mastering Taking My Pills

I can do what
I've got to do!

I do it the same way every time. I put the pills right behind my teeth then take a big drink of apple juice.

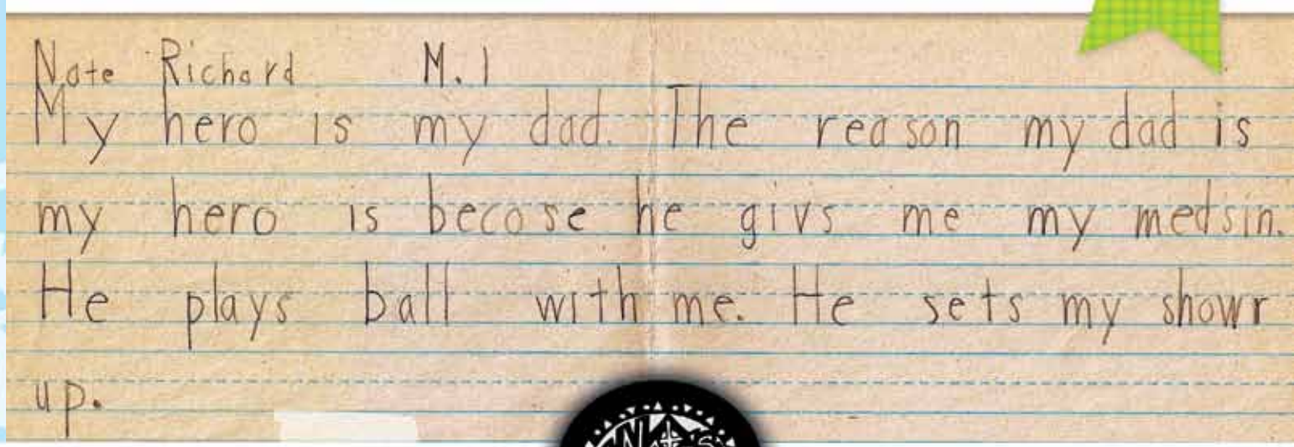
I have had to take as many as 13 pills at one time.

My dad had to give me some treatments at home so I still had my port accessed when I left the clinic. I felt like I couldn't play having a needle in my chest even though it was covered with tape. The treatment took six syringes each day. They were numbered, but I still watched to make sure Dad did it in the right order.

Some of the medicines make a bad taste in your mouth when it goes in. This was one of those medicines, so I have a hard candy in my mouth trying not to taste it. I was glad when my dad could take the needle out.

Tip

Get your mom or dad to give you hard candy to cover up the bad taste that some medicine makes in your mouth even when it is given in your port, not your mouth.



Nate Richard M.1
My hero is my dad. The reason my dad is my hero is becose he givs me my medsin. He plays ball with me. He sets my showr up.

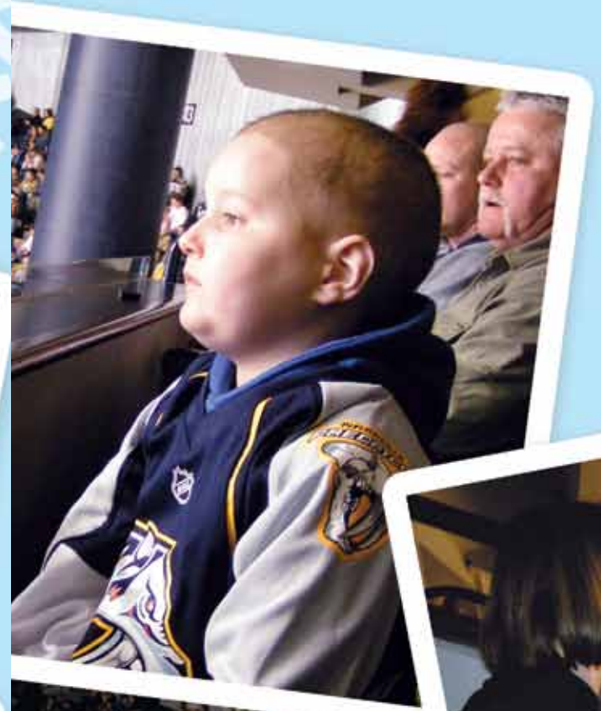
An Awesome Christmas!

A group of people my mommy used to work with came and brought three huge boxes wrapped and filled with presents. Mommy took this picture for a Christmas present for Daddy. I think he really loved it.

This is Mrs. Gloria. She's really nice. She changed our dining room into a neat school room for me, and she made our whole house look awesome for Christmas. She always brought presents for Ali and me.

We got to meet Santa and Mrs. Claus. Santa read to us then asked what we wanted for Christmas. He even gave us presents before Christmas!

Having Some Fun



I'm focusing on the game and hoping the Predators win! The Nashville Predators are awesome!

We had fun at the hockey game! My sister, Ali, liked the girls and cars on the ice the most.

Thank you to the player who donated your seats for us to get to come and watch the game!

Here's what a clinic day is like when I have to get a spinal tap.

My family is with me at the clinic. I got my port accessed and Mrs. Donna drew my blood to check my counts. Dr. Adam got the results that my counts were good. I had a regular checkup and played a game of Mario Cart with Dr. Adam. He wins sometimes — but not this day.

Next, I have to get a treatment in my port. I do this every clinic day whether I have to get a spinal tap or not.

Having a Spinal Tap

Mrs. Donna puts "magic" cream on my lower back to get me ready for the spinal tap. I don't like creams, but this kind is good to keep from feeling needle sticks.

I play my DS while I wait for my turn. I'm usually very hungry while I wait because I had to fast (not eat) since bedtime the night before the spinal tap.

My Predators hockey jersey is so cool I decided to wear it to the clinic today. It's time to get "sleepy medicine." I think the "sleepy medicine" is awesome because it makes me feel like I've gotten hours of sleep when I've only been asleep for a few minutes. Dad stays with me until I'm asleep. While I'm asleep, they turn me on my side so they can reach my lower back and take a small amount of spinal fluid and put medicine in. It takes a needle to do that job, so I'm glad not to be awake for it. The lab then checks my spinal fluid to be sure it is healthy.

They all know me because I have to get spinal taps so much. Mrs. Kim (on the left) always does the spinal tap.

On days when this is the last thing I have to do, Mrs. Kim takes the needle out of my port while I'm asleep so I don't even have to know about it.

I have to lie flat for thirty minutes after the spinal tap then I can eat. Dad always has food ready for me after I wake up. I like having a grilled cheese from the cafeteria. That's the first thing I ask for when I wake up!

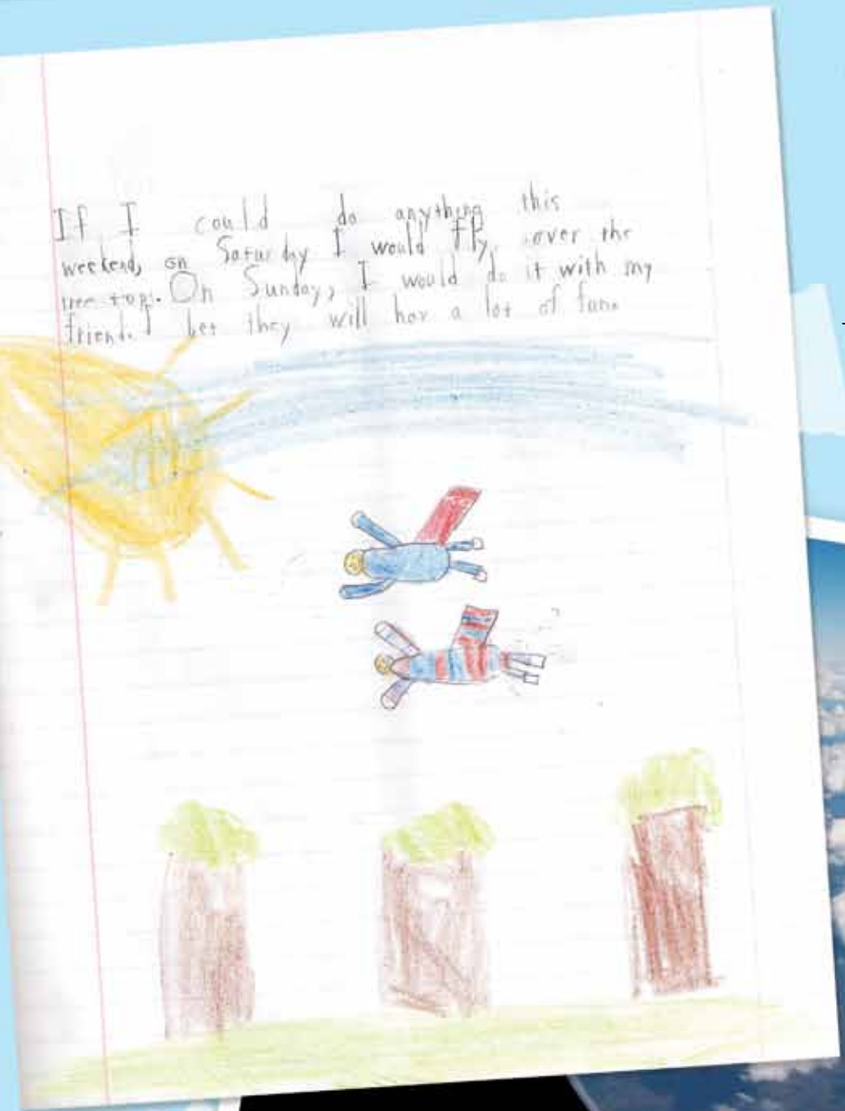
Then we'll be on our way home! Sometimes I start feeling not-so-good from a headache but not always.

Facing Giants

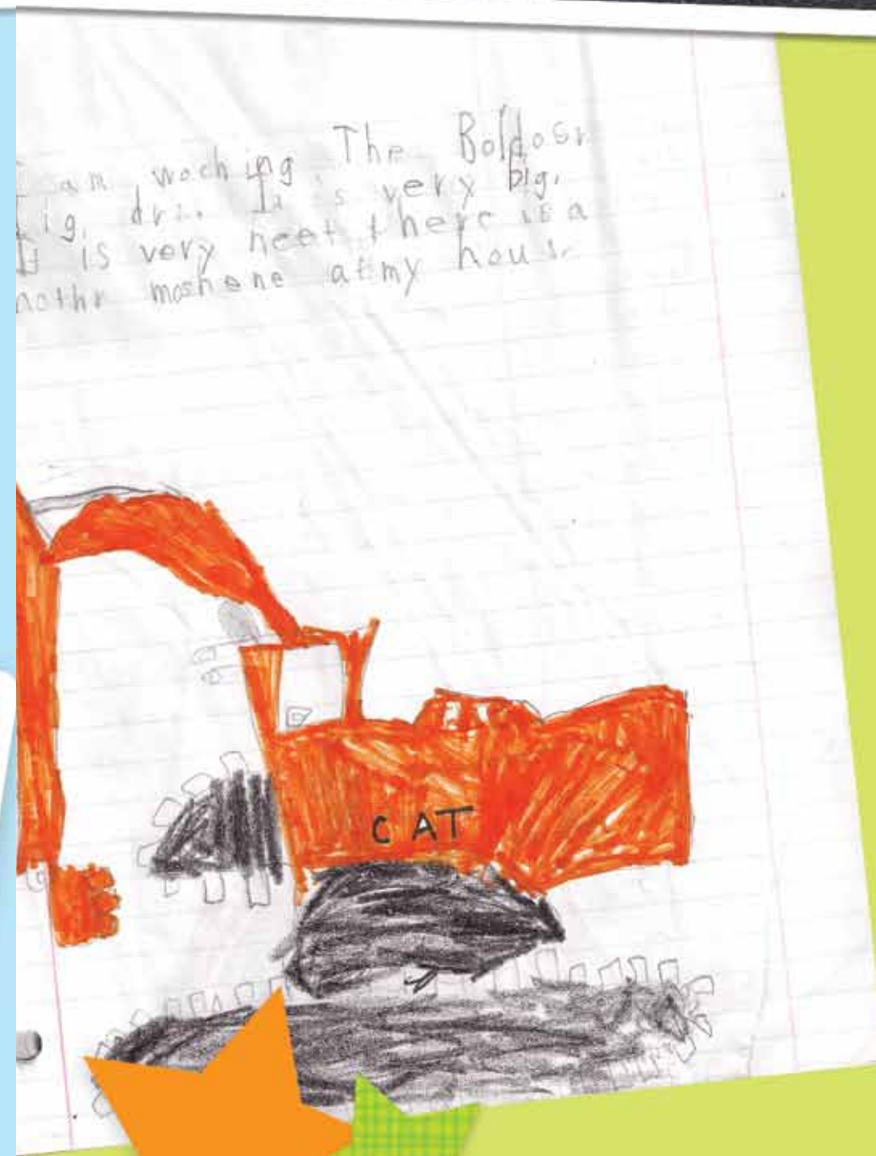
I love the story of David fighting the big giant, Goliath. My Bible fell apart at this story where my mom read it to me so many times. David was a boy who fought against a bad guy. David couldn't lose because God was on his side.

A Good Friend

This is my friend, Cody, holding my sister while he waits to be admitted to the hospital for treatments. We became friends the first time we were in the hospital. Cody said I should go ahead and take my pills, that it wasn't so bad. The doctors couldn't fix his disease, and Cody went to heaven April 20, 2008.



"If I could do anything this weekend, on Saturday I would fly over the treetops. On Sunday, I would do it with my friend. I bet they will have a lot of fun."



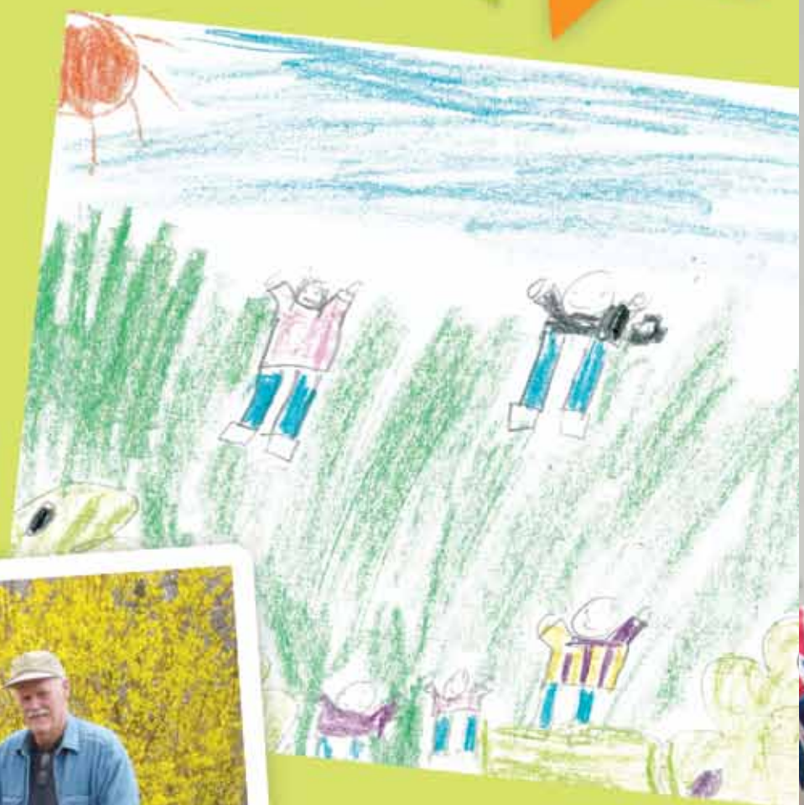
I like to draw pictures, make cards, and pray for other people who are sick. I know how much those things have helped me.

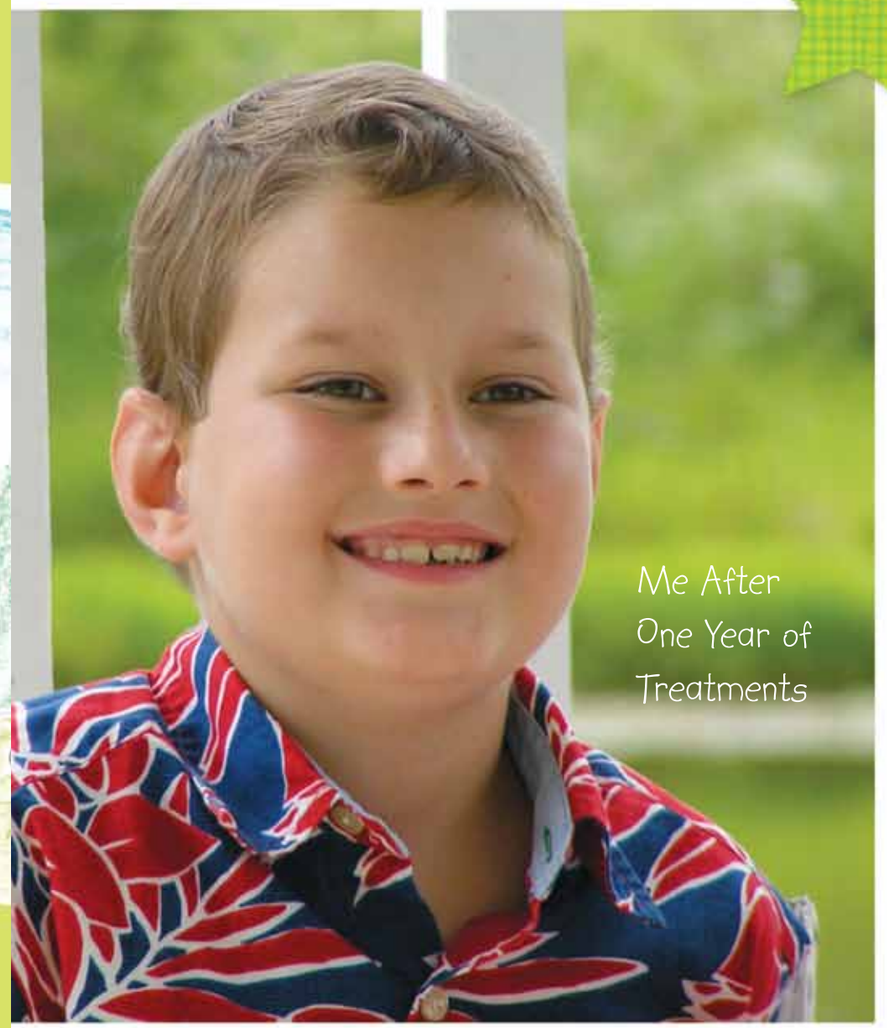
Spring

My Grandparents

My grandparents are good to me!

This is Easter Sunday. Me and Ali had fun hunting Easter eggs on Nana and Poppy's farm. It was a great day with our grandparents!





Me After One Year of Treatments

First Treatment Month

Fourth Treatment Month

Seventh Treatment Month

My treatment switched to Maintenance. I started going to the clinic once a month instead of once a week! Since I started maintenance treatments, my hair has grown back, I started going to school, and best of all, I feel better! Some of my treatments made me puffy, and some made me pale. Some made me have no hair, but I am always just me.

I'm a Cancer SURVIVOR!

This was my first Relay for Life. All the cancer survivors got a survivor medal! I want to get a huge collection of medals by going back every year! I walked up to get my first medal when they called my name. Our family walked the survivor's lap, then I went to the blow-ups. I climbed and slid and ran until time to go. It was fun.

Camp Horizon

My family told me they missed me a lot while I was at camp.

I had an awesome time at Camp Horizon, a summer camp for kids with cancer. There were lots of kids my age. I shot a bow and arrow and I liked making s'mores.

I'm with my doctor in this picture. Dr. Adam and I played a game of one on one basketball. I beat him on a fade away jump shot. He knew basketball was my favorite game, but he didn't know I had practiced that shot lots of times.

Making a Difference

monade stand to help in fa
fight against childhood cancer

Tina Forrest
Managing Editor

"Nate" Richards was
inary boy the day he
is standard check up
garten, but after get-
blood work done by
or, his mother was
he has leukemia.
ppened so fast," said
other, Stacie. "he was
le boy running up and
bill playing and four
or he was undergoing
erapy."
this 6-year-old and his
know from experience
important it is for the
ed research for faster and
eatments.
's Lemonade Stand
ation is a registered
3 charity that has raised
than $19 million towards
g a cure and funding over
earch projects all over the
ry. The foundation began
t 10 years ago in the front
of four-year-old Alexandra
" Scott at a simple lemon-
rand.
our-year-old Alex announced
day that she wanted to raise
ey to help find a cure for all
dren with cancer. Since Alex
l the first lemonade stand, the
undation bears her name and
as since turned into a nation-
fundraising movement. She
t her battle with cancer in
gust of 2004. Today, there are
of volunteers across

The Richard family at their Lemonade stand at their church soccer fields at Lone Oak First Baptist Church. Front row: Ali and Nate. Back row: Stacie and Richard.

photo by Tina Forrest

the country carrying on her legacy of hope to find a cure.

On Saturday June 14, her dream continued at Lone Oak First Baptist Church. The Richard family put up a lemonade stand during their church's youth soccer games. They sold lemonade and provided information to anyone that was interested and who wanted to get involved. They also accepted donations.

They were just one of 20 other lemonade stands scattered across the United States that day.

The Richard family heard about Alex's Lemonade Stand before, but it was through Nate's doctor out of Vanderbilt Children's hospital who is on the medical board of the Foundation, that helped them learn more.

"We wanted to do something that was positive that our children could get involved in," said Nate's father, Jeff. "Our goal is to raise $3,000 and we hope to do this again."

Nate has been undergoing chemotherapy treatments since July of 2007 and he has two and a half more years of chemotherapy left. At the soccer games on Saturday, he was made an honorary member of one of the teams.

"He wasn't able to do much, but he's out there having a great time," said Stacie. "He came up to me and asked if we could do it again next year" she said with a laugh.

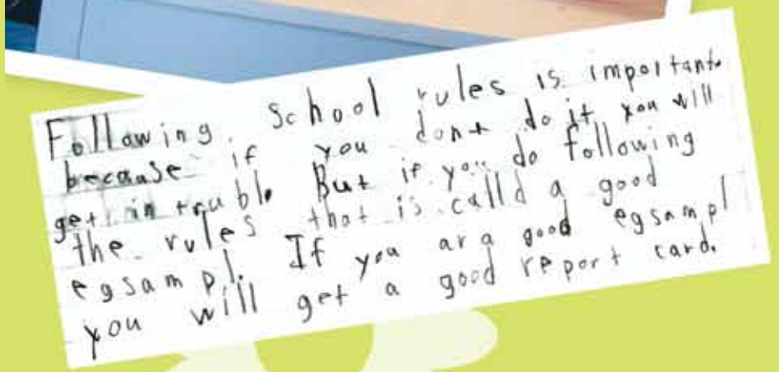
So far the Richard family has raised a total of $2,403.53 through their website and from donations and profits made from their lemonade stand that Saturday.

"We just wanted to do something to give back to the community," said Jeff. "We just wanted to do something to make a difference in improving treatments so that no other child will have to go through this."

Anyone who wants to get involved by setting up their own lemonade stand or want to donate to the Foundation can go to: www.alexslemonade.org. Or visit www.firstgiving.com and type in Nate Richard to monitor his progress and make a dona-

Me and my family raised over $3000 for Alex's Lemonade Stand! Thanks everyone who gave money! I hope for cures for cancer like my great Uncle Harold had and like my friend Cody had.

A School Day



Following school rules is important
because if you dont do it you will
get in trubl. But if you do following
the rules that is calld a good
egsampl. If you are a good egsampl
you will get a good report card.

Here I go to first grade. I hope I get all A's and nothing wrong.

Mrs. Sandy helps me with my school work at home since I still have to miss sometimes. She's the best!

I guess I am the only kid who likes to go to school! Even on days when I have to get my counts checked, I always have my dad take me right back to school.

It's My 7th Birthday!

We are back at the Ronald McDonald House. My friends here surprised me with a BIG Happy Birthday card.

I have to get treatments and a spinal tap tomorrow, but I'll think about that when it's time to do it. Tonight I'm eating pizza with my family at my favorite, Pizza Perfect!

Raising Money for RMH

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES

NASHVILLE

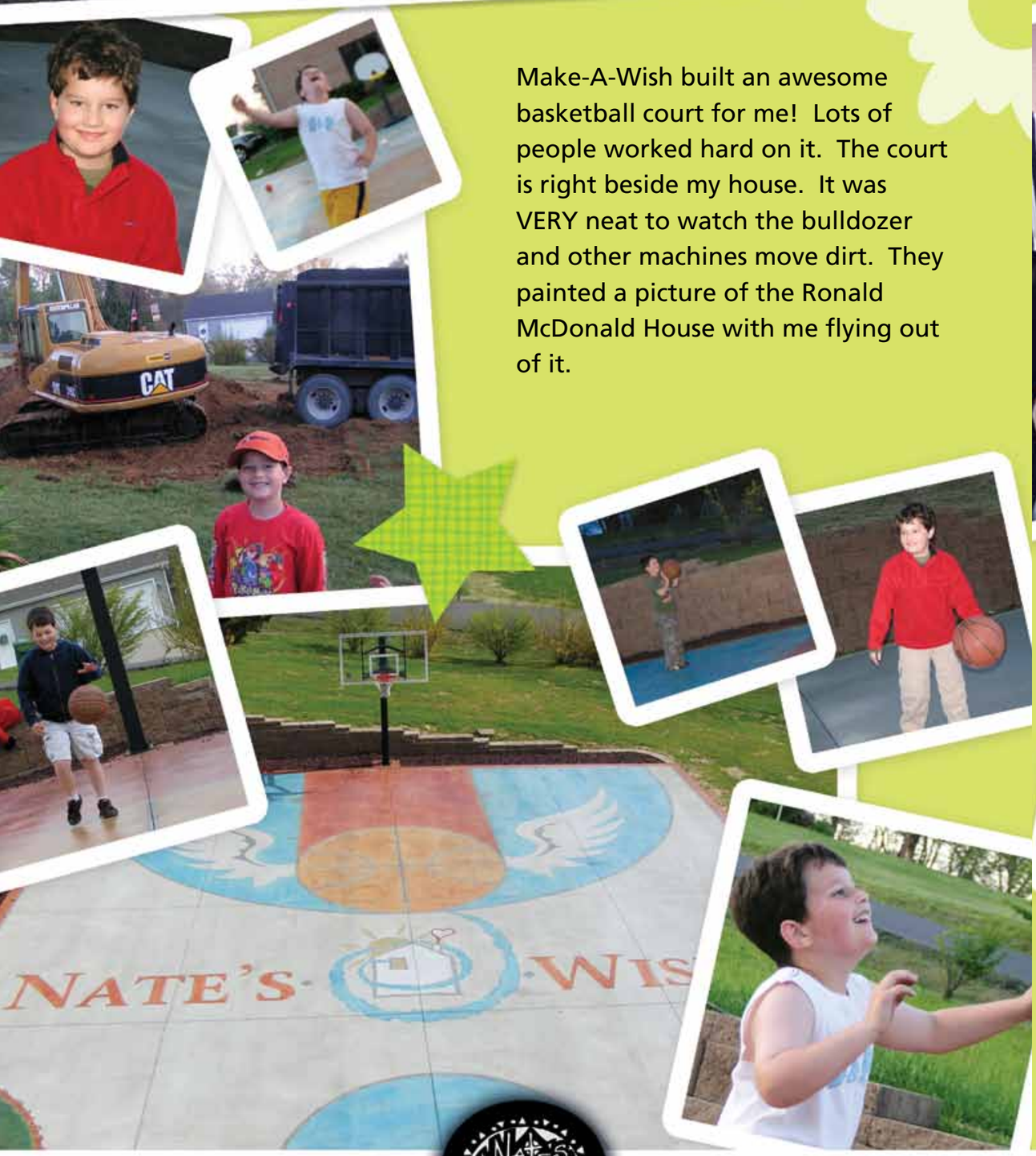
A helper asked me to introduce the band, but I would have no part of it so my sister did!

During spring break, I went to Nashville with my family to see a concert. We got to see about six different bands. One of the bands was very shy.

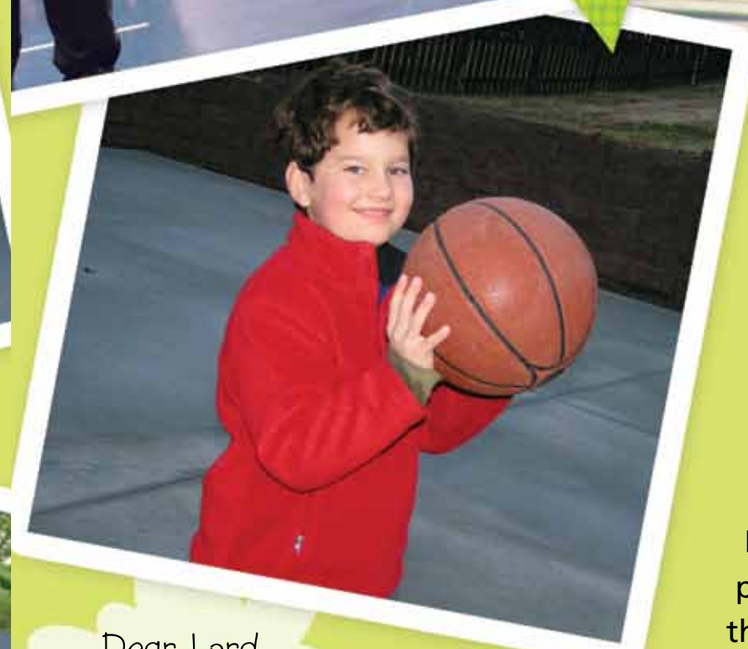
The band we were there to see was called Ricochet. They had a speaker that said Ricochet was the hardest working country band. I even got my picture with the band. "Feel Like Fallin'" is one of my favorite songs. I surprised my mom by trying the crawfish they had boiled. It looked weird, but it tasted good.

Can't Get Enough...

Make-A-Wish built an awesome basketball court for me! Lots of people worked hard on it. The court is right beside my house. It was VERY neat to watch the bulldozer and other machines move dirt. They painted a picture of the Ronald McDonald House with me flying out of it.



...Basketball!



Dear Lord,
Thank You for healing me and continue to.
In Jesus' name, Amen

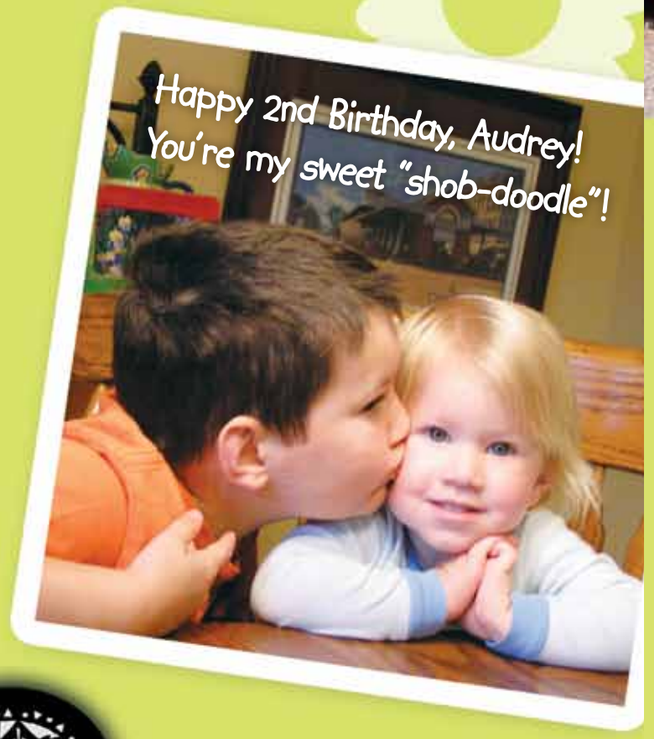
I play basketball all the time. I play with my friends and family. My dad hasn't been able to beat me at "around-the-world." I practice each shot over and over again.

I'm #4 in the white jersey. Months ago, I set my mind on playing Upwards Basketball this year. It was fun! My coach asked me for my autograph, and I gave him one! When I grow up, I want to be a famous basketball player.

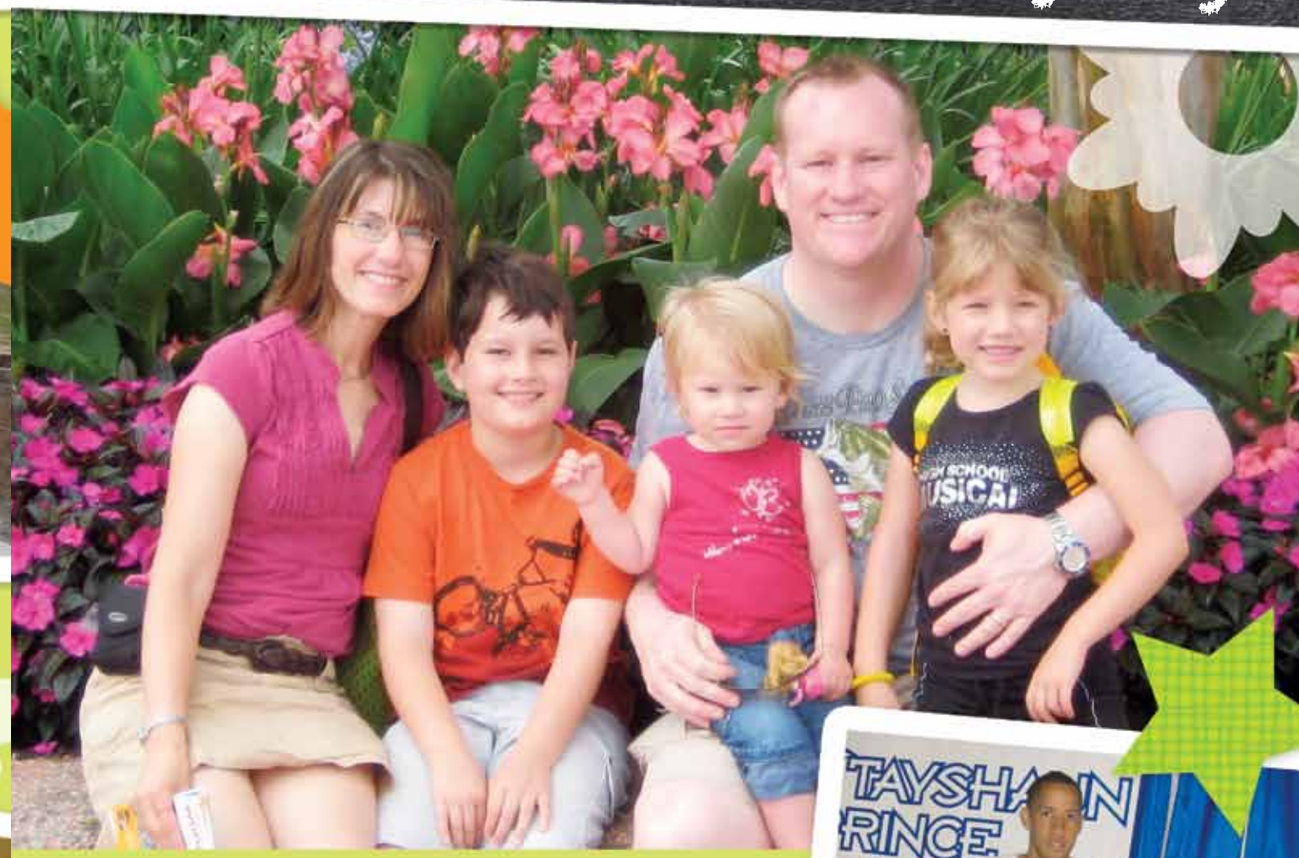
Working Hard to Be the Best!

I played soccer for two years before I got sick, and then I was back playing again. I focused on scoring a goal for my team! My mom asked me how I can keep going when I don't feel well. I told her, "Sometimes, I have to tell myself to do it. That's how."

When I am in high school, I am going to be the best basketball player in high school. If I am not the best basketball player, I will work to be it. I am going to be a funny one, too.



Making the Most of Every Day



Me and my family had fun at Disney World! It rained a record 23" the week we were there, but we still had fun!

I got the chance to meet Tayshaun Prince, a famous NBA basketball player. My mom didn't think I would want to go because I wasn't feeling well after treatments, but I was excited at the chance to meet him. So we went. He was really nice and kind of quiet like me. Me and my dad watched videos of his highlights, and he is an awesome basketball player!

Dear Lord,
Thank You for the BEAUTIFUL day. Please help me have a great day. In Jesus' Name, Amen

I'm Just a Regular Kid With My Friends...

in my neighborhood...

in my school...

in my church...

Keep Looking Up!

"I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14

I hope seeing me make it through a lot of hard things helps you to know you can do it, too. I hope that you like my story. We really can do big things!

Love,
Nate

"As his Ronald McDonald House family, we are so blessed for having the privilege of knowing and loving Nate. His contagious zest for life, unwavering faith, and beautiful soul full of compassion has touched us all."

- Amy Anders, House Operations Coordinator, Outreach & Communications Coordinator, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Nashville
  Kaye Slater, House Manager, Ronald McDonald House Charities of Nashville

In "Nate's Story: What It's Like to Have Leukemia," Nate Richard records his life through pictures after he was diagnosed at 5 years old with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common form of childhood cancer. Nate shares what it is like to be in the hospital, get chemotherapy treatments, and lose your hair. He offers encouragement that there can still be good days in spite of the difficulties of battling cancer. Nate's personality shines through as he shares his experiences and gives a real-life view of what a child with cancer may experience. It is Nate's wish that sharing his story will help other children like him who have to face a serious illness.

How to Contribute

a Gift Pack to a Child with Cancer

If you are interested in making a donation or want more information, you may contact us at **NatesWish07@gmail.com** or visit our website at **www.NatesWish.com**. All donations for "NATE'S WISH" are tax-deductible.

Thank you for your generosity. Your investment in the life of a child dealing with a serious illness makes a lasting difference!

The "Gift" Pack

Created to offer encouragement and distraction to children newly diagnosed with cancer, Nate's Wish Packs include "Nate's Story: What It's Like To Have Leukemia" along with other helpful reading materials and gifts to help get through difficult treatment days.