

Corbin
-written by Corbin's mom, Larissa

On May 20th, 2017, I can remember what I was wearing and what I was watching on T.V. It was the night my husband, Jamie, took our seven year-old son, Corbin, to the ER for extreme constipation. He called me at 2am hysterical. There was a mass found in Corbin's abdomen during the ultrasound. I can't bear to watch the show I was watching ever again. I remember every second of the drive to the hospital that night. I still flashback to those moments on that same stretch of road. After a sleepless night of tests and scans, in the early morning hours, a calm voice was explaining in a dark hospital room that Corbin had a kidney tumor. Wilms tumor. Cancer. Stage 4. It had spread to his lungs and his liver. Only bits and pieces of the information were being processed. It took days and weeks for it to all sink in. We were looking at nearly a year of intense chemotherapy and radiation. We went through anger, denial, fear, depression, all of it.

Everything happened so fast after the surgery to have his kidney and the tumor removed. He arrived in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit on a ventilator, with a port in his chest, and an incision from his ribs to his bellybutton. He had so many drugs pumping into him, they needed two poles to hold all the machines. He had a wound vac placed and then a feeding tube, which stayed for six months. His hair fell out during his 25 radiation treatments, all of which he was put under general anesthesia for. We watched the first time they administered chemo, dressed in special gowns, with masks and gloves, explaining the special caution we need to take after he urinates, and how to keep the bathroom from contamination. We needed to be so careful with this poison that they pumped into his little body. His little body, that had not even had the chance to heal from major surgery yet. He had so many rounds of chemo, sometimes five days a week, all day. So many blood and platelet transfusions that I lost track. We needed a notebook at home just so we could keep track of all the drugs and the times and doses to give. We became overnight and all day nurses, administering the drugs through his feeding tube. He started night terrors and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Our own PTSD didn't really rear its head until Corbin completed his treatments this past February.

Childhood cancer is not rare. There are far too many children in and out of the outpatient pediatric oncology clinic right here in the Lehigh Valley. Just since this past January, over 20 children have been diagnosed in the Lehigh Valley. The Pediatric Cancer Foundation of the Lehigh Valley has been our rock this past year. They were there with overnight necessities when the hospital was our home, with gas cards and cafeteria cards, with game tickets, super heroes, and parties. They helped me connect to other parents that knew what we were going through. They let all of my children forget everything and enjoy summer camp. They gave us fun during a time when there was only pain. Everything that PCFLV does is so helpful to bring back some normalcy in the lives of the children and their families. If you want to help families right here in your community, donate to the PCFLV, or donate your time. If you can't do that, please donate blood or platelets. Spread awareness. There are many ways to help.

