

ST. JUDE

inspire



WINTER 2024

Playful Spirit

After 15 months of treatment at St. Jude, Kenadie is as “sassy” as ever.

Kids helping kids

Young supporters have big hearts for St. Jude

New discovery

Advances in soft tissue cancer research offer hope for kids like Calvin

From Memphis to Peoria

Runners from Illinois make the annual trek to benefit St. Jude

Home away from home

Micah was one of the first St. Jude patients to enjoy the outdoor play area at The Domino's Village, the newest patient housing facility at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®.

The Domino's Village, funded by long-time partner Domino's as part of a 10-year, historic \$100 million commitment to St. Jude, has 140 furnished units, including one-bedroom suites and two- and three-bedroom apartments. The housing facility includes an arts and crafts room, recreation room, toddler room and an outdoor playground with accessible playground equipment, outdoor grills and a massive LED movie screen for families to enjoy.

St. Jude treats patients from every state and countries around the globe and provides free housing for patients who need treatment requiring an overnight stay.



You can help ensure patients like Micah keep jumping and playing.
stjude.org/hope



I have been blessed to have the mission of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital as part of my life for most of my life.

My father was among the first Americans of Lebanese descent Danny Thomas asked to help realize his bold vision.

That’s my foothold into the St. Jude mission that has become a global movement. I grew up with it and, as a child and teen, raised money for the cause, going door to door collecting coins. Today, I’m proud to serve this mission as President and CEO of ALSAC.

And I’m proud that so many young people still choose to serve this mission, generously giving of the most valuable asset at their age: their time.

That they choose to give back in whatever way they can means the world to all of us at ALSAC and to kids and families around the world who depend on the research from St. Jude for a second chance at life.

Their efforts help kids like Kenadie, who was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma just after her eighth birthday.

Or Calvin who, at 10 years old, underwent chemotherapy, photon radiation and proton radiation at St. Jude for stage IV

rhabdomyosarcoma, a cancer of the soft tissue.

And Mayela. She spent what would have been her first day of first grade in treatment for leukemia at St. Jude, 1,800 miles from her home in Puerto Rico.

The young, creative supporters who you’ll read about in this issue, like Arsh and Addy and brothers Amir and Damian – kids helping kids – mean our mission is in good hands for the next six decades and beyond. And I have no doubt their good work will inspire future generations to help neighbors in need as well.

As Sawyer and his peers prove, and you’ll read in his story, a “ripple effect” occurs when anyone, but especially children, commit with their hearts and souls to give back and make a difference in the world.

Richard C. Shadyac Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer, ALSAC

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You can help ensure families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. Donate today at stjude.org/hope



FROM

MEMPHIS

TO PEORIA

Runners from Illinois make the annual trek to benefit St. Jude.

By **Linda A. Moore** - ALSAC

One day in the summer of 1989, Kevin Pautler, still stunned and processing the awful news that his young son had cancer, sat down at a table in the cafeteria of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®. Surprised, he saw two guys from his hometown in Illinois. They were in Memphis for the annual St. Jude Memphis to Peoria Run, a relay established in 1982 to raise money for the research hospital. Kevin had never heard of it.

Fast forward to 2023 and he's now in his 31st year as a relay runner.

Back in 1989, Kevin's son, Dusty, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL). He was 12 when he passed away in 1991. Survival rates for his cancer were significantly lower then.

Today, about 94 percent of ALL patients survive. And if Dusty were diagnosed today, Kevin believes his son would be one of them.

"We're in it because we don't want other parents to go through it. I also have a vendetta against the disease. So, I'm here to get the disease that got my son," he said.

Each year, runners caravan down from Peoria, Illinois, to Memphis and the St. Jude campus, where the run begins. Over the course of four days, the relay travels 465 miles back to Peoria. Kevin can't handle the long distances anymore, but he puts in his share of miles.

Kevin jokes that he doesn't train as often as he used to, but when he does, he's almost always alone. Except for Dusty.

"It is my time with him. Life goes on, but it's always with you. Your life changes forever," he said. "So, it's my time when I'm running that I can chat with him about how things are going."

Kevin runs the relay with his daughter, Jeri. Her mom, Joy, was pregnant with Jeri when Dusty was diagnosed. Jeri was only a year old when he passed.

"So, while I never really have a memory of him, I hear stories. Everyone tells me that I actually am a lot like him in many ways," Jeri said. "I know he's watching over me and he's very, very proud of us."

The Pautlers are from the tiny Dunlap community in Peoria County, Illinois. So is Dr. Beth Stewart, a pediatric oncologist and physician scientist at St. Jude, where she's been for 13 years. She's run the relay for 20 years.



**We're in it because
we don't want
other parents to go
through it.**

– Kevin Pautler,
bereaved St. Jude dad

Dr. Stewart was a few years younger than Dusty and their families were great friends. "I grew up knowing about St. Jude through the Pautler family. Our families are really good friends. Dusty and I were in the same grade school," Dr. Stewart explained before she left Memphis as part of last year's relay.

As a child, she would watch Kevin and the other runners as they returned to town. She babysat Jeri while watching the telethon that follows the run.

"I grew up hearing about Dusty and his experience and their family's experience down here at the

hospital and just how much Dusty fell in love with his doctors and nurses," Dr. Stewart said.

It was Dusty's dream to be a doctor at St. Jude.

"Somehow, even at that young age, it got laid on my heart that his dream sort of morphed into mine," Dr. Stewart said.

Every day she wears a St. Jude pendant engraved with Dusty's name, a gift from the Pautler family when she graduated from medical school.

Every day she sees first-hand how donor dollars support the St. Jude mission.

Families will never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. When donors give to St. Jude, they help give children with cancer around the world the chance to live their best lives.

Run supporters have donated more than \$25 million to St. Jude.

The Pautlers no longer live in the Peoria area. Kevin and Joy have retired to Florida. Jeri lives in Chicago. But each year, the father and daughter end the St. Jude Memphis to Peoria Run the same way, with a special tribute to Dusty.

They run side by side – just the two of them. As they reach Peoria, the streets are lined with people who remember Dusty. Some are family members or kids who went to school with him. Some are St. Jude patients.

They cheer on Kevin and Jeri. And Kevin has named this stretch of the Memphis to Peoria route, "Dusty's Run."

PLAYFUL SPIRIT

After 15 months of treatment at St. Jude, Kenadie is as sassy as ever.

By **Linda A. Moore** - ALSAC

Arearn laughs as her youngest child, 9-year-old Kenadie, resolutely proclaims that she is her mother's favorite.

Arearn laughs a lot now, watching Kenadie dance and announce that she's an artist (with 100 canvases at home) or say that one of her favorite things to do is to bug her mother. To the staff at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, Kenadie is known as Miss Sassy.

Kenadie is full of spirit and likes things done in a certain way, her mom said. She will give you a "death stare" when something must happen that she doesn't like but can't avoid.

She doesn't like needles or having to swallow pills. She wanted her own pillows and her own blankets until she decided she liked the warmed hospital blankets better. And sometimes she didn't like the food, so they'd order out.

She's still sassy. Fifteen months of cancer treatments couldn't touch Kenadie at her core. For that, Arearn is grateful to God and to St. Jude.

Kenadie was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma in April of 2022, less than a month after her eighth birthday. It wasn't her first health complication.

When Kenadie was 2, doctors discovered her subclavian artery, a large artery that supplies oxygen-rich blood to the upper body, was going the wrong way around her heart. It was something she was born with. A vascular ring repair was done when she was 6 to correct it.

A few weeks before her cancer diagnosis, Kenadie woke her mother in the middle of the night. She felt sick and was vomiting.

The next day it happened again. Because of Kenadie's previous health challenges, Arearn was worried. She and her husband decided to take her to the emergency room at a Tennessee children's hospital.

There, Arearn was told Kenadie likely had a stomach bug

and a pulled muscle. They were sent home.

A couple of days later, the hospital asked them to bring Kenadie back in as soon as possible. They had seen a mass in one of her scans. They reached out to St. Jude and the following day, Kenadie was admitted.

At St. Jude, doctors compared her new scans with the old scans and saw that the mass was there a year ago. It had doubled in size and was now about 18 inches long.

"It had a year to grow, and we had no idea," Arearn said. The tumor was around Kenadie's adrenal gland and her kidney but had not spread to other organs.

"God just had his hand around her," Arearn said.

Early radiation therapy didn't shrink the tumor.



So, Kenadie underwent surgery and about 95% of the tumor was removed. Surgery was followed by chemotherapy, a stem cell transplant and more radiation.

It took over a year, but Kenadie was cancer-free.

“The care they took with Kenadie, I don’t care if it was a time when we had to drive in the middle of the night when she was running a fever or if she was impatient with treatment, it was 110 percent that they gave every time,” Arearn said.

Families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live.

Arearn is grateful to St. Jude and to donors.

“Because, for my family, for Kenadie to get treatment here without having to pay anything was a huge help,” she said. “That was stress we didn’t have to worry about.”

Arearn is a regular donor now and since Kenadie’s diagnosis, other family members have become monthly donors, too.

Kenadie describes being in the hospital as both good and bad.

“The bad part about it is I want to go home. And the good part about it was I get to spend time with the nurses,” she said, happily recalling a long list of favorites.

“What got me through it was probably Kenadie’s strength. I was there every step of the way, every

treatment, every appointment. And just seeing her go through it, that’s what got me through it,” Arearn said.

Kenadie is back home now with her 16-year-old sister and 12-year-old brother. She’s in fourth grade and is being homeschooled.

As much as she’d like to wrap her up, hold her tight and to keep her close, Arearn knows she has to let Kenadie go. For fifth grade next year, she’s going back to in-person school.

”
*For my family,
for Kenadie to get
treatment here
without having to
pay anything was
a huge help.*

– Arearn, Kenadie’s mom



St. Jude patient Kenadie and her mom, Arearn, show off their playful spirits in September 2023 (left). The two enjoy a quiet moment reading together (above) in a resting nook in the Family Commons area at St. Jude in January 2023.

Meanwhile, Kenadie wants to do gymnastics, cheer and act.

Because of St. Jude, Arearn thinks about what she wants for Kenadie in the future.

“To be a good person in society, to go for her dreams whatever that may be. She says she wants to be a doctor. I want her to go for it if that’s what she wants to do,” Arearn said.

Now that cancer treatments have ended, Kenadie will continue with follow-up visits and will eventually come back annually.

And for any other little girls who might also have cancer, Kenadie has words of encouragement.

“You can do it,” Kenadie said. “You’ve got this. You’re strong.”



Your support helps ensure families like Kenadie’s never receive a bill for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. Please consider giving an additional gift at stjude.org/hope

Time to Dream Again

Mom fought for her own child with cancer and now fights for other kids through Chilean foundation and St. Jude collaboration.

By **Kristina Goetz** - ALSAC

Alejandra Mendez remembers every detail. Her son Pablo's blue hat, his yellow boots, teetering as he balanced on the orange line leading to the hospital admissions department.

It was December 11, 2000, and the hospital walls in Boston were decorated with reindeer. A jolly Santa handed out stuffed animals, and Christmas music seemed ever-present.

Alejandra, in her late 20s at the time, hated all of it, but especially the embroidered word she read on the kindly doctor's white coat: Oncologist. Her only child, just 2, stared up at her with bright blue eyes.

Pablo had clear cell sarcoma of the kidney, a rare and aggressive cancer. The tumor on his right kidney was the size of a melon. The tumor and the kidney would have to be removed.

Pablo's cancer was stage IV. What followed was nearly a year of aggressive chemotherapy and radiation.

Finally, after months of treatment, Pablo was in remission.

'Totally broken'

After treatment, the family returned to Chile. The family had

been in Boston so Alejandra's husband, Pablo Allard, could study for his master's degree in urban planning. Back at home, Alejandra returned to her university job and got pregnant with her second son, Max. But several months after Max was born, Pablo, 4, started having bad headaches.

It was January 2004, summertime in Chile, and Alejandra thought maybe he was dehydrated. But MRI results were devastating — Pablo had a tumor attached to the back of his brain. The cancer was back.

Alejandra took Pablo back to Boston, but there was little hope he would live.

"This time it was harder because Max was in Chile," Alejandra said. "I left Max behind, and I was totally broken. And we started again."

Pablo underwent surgery and more rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. After four or five months, Alejandra's mother brought Max to the United States so the family could be together.

In May of that year, doctors decided Pablo needed an autologous stem cell transplant, one that used his own cells.

Then, in August, doctors decided Pablo needed a second stem cell transplant.

Astoundingly, he survived.

A mother knows

Back home in Chile, Alejandra was determined not to let cancer break her. She and her husband decided to have a third baby. She was hoping for a girl, but Antonio arrived, a healthy boy.

Then, in 2006, it happened. A yearly checkup showed a tumor in Pablo's thyroid.

Back to Boston the family went for another surgery to remove the thyroid.

But there was something different about the trip back home.

"I knew he was cured," she said.

Alejandra realized how privileged she was to take Pablo to the United States for treatment.

She began volunteering at Fundación Nuestros Hijos (Our Children Foundation), an organization dedicated to supporting disadvantaged children with cancer

”

Every single day when I look at Pablo or when he calls, I'm so grateful that he's here.

– Alejandra Mendez,
mom and board member of
Fundación Nuestros Hijos

in Chile. Modeled after St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, it was created in 1991 by parents whose children had been treated at St. Jude.

Today, she's a board member of the foundation, which is part of the St. Jude Global Alliance, an international collaboration that brings together foundations and healthcare institutions dedicated to the shared vision of improving access to quality healthcare and increasing survival rates for children with cancer and other catastrophic diseases worldwide.

No need for words

For 13 years, Alejandra and her family lived in the shadow of cancer's possible return. But they were happy and enjoyed each other.

Then, in 2019, Pablo started having neck pain. Fortuitously, the family was in Boston again because Pablo Sr. was teaching at his old university for a semester. Imaging showed a tumor on the C1 vertebra.

But it was not cancer, only a benign tumor, and surgery was a success.

Pablo still lives with flashes of his treatment, he said. But he also remembers his family, especially his mother, the pillar of support.

"Without her, I wouldn't be alive," he said.

The cancer has been gone so long now that Alejandra has started to think about the future, a day when her son might get married. She hasn't let go of the worry, but she has begun to allow herself to dream.

"Every single day when I look at Pablo or when he calls, I'm so grateful that he's here," she said.

For more information about Fundación Nuestros Hijos, visit <https://fnh.cl/>

It is estimated that more than 400,000 children worldwide develop cancer every year, and nearly half of them are never diagnosed. In many low- and middle-income countries, 4 in 5 children won't survive cancer, largely due to the lack of access to quality care. St. Jude Children's Research Hospital believes children all over the world deserve the same chance at survival and is working with healthcare institutions and foundations across the globe to help make that dream a reality.



Family Giving

The Davises build generosity into their daily lives through St. Jude.

By **Bethany Horton** - ALSAC

Tameika and Marcel Davis lived parallel lives before they met. Both were raised in Jamaica and followed opportunity to the U.S. Both went into the medical field – Marcel a registered nurse and Tameika a nurse practitioner. And both eventually settled near family in Florida where their paths finally crossed.

Ambitious and hardworking, Tameika and Marcel set out to build a life together rooted in helping others. Skilled caregivers, the young couple opened a pair of assisted living facilities and a real estate company, and their success allowed them to commit to monthly donations to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®.

For the Davis family, the St. Jude Partners In Hope program is a perfect fit because it allows them to build generosity into their daily lives. "With saying we are committed to a certain thing; we just want to work toward it," Tameika said. "Being able to give to St. Jude is us extending who we are ... I feel as though we are still really being nurses as we give to St. Jude."

Monthly sustaining donors like Tameika and Marcel allow St. Jude to take care of children today and invest in research to develop more cures and better treatments for childhood cancer and other life-threatening diseases.

As a child in Jamaica, Marcel attended a primary school also named after Saint Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes. Years later, living in Chicago, he saw a late-night infomercial for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Hearing the stories of the very ill children and families who found hope when they didn't think there was any to be found, Marcel felt compelled to become a supporter right then and there.

As he began building a life with Tameika, they made philanthropy a priority – and Marcel's passion for St. Jude was contagious. Now, as parents of two young children, Jendayi and Kaleb, the call to give is even stronger. "It's a blessing to

have healthy children, but I can imagine the pain of a parent whose child is diagnosed with something, and they don't even know where to start," Tameika said.

"It is just amazing to us to be able to give ahead of time so parents can be relieved of that pressure."

– Tameika Davis, St. Jude supporter



They appreciate knowing supporters help ensure families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. "It is just amazing to us to be able to give ahead of time so parents can be relieved of that pressure," Tameika said.

Looking for additional ways to support the mission of St. Jude and its commitment to healthcare equity, Marcel and Tameika donated to St. Jude as part of a campaign to honor Dr. Rudolph Jackson. Dr. Jackson, one of the first Black doctors at St. Jude, was a groundbreaking figure in the research and treatment of sickle cell disease. His work laid the foundation for medical advancements that continue to save lives all over the world. Supporting this campaign helped Marcel and Tameika feel even more connected to the vital work of St. Jude.

Monthly updates for Partners In Hope members motivate the Davis family to keep moving forward. "It's inspiring to feel like we are part of the mission," Marcel said. "It's motivating to see good is still happening. We can tie into something that's a worthy cause ... that's

expansive ... that's worldwide. We feel like we are part of the mission – part of the team."

Partners In Hope are who Tameika and Marcel are and who they are raising their children to be. "As we give, it's not just us giving, but our children as well," Tameika said. "Jendayi is giving. Kaleb is giving. That's the beauty of giving. As we push them forward, we help the generation behind us."

The charismatic and humble couple have no plans of stopping. "It's a privilege for us to give and to be a part of this. To watch it grow and move forward," Marcel said. "The financial is replaceable, but life is not replaceable. So, if it's just financial resources on our part, that's just a small part for us to do."



You help St. Jude focus on what matters most – saving kids. Donate today at stjude.org/hope

A NEW START

Mayela is back in Puerto Rico after treatment at St. Jude.

By **Monsy Alvarado** - ALSAC



Mayela rose early one recent August morning and put on her school uniform. She was excited to be going back to school. She was starting sixth grade, and she was happy to see her friends again. She was looking forward to class projects and playing with friends at recess.

This was her last year before middle school and all the angst that comes with that. But all that's next year.

This year, as she put on her colorful bookbag filled with new school supplies, she also felt a bit nervous. She was assigned a new teacher this year – one she'd never met. Her parents, Karen and Angel, empathized with their daughter's mixed emotions, but they were grateful for the normalcy. After all, most of Mayela's elementary school experience had been anything but typical.

Five years earlier, in 2018, Mayela was treated for leukemia at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, hundreds of miles from their home in Puerto Rico. That year, there was no back-to-school shopping or excitement about seeing friends.

They just wanted their little girl to live.

"It's such a joy to take your child to their first day of school, to meet their teachers, to see them walk away with their bookbag and lunch bag, and this was totally different," Karen recalled.

Instead, Mayela's first day of first grade was in a hospital room after receiving a bone marrow transplant. A Spanish-speaking

teacher provided by St. Jude sat at Mayela's bedside. They reviewed lessons while Mayela was connected to an IV with her baby doll beside her.

Mayela was enrolled in a school program, now called The St. Jude Imagine Academy by Chili's. The teachers at St. Jude provide individualized instruction for patients in grades K-12 who are at St. Jude for an extended period.



This place just has so many happy memories for her, and the people here are so good to her.

– Karen, *Mayela's mom*

"Thank God for the educational program offered at St. Jude because Mayela was able to continue to take classes and be in step with her classmates back home," her mom said.

Busy days

Mayela, who is always smiling, does not remember the classes she took at St. Jude, although she does remember her teacher, who she visits when she returns for annual checkups. She prefers to talk about what is ahead and her daily activities

at home located on the Caribbean coast of Puerto Rico. She recently celebrated her 11th birthday and returned from "the best trip" of her life in the Dominican Republic, where she got to swim with dolphins, splash around on a water slide and create lasting memories with her mom and dad.

"I'm happy," said Mayela, who aspires to be an interior designer. "I have great parents who support me in all I do, and physically I am doing really well. I have energy and I do not feel tired, and I am always active."

As she sat recently in her bedroom, where the walls are painted light pink and lilac, Mayela talked about her hobbies and life after treatment at St. Jude.

She swims regularly and is working to improve her aim in air gun shooting. She is following in the footsteps of one of her older cousins who has excelled in the sport.

Mayela has also become a small business owner. She makes colorful bracelets with hearts, faces and other shapes, and creates her own soaps, with a variety of scents like lavender, oatmeal and honey. "I started to sell them at school and then to neighbors, then to my friends and then to my friends' parents until everyone learned about it," she said.

A new start

When Mayela was 5 years old, she was full of energy and eager to play and try new things. She enjoyed dancing, singing and playing with her cousins. At her dad's birthday party in 2018, her parents noticed



First days of school, first communion, everything that Mayela does reminds us how blessed we are.

– Karen, Mayela’s mom

she seemed lethargic, and she asked to go to bed early.

They took her to the doctor and Mayela was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, or AML. In AML, white blood cells, produced in bone marrow, are abnormal and do not become healthy cells. These abnormal cells crowd out the normal ones, so the patient’s body has a harder time fighting off infection.

Only about 500 children are found to have AML in the U.S. each year. “It was heartbreaking news,” Angel recalled. “I like to solve everything, but at that moment it was not in my hands. I could not resolve this situation for my daughter.”

Doctors in Puerto Rico referred Mayela to St. Jude.

“The most difficult thing was to know that there was no treatment for Mayela on our island. For me, it was difficult because I had never lived anywhere else, and we had to, like they say, cross the pond to be able to seek healing,” Karen said.



Photos hung on string are displayed in Mayela’s room, including images from her time in treatment at St. Jude.

Even though they had to leave their home, Karen and Angel were grateful they did not receive a bill from St. Jude for their daughter’s treatment. No family ever receives a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live.

Mayela was treated with chemotherapy and radiation therapy before she received a bone marrow transplant. Her father was her donor.

“I was full of joy and emotion, and grateful for St. Jude because without St. Jude that donation would not be possible,” Angel said.

The family was at St. Jude for six months before Mayela was able to return home. She completed first grade by being homeschooled in Puerto Rico as she continued to recover.

Mayela went back to school in the summer of 2019 to start second grade. She had to wear a mask that she changed a few times during the day and carried an extra bag to

carry sanitizing wipes and alcohol. And then in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Mayela to take classes virtually. She remained at home, taking classes for more than a year, and then went on a hybrid schedule. In 2022, she returned to school to full-time, in-person instruction, but with precautions.

“For us, it was a joy that she returned to classes because here at home she missed many activities and socializing with her friends,” her mother said.

As Mayela begins her last year as an elementary school student before she heads to middle school, her mother and father revel in each milestone.

“First days of school, first communion, everything that Mayela does reminds us how blessed we are,” her mom said.



Your donation can help ensure patients like Mayela get to keep making more memories.
stjude.org/hope

You help St. Jude focus on what matters most – saving kids.

St. Jude patient
Natalie

Thank you for being a monthly donor.

Every St. Jude patient deserves a chance to live their best life and celebrate every moment. Because the majority of St. Jude funding comes from generous donors like you, we have the freedom to focus on what matters most – saving kids regardless of their financial situation. Visit stjude.org/hope to make an additional one-time gift this month and help give more kids like Natalie the chance they deserve.



Scan the QR code to visit stjude.org/hope and make an additional one-time gift today for an even bigger impact.



PROMISING

Lead for Researchers

St. Jude study discovers way to keep soft tissue cancer from returning.

By **Ruma Kumar** - ALSAC

The first signs of Calvin's cancer emerged after a family bike ride one summer. His mother, Tiffany, noticed a bump on his back and his right leg was swollen. A CT scan and biopsy found stage IV rhabdomyosarcoma, a cancer of the soft tissue.

Calvin was 10 and had tumor growth in multiple places, including his pelvis, hip, stomach and lung. Doctors in Nebraska referred the family to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, more than 900 miles from their hometown.

At St. Jude, Calvin underwent nearly 18 months of treatment that included chemotherapy, photon radiation and proton radiation. It was a tough protocol, but successful. He returned home, cancer-free, in December 2019 wishing for snow – and got it.

But just months later, in the summer of 2020, scans revealed Calvin's cancer had returned.

It was a devastating setback – the kind that doctors and scientists at St. Jude are working hard to prevent.

Cancer recurrence like Calvin's is a major barrier to improving outcomes in children with solid tumors. It was the driving force behind a recent study led by doctors and scientists at St. Jude that identified the rare cells that survive conventional treatment and cause relapse in patients with a subtype of rhabdomyosarcoma.

"I think that every oncologist has had a patient who responded great to therapy, only to have their cancer return months or years later. It's a heartbreaking experience," said Anand Patel, MD, PhD, an assistant member, St. Jude faculty with the Department of Oncology at St. Jude and an author of the recent study.

The study is a result of intensive ongoing efforts at St. Jude to develop ways to more effectively kill those few cells that remain after treatment to improve survival for the roughly 400 children who are diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma each year in the United States.

"Prior to this study, we didn't know how some cells survive and continue to grow after treatment,"

said Michael Dyer, PhD, the corresponding author of the study and co-founder of the Childhood Solid Tumor Network at St. Jude. He called the results of the study published last spring "exciting and impactful."

Revolutionary science

In that study, St. Jude doctors and scientists used new single-cell sequencing technologies, which have revolutionized cancer biology over the last five years. These new techniques allowed researchers to study individual cells within a tumor and gave the team an unprecedented amount of information about how tumors are structured, Patel said.

"We, as a field, have struggled to find safe and effective therapies for children with high-risk solid tumors, particularly sarcomas," Patel said.

As a result, therapy and outcomes for these children haven't significantly changed in over 30 years, he said.

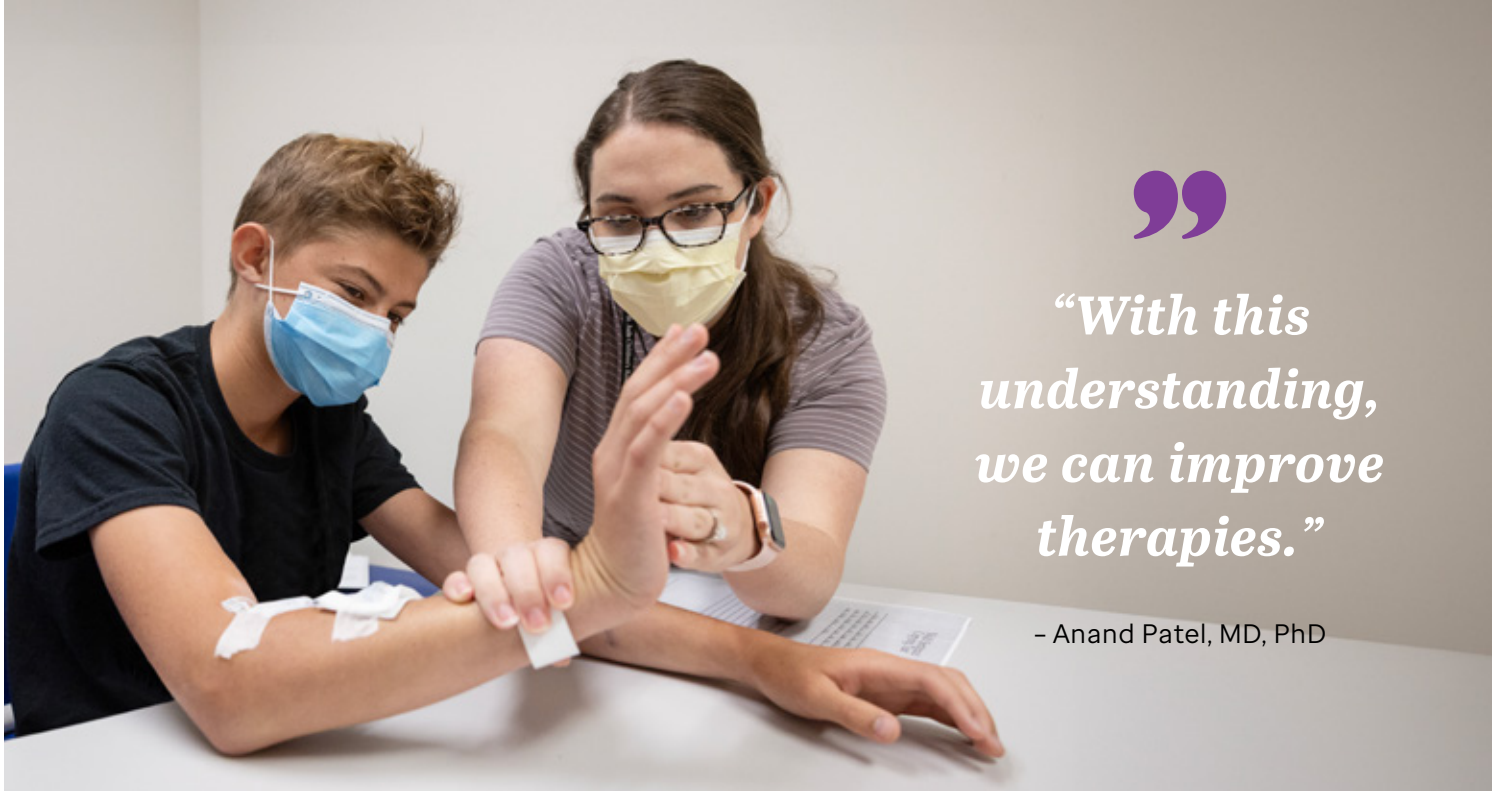
"We need new strategies to help these children. I hope that our work can point towards a new approach," Patel said.

Calvin pictured at St. Jude in December 2019.





St. Jude patient Calvin (left) and his family walk the halls of St. Jude during one of his regular checkups in July 2023. Patients regularly return to St. Jude for checkups and specialized therapies (top, right).



“With this understanding, we can improve therapies.”

– Anand Patel, MD, PhD

Patel and his colleagues found three different types of cells that mimic different stages of muscle development. Scientists then used experimental models generated from tissue samples of 18 rhabdomyosarcoma patients to start charting what happens to tumor cells as they are exposed to chemotherapy.

They found one of the three cell types was resistant to chemotherapy, and these cells seemed to have the same unique patterns of signaling activity. So, Patel and his team repurposed drugs often used for lung cancer and combined them with traditional chemotherapy for rhabdomyosarcoma. That innovative combination killed the cells that caused recurrence of the soft tissue cancer, a promising lead that is changing the way doctors approach cancer treatment.

“Our study shows that, with the right combination of patient samples, experimental models and technology, we can understand what happened to these patients. With this understanding, we can improve therapies,” Patel said.

Broad implications

Dyer and Patel believe the recurrence of cancer due to a small amount of cancer cells that survive treatment is a common mechanism across solid tumors, so they are ramping up efforts to tackle this challenge more broadly.

Instead of just focusing on drugs that reduce the total size of the tumor, doctors and researchers also need to consider any residual cells that may survive treatment, Dyer said.

“We call this new approach ‘total clonal therapy’ because it focuses on eliminating all the clones of cells with particular emphasis on the rare clones that we previously didn’t know were the culprits leading to disease recurrence,” he said.

Research like this provides hope to patients like Calvin, who is now 14 and thriving after his relapse two years ago. Last summer he was in Orlando, Florida, posing happily next to a 10.5-foot-tall, 12,000-pound Monster Jam® truck decorated with his art titled “Emoji Strong.”

Looking back at their cancer journey, Calvin’s mother, Tiffany, said, “We had no idea what we were up against. No idea. We just knew that St. Jude was the best place. They have the best doctors and had the best options.

“We didn’t hesitate to come,” she said, “At all.”



Research and treatment at St. Jude is possible because of generous supporters like you. Please consider making an additional one-time gift by visiting stjude.org/hope

The Cancer Dancer



Art by St. Jude patient CJ

St. Jude patient CJ (left) with best friend and fellow St. Jude supporter Addy.

Friends bring community together for a serious purpose – but don’t take them too seriously.

By **Betsy Taylor** - ALSAC

The first thing to know is Addy is the visionary and CJ is the artist, but sometimes they switch roles.

The second thing to know is the two best friends love to crack each other up.

The two Central Illinois sixth graders, who host Cancer Dancer, an annual fundraiser for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital®, say exactly what they mean. And they don’t sugarcoat it. They are giggly and chatty, and they crack themselves up.

Today, they’re sitting at the table in Addy’s sunroom. The purpose of this meeting: to create a logo for their fundraiser.

It’s April, their fundraiser for St. Jude doesn’t take place until September, and they are only 11 years old. But they already meet often – despite CJ’s weekly chemotherapy and how sick she sometimes feels – to discuss the particulars of their event and how to improve on last year.

Addy conceived the idea for the fundraiser in 2021, when CJ first got sick.

“Here’s my vision,” says Addy, and the self-professed non-artist draws two swipes of purple and gold,

forming a circular shape. In the center of that, she draws a cancer awareness ribbon and a heart. Within the heart, she draws what looks like ...

A blob? A chicken? Well, it’s supposed to be the St. Jude logo. “This is embarrassing. It’s so bad,” says Addy. They both laugh. “Be proud of your little monster, Addy.”

CJ tucks the drawing into her backpack so, later, she can take it home and create a refined version of the logo from Addy’s prototype.

They accomplish more during one business meeting than some adults do all day, which leads to a third thing to know about these two girls: They’re on a mission to help St. Jude kids everywhere through their Cancer Dancer fundraiser, and they say they won’t stop, to paraphrase St. Jude founder, Danny Thomas, until no child dies from cancer.

Addy the visionary

Addy’s grandmother saw something in the little girl: a restlessness, a drive, a desire to do good that, if channeled right, could move mountains.

So, in 2021, she gave her granddaughter a book about how to change the world. As the 9-year-old looked through the pages, her head filled with possibilities.

One suggestion was holding a party to support a good cause. Addy knew she could do that. From then on, it was as if she saw the world through a different lens than before, wondering: What can I do to help others? How can I change the world?

Not long after, she and her mother, Carla, went through a drive-thru to get her favorite – a mango smoothie. Those smoothies were expensive, Addy knew, and it wasn’t her birthday or any other special day.

Looking back, Addy said, that expensive smoothie was her first clue something was wrong. They got home and her mom broke the news: One of her best friends, CJ, had cancer and was traveling to St. Jude in Memphis for care.

“She told me, and it was like a full family cry fest,” said Addy. “I didn’t know what it was because I was in fourth grade, and I thought that cancer was just like the flu, but 10 times worse.” She also knew that sometimes people died from it.

But even as she cried for her friend, Addy’s ideas were beginning to spark.

“I wanted to help St. Jude because I know it’s more than just CJ who’s going through this,” said Addy. “I wanted to help all of those kids out. It meant a lot to me because I felt that I could do something good.”

“I wanted to help St. Jude because I know it’s more than just CJ who’s going through this.”

– Addy, St. Jude supporter



CJ and the double rainbow

CJ's grandmother, a nurse, often babysat CJ and her younger sister. In July 2021, she began to see things that troubled her. CJ had less energy for playing than before. Her normally pale skin looked beyond pale.

It could be anemia, she told CJ's mom, Natalie. Go to the doctor soon and get it checked out, she advised.

Natalie decided she probably would soon, keeping a watchful eye in the meantime. But when sunlight streaming through the kitchen window later caught CJ, showing her skin as a shade of yellow, every alarm bell in her mom's body rang.

If it hadn't been for CJ's grandmother's insight, would she have noticed? It's a question Natalie asks herself now.

At the doctor's, CJ underwent a series of blood tests, which led to a diagnosis of B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. It was "devastating, life-changing news," said Natalie.

Natalie's terror took a physical form: an ache in the throat and a sick feeling in the stomach that wouldn't go away. Not for three months.

Within 48 hours, CJ and her father were riding in an ambulance to St. Jude while Natalie drove her car behind it.

During the drive, Natalie saw a double rainbow hovering above her daughter's ambulance. She wasn't the kind of person who believed in signs, but this one had appeared to her at many significant moments in her life, such as the day CJ was born.

Amidst the terror of cancer, this double rainbow helped Natalie believe that hope lay ahead at St. Jude.

"The St. Jude medical team is the best of the best, and we felt that," said Natalie. "The relief this provided us was tangible and allowed us to have the hope we so desperately needed."

The shape of a heart

But the cancer was awful. The kind of thing you wouldn't wish on your worst enemy, much less a 9-year-old girl.

Within hours of arriving at St. Jude, CJ underwent a lumbar puncture with chemotherapy and a bone marrow biopsy. They also placed a port inside her chest to administer chemotherapy. "The first two weeks of cancer treatment resembled hell right here on earth," said Natalie.

CJ threw up. Constantly. She had a hard time even keeping her pills down to the point where her care team decided she needed a nasogastric (NG) tube. But the NG tube had been hard to

place, and finally CJ said she would swallow the pills on her own.

Her determination to fight through the nausea astounded Natalie, who described this moment with the NG tube as a turning point for CJ. She took CJ outside on the grounds of St. Jude in her wheelchair. CJ turned her face toward the sun and took a deep breath of fresh air.

"Our 9-year-old had felt true hardship, sickness and pain," said Natalie. "She was taking in this small, yet incredibly significant, moment of peace in a way most healthy kids never could. I wanted to sob and hug her, which was a normal yearning for me at that point."

As the days went by, their cell phone pinged with new messages from Addy.

Every day, Addy sent a photo of herself forming the shape of a heart with her hands, reminding CJ how much she was loved. She sent care packages. Not just one, but several of them that summer so CJ would always know something good was on its way.

She began to call and text details of a St. Jude fundraiser she was planning in CJ's honor. She already had a name for it: Cancer Dancer.

President in the making

A fundraising event could be anything, Addy realized. It could



be based around what you loved, and Addy loved dancing. She decided to create a choreographed dance in honor of CJ and lead a performance for her neighbors. Like her grandmother's book suggested, she would hold the St. Jude Cancer Dancer fundraiser in her own front yard.

She drew up a list of neighborhood girls for a fundraising committee and worked with her mom to decide on a date for the event. It would happen in September – Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

"The relief this provided us was tangible and allowed us to have the hope we so desperately needed."

– Natalie, CJ's mom

The event grew to include not only a choreographed dance, but also a bake sale, raffle and epic musical chairs game. A hair-cutting station would allow event-goers to donate their hair to make a wig.

It felt like almost every day she was texting or calling CJ to tell her about one more new part of their event.

"I can't believe Addy is doing all this," CJ told Natalie, but then pondered it some more. "Oh wait, yes, I can. It's Addy."

Addy told friends she wanted to be president of the United States someday, and people believed she could. Things that would normally seem impossible felt possible with Addy around.

For example: As the new school year started in 2021 and CJ was set to return home to continue chemo at her nearby St. Jude-affiliated clinic, Addy emailed the principal to ask if she and CJ could be placed in the same class so she could help ease CJ's transition. The principal agreed. Later, she went to

the principal and gave her a bracelet she'd ordered to support CJ. Soon, all the teachers and staff at school were wearing them.

In September 2021, as the inaugural Cancer Dancer fundraiser was taking place in Illinois, CJ's family was at St. Jude in Memphis, celebrating the good news.

CJ, now in remission and past the hardest phase of her chemotherapy, could finally get most of her treatments from home.

After three long months, they were coming home from St. Jude.

CJ the artist

CJ's walls at home are lined with her paintings, glimpses of the sunny way she sees the world.

There's a painting of the ambulance with the double rainbow above it that had given her mom so much hope. Addy has a nearly identical painting made by CJ in her bedroom.

There's a painting of her dog Jude, named after the research hospital, who cuddles with her on the sofa on days she's too sick from chemo to want to do much else. There are rainbows and constellations, animals and sunrises.

She focuses on the joy.

Leading up to the 2023 Cancer Dancer fundraiser, CJ created dozens of pieces of original art to sell at the event.

There was high demand for what CJ, who paints the world in vivid color, and her best friend Addy, who rallies the love and compassion of an entire community, have to offer.

All the neighbors came to Cancer Dancer, and the girls raised more than \$7,000 for St. Jude.



You can join CJ and Addy in supporting the St. Jude mission. Donate today at stjude.org/hope

PAINTING WITH A PASSION

Arsh Pal uses art to foster support for St. Jude.

By **Betsy Taylor** - ALSAC

Arsh Pal takes his own publicity calls. His mom, Divya, schedules them. She drifts in and out of the room as he talks on the speakerphone, chiming in if she needs to, but mostly tending to things around their house.

He's answering questions about two passions of his life: his paintings and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital® – just as he's done in dozens of interviews in the past year since winning a prestigious Diana Award for his charitable efforts.

Yes, that Diana, the Princess of Wales.

"I am very proud," said Divya. "He's using his skills and talent, and every little bit helps."

Nearby, in Arsh's art studio, an abstract painting sits on an easel to dry. It depicts a blazing orange sun offset against a dark blue sky with multiple layers of acrylic paint adding texture and mood. The day before, he and Divya had posted a video of him painting this scene on his Art By Arsh Facebook account with this caption: "Keep trying until you are happy with your art!! There is no right or wrong way." That's so Arsh: always passionate about art, always using it to encourage.

For the past five years, Arsh has been selling his artwork to help people everywhere, including St. Jude kids.

"I decided to donate the money to St. Jude because St. Jude is run with donations, and it helps kids with cancer, so that really stood out to me," he said.

His first donation to St. Jude, when he was 8, was for \$1,000.

He's donated \$1,000 to St. Jude every year since then, until this year when he decided to take part in something even bigger.

A shared humanity

Arsh shares the story of how, on his eighth birthday, his family gave him acrylic painting supplies and he became obsessed with the medium, producing painting after painting. He found endless inspiration in nature, and the world at large, including the downtown murals near his then-home in Dubuque, Iowa. The family has since moved to Chicago.

"One day, I had the idea of selling my paintings," said Arsh.

At around this time, Divya started bringing Arsh with her to her job as an occupational therapist at a nursing home, so he could help with the activities.

As Arsh was leading the residents in a painting tutorial, he noticed the attention he showed them as they created their paintings, of a simple landscape scene, brought them joy.

"We can all be learning the same, simple thing, like a mountain or a cloud, and the activity makes us happy," said Arsh.

The moment affected Arsh deeply, and something clicked: He realized the residents, though decades older, had the same desire for connection and fun that he did. But he also saw that sometimes they were hurting and lonely.

Heavy thoughts for an 8-year-old.

"That made me want to help someone," said Arsh. Someone else who was hurting. Remembering how he'd wanted to sell his paintings, he thought, "You're too young to earn money, but this is the way you can support someone, using your talents."



Families helping families

Arsh and Divya often paint side by side.

"She just teaches me different techniques, and I just learn with her," said Arsh.

Arsh often works on four canvases at once, so while one canvas dries, he can add a layer of primer or paint to another. He works mostly in acrylics but said he loves new mediums, such as resin.

"You can be free with art," said Arsh. "You can make mistakes and it doesn't matter because you can always just paint over it."

Some of his paintings are breathtakingly good.

Arsh has taken virtual marketing seminars to help him sell art. "A lot of things are behind it," said Arsh, "and it's a lot of work." He said he believes these skills will help him throughout life.

Divya has been his pressure-release valve, taking the harder things off his shoulders so he can focus on creating the art itself.

"She's kind of my manager, actually, because she's handling a lot of things. She created my Facebook account and Instagram page, and

she takes pictures. And she handles the meetings and emails and a lot of different things," Arsh said. "Without her, I really can't do it."



You can help ensure families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live. Donate today at stjude.org/hope

Amir and Damian believe in St. Jude, and they want you to believe, too.

By Karina Bland - ALSAC

BROTHERLY LOVE

Amir Carrizosa and his brother, Damian, love superhero movies, and they love how supporting St. Jude Children's Research Hospital® makes them feel. Like superheroes.

Not like the solo hero who goes it alone, but a team that works together to tackle villains for the good of the world.

The teenagers even wear super suits. Amir's suit is pink plaid with a raspberry vest over a patterned navy dress shirt and muted pink tie. Damian wears a red three-piece suit, with a buttoned vest over a white dress shirt and narrow black necktie.

They wear St. Jude logo pins on their lapels.

"When I put this suit on, I know I'm doing something big," Damian said. "Something bigger than me."

Amir, who's 18, and Damian, 17, started their volunteer work for St. Jude in 2021 when they joined the St. Jude Leadership Society, a program for teenagers to learn about leadership, service and how to make meaningful connections.

They live in Arizona, where their dad, David, is an entrepreneur and community activist who helps

Latinos grow their businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs to get started. He raised his sons with his belief that the success of communities depends on the wellbeing of each individual.

"If I have a Lamborghini and I'm going 200 miles an hour – that's fun – but it's a whole lot less fun if my friends fall behind," Amir said. "It's why we have to bring everyone along together. The whole community."

That's superhero talk.

'We are stronger together'

As part of the St. Jude Leadership Society, teenagers meet monthly with mentors, business and community leaders for sessions inspired by St. Jude founder Danny Thomas that focus on gratitude, grit, integrity, empathy and courage

Participants also explore career paths and hone communication skills. They use what they learn to come up with a fundraising strategy to benefit St. Jude.

The brothers teamed up. Just 17 months apart in age, they have always been close. They think alike, instinctively knowing what the other is going to say next. Amir is outgoing and chatty; Damian is more reserved, reeling in his brother when he lays it on too thick.

Getting to 'yes'

The brothers put together a pitch for St. Jude, using what Damian had learned in his English class about the three modes of persuasion: *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. Damian, who wants to be an investment banker, is taking college courses while in high school.

Ethos meant they'd need their audience's trust. From the time they were little, their dad taught them that first impressions are important.

"It does draw attention – this guy is wearing a suit – what is he proposing to us?" Damian said. Wearing the suits gave them credibility.

"We are true believers in the mission of St. Jude."

- Damian Carrizosa, St. Jude supporter

Logos meant appealing to donors' logic and assuring them that St. Jude was a good investment, citing statistics and talking about new research and treatments. For *pathos*, the emotional appeal, the brothers collected stories about the kids of St. Jude. Those stories hit hard.

"That message doesn't just get to them. It goes *through* them," Damian said. "It touches their hearts."

That first year, the brothers put on their suits and made their pitch to a local business chain, asking if customers could round up at the cash register to donate to St. Jude. The owners agreed, and the brothers collected \$700 in donations.

Amir also put out a donation jar at the ice cream parlor where he worked after school and collected \$400. At school, Amir put donation jars in his classrooms and asked students to donate, raising another \$100.

Being brave and asking

The next year, in 2022, the brothers made their pitch to the Hispanic Rotary Club of Phoenix. It was an intimidating group of Latino professors, business owners, lawyers, even a hospital CEO and a college provost.

They did the presentation in a combination of English and Spanish and showed a video in Spanish about St. Jude patient Lucas, who's from Chile. Diagnosed with a brain tumor at 3, he's now 11 and cancer-free.

"With your help, St. Jude can save more kids like Lucas," Damian told the group.

Because the brothers are Latino, they understand the struggles of the Hispanic community and the barriers they face.

"Even though we struggle," Amir said, "we have to help others who struggle as well." The brothers collected about \$1,200 in donations.

"That just shows what you can do," Amir said. He's studying electrical engineering in college, focusing on nanotechnology.

Sometimes, when things are wrong in the world, young people can feel helpless to do anything about it. Maybe they can't cure childhood cancer, Damian said, but they can support the doctors and researchers at St. Jude who are trying.

"We are true believers in the mission of St. Jude because in the battle against childhood cancer, St. Jude has increased the survivability rate from 20 percent the day they first opened to above 80 percent today," Damian said.

Amir talks about how St. Jude shares its discoveries, so every child saved at St. Jude means doctors and scientists worldwide can use that knowledge to save even more kids.

Damian chimes in how families never receive a bill from St. Jude for treatment, travel, housing or food – so they can focus on helping their child live.

"As St. Jude Founder Danny Thomas stated: 'No child should die in the dawn of life.' That's what we want, too," Amir said. "We want children to have a chance to grow up and become their own superhero."



MAKING A SPLASH

At 11 years old, Sawyer has raised thousands of dollars swimming for St. Jude

By **Betsy Taylor** - ALSAC

With his arm muscles straining and his legs burning, the swimmer feels like he has no strength left. There comes a moment during Sawyer Hansen's yearly swim for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital® when the 11-year-old from St. Petersburg, Florida, wants nothing more than to stop.

"It's really hard once I get to that 30-minute mark," said Sawyer, who's been swimming competitively since he was very young.

He's here at the North Shore Aquatic Complex to complete

his Sawyer Swims for St. Jude fundraiser, just as he's done for the past seven years. Sawyer's coach gives him a lane to himself, the countdown clock starts and he swims as many freestyle laps as he can for one hour.

"It's not fun staring at a black line at the bottom of the pool for an hour," said his mom, Rebecca. "Grinding it out is not that fun."

He could take a break. He could stop if he wanted to. No one would blame him because he's already done so much. Sawyer has raised more than \$70,000 for St. Jude

since he saw a commercial that changed his life.

But he won't stop, even when it's hard.

Sawyer keeps swimming for St. Jude kids.

An equal chance

Sawyer was sitting on the edge of his parents' bed one night when a St. Jude commercial came on TV. A little bald child appeared on the screen. The announcer explained that the child was sick, that St. Jude needed help.

"Those kids, they deserve a life like I have"

– Sawyer, St. Jude supporter

Sawyer looked alarmed. He turned to his parents. It was 2016, and he was only 5 years old. "Do kids really die from cancer?" he asked. His parents didn't respond for a moment, and finally his mom spoke.

"I hated giving him the answer, but we believe in being pretty darn honest with our kids. "She told him: "Yes."

He was quiet, but a couple days later, he asked more questions.

Sawyer didn't think cancer seemed fair. So, with the guidance of his parents, he created a fundraiser for St. Jude based on his talent for swimming.

"Those kids, they deserve a life like I have," said Sawyer, "and that's what just sparked me to do this. I just believe that everyone deserves an equal chance."

Impressed by Sawyer's vision, but feeling a little daunted, his parents had to decide how involved they wanted to be.

"I'm thinking, he's only 5 years old. How are we going to tackle this?" said Rebecca. "And shouldn't you be thinking of things a little less serious? But we had to embrace it, and how could we make this our mission?"

His parents created a St. Jude fundraising page for Sawyer and shared it through social networks. The Sawyer Swims for St. Jude fundraiser was born.

"It started off as, 'I want to raise \$500 and swim 100 lengths of the pool,'" said Sawyer's dad, Jay. "And he ended up that year at \$3,400 and swimming 100 lengths. As a 5-year-old."

This image – of a little boy on his solo mission to help other kids – made others in the community want to rally behind him. Even strangers donated.

"We were blown away," said Rebecca.

Ripple effect

Sawyer's family and friends stand by the pool, cheering him on and shaking posterboards with words of encouragement. He can hear them in short bursts when he comes up for air.

Some of them windmill their arms in overhead rotations, as though swimming laps for him. He can't see them, but knowing they're there gives him strength.

What happens when a child decides to make a splash?

A ripple effect, of course.

When a retired, local judge learned about Sawyer's fundraiser in 2019, the 88-year-old man felt inspired. He challenged Sawyer, then 7, to a swim-off for St. Jude. "The Judge and the Juvenile," they billed the one-time matchup.

The judge knew the 81-year age difference would create a media buzz.

It did. And, Sawyer won the challenge. But it was the kids at St. Jude who benefited.

His three siblings can't wait to hype Sawyer's swim every year.

"They're telling their teachers. They're telling their friends. They're his biggest cheerleaders," said Rebecca, who calls Sawyer's swimming event "our family mission."

Last year, when Sawyer was assigned to do his fifth-grade presentation on a cause important to him, he chose St. Jude. His classmates seemed amazed that he'd already done so much.

"The other kiddos were like, 'How can we do something big like this?' You could just see their eyes light up thinking, 'Wow, this is really impressive,'" said Rebecca.

Some of them will go on to help St. Jude, she said, or maybe their interests will lead them to support another cause.

Either way, the good in the world increases.

They don't stop

Sawyer's limbs feel incredibly heavy at the halfway mark. He's coming up for breath with every stroke. A swimmer wouldn't normally breathe with every stroke during a race, especially heading into a turn. But nobody races for 60 minutes. The typical race is less than two.

This moment of struggle defines him.

Sawyer trains with two-time Olympic medalist Bobby Finke for moments like this one. "The greatest swimmers are always looking for more to accomplish," said Finke. "They don't stop at

one goal, but keep setting higher standards for themselves."

He sees this drive in Sawyer.

Sawyer set a goal to raise \$15,000 for St. Jude this year and wound up raising more than \$18,000. He's promised to swim at least 5,200 yards during this year's Sawyer Swims for St. Jude event, not really knowing if he has it in him.

"I've had the honor of watching Sawyer grow up and always chasing times and, in this case, chasing charity for St. Jude," said Finke. "It is clear to me and the people around Sawyer that he doesn't just swim for himself, but also for his family and community around him."

Sawyer wants to attend the University of Michigan someday and become an Olympic champion, just like Finke. Beyond that, he wants to be a doctor, maybe even at St. Jude.

"While we were doing research, and he was putting together his [school] project, we stumbled upon the fact that there are residencies at St. Jude," said Rebecca.

"How cool would it be to see this come full circle? How wild?"

They made it through

When things seem hardest during his swim for St. Jude, Sawyer sees a vision of the children. He's swimming for that child he may never meet. The kid on the St. Jude commercial. And all the kids at St. Jude.

"Every single time, every single lap, I'm saying to myself, 'Those kids are hurting even more, and they have to do that every day,'" said Sawyer.

They help propel the 11-year-old past exhaustion and past any doubts he might have in himself. He's well past the halfway mark now, and his goal feels so close.

His arms arc into the water, his legs flutter behind him, his breaths are strong and rhythmic now. Determined, like the chug of the locomotive in the children's book.

I think I can, I think I can ...

When Sawyer's strength of body fails, he reaches into a place inside

himself that we all hope our children will have if we raise them right.

It's not just his conditioning that kicks in. It's his character. "I know that I could be a good swimmer," said Sawyer, "but I want to be a great person."

For Sawyer, being a great person is an active verb – it's something you do and keep doing.

The timer bell rings and his race is done for another year. He swam 5,285 yards in one hour. Sawyer celebrates.

"In my head I'm like, that's like a cancer patient ringing the bell," said Sawyer. "That's like saying they made it through. They finished. And it really means a lot to me."



You can join Sawyer in supporting the St. Jude mission. Donate today at stjude.org/hope

"Every single lap, I'm saying to myself, 'Those kids are hurting even more.'"

– Sawyer, St. Jude supporter



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Big dreams for Jamarcus

In 2021, Jamarcus was having upset stomachs, headaches and vision problems. He was fitted for glasses, but on a second visit, the eye doctor saw fluid behind Jamarcus' eye and sent him straight to the children's hospital near his home. Jamarcus was diagnosed with a type of brain cancer called medulloblastoma.

At St. Jude Children's Research Hospital®, he received chemotherapy and proton therapy, which allows doctors to aim high-dose radiation at cancer cells while sparing healthy cells. As a result of his brain tumor, Jamarcus is now legally blind and attends a school for the blind. Smart and goal-oriented, he has aspirations that include getting a dog, going to college, owning a successful business and eventually being president of the United States.



Thank you for helping St. Jude children through your generous monthly gifts as a loyal Partner in Hope. St. Jude won't stop until no child dies from cancer – we hope you won't either. To help get us closer to that day, please consider giving an additional, one-time gift by going to stjude.org/hope or scanning the QR code.