

September 26th: Blaze's Story, written by his mom, Katrina

Blaze turned 8 years old on May 11th. He was always very energetic, a lover of all animals especially his reptiles... and just funny and always laughing. But that changed not even two months later when he was diagnosed with B-cell Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. For those who aren't aware of what ALL is, it is a cancer of the blood & bone marrow that affects white blood cells.

On July 6th, 2018, Blaze went to his father's house to celebrate the fourth of July. His dad called me saying Blaze was complaining of leg pains. He also was complaining about this a few days before, so it seemed to be growing pains or from too much running around. On July 8th, early in the morning, Blaze couldn't put any weight on his legs and was crying hysterically, so I told his father to take him to the emergency room while I was at work. There, they did blood work and realized his blood platelets and other counts were extremely low, so they emergency transported him to Lehigh Valley Health Network Cedar Crest.

After a night in the hospital and further testing, Blaze was diagnosed with cancer on July 9th. I was hysterical, I stopped at my grandparents' after work and that's where I found out. He went for surgery to get his port put in and started chemo right away. Blaze already struggles with speech and learning disabilities, so it took a bit to get him to communicate with the doctors about his pain levels and to understand. He got released from the hospital on July 21st and has been doing great since. He's been losing his hair and gaining weight from steroids. He's already had multiple spinal taps & blood transfusions. But overall he is getting healthy, and so far we've had no emergencies. We're all so proud of him and how well he is taking all this.

It's only been a few months since his diagnosis, and we have a long road ahead. You never expect it to happen to your child and, when it does, your whole world flips upside down. My husband is now a stay at home parent and is Blaze's full-time caretaker when I am working, Blaze will also be home schooled for the next few months. The Pediatric Center of the Lehigh Valley has been so helpful with gas gift cards and cafeteria gift cards, school supplies, and even gifts for Blaze. It takes a lot going to chemo every week, plus physical therapy, emergencies, etc. It's definitely not easy for parents with children with cancer, but somehow we get through it with help. Childhood cancer is not rare, and these children did not choose this disease. They deserve the world. #BlazesArmy