

Gary Yost

A week before his tenth birthday, Gary complained of shoulder pain after soccer practice in June 2007. Gary is not a complainer, so we found this somewhat unsettling. We took him to the pediatrician expecting to hear news of a pulled muscle. Following an X-ray to rule out a cracked rib, the doctor told us that Gary had a mass in his chest cavity and he wanted us to head up to Seattle Children's immediately. We got in the car and headed north from his office. It was 6:30pm on June 25th of last year. The tests, scans and blood draws began. A mere 18 hours after our pediatrician appointment for what was supposed to be a pulled muscle, we were told that Gary had cancer – Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare form bone cancer. The scans showed a tumor in Gary's chest cavity the size of a softball. It was wrapped around at least three of his ribs and was pressing on his lung. Only twenty-four hours after leaving the pediatrician's office, Gary was admitted to the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance Unit at Children's where his bone-marrow was aspirated for testing and a central line was placed in his chest. The news of Gary's cancer-free bone marrow was the first good news we'd received. Fourteen rounds of intense chemo therapy followed each of which required a 3 or 5 day admission to the hospital and several blood transfusions. In October of 2007, about half way through his chemotherapy treatments, Gary had surgery to remove the tumor. He had three ribs removed and a titanium rib, some wires and Gortex put in their place. Although the surgery was terrifying and overwhelming, we were very happy to hear that Gary would not need radiation therapy because the removed tumor contained only dead cancer cells. Thankfully Gary's chemotherapy ended on March 1st, 2008 – the four of us celebrated with sparkling cider and a good hard cry. His end of treatment scans showed no signs of cancer. His three, six, nine month scans showed no signs of cancer. His one year scans showed no signs of cancer. Life is getting back to 'normal'.

We are so thankful for the unique and world-class level of cancer care we have access to right here in Seattle. Seattle Children's Hospital, the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance and, of course, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center combine forces to make surviving cancer a reality for so many patients. We are so grateful that Gary is counted as one of them.