

STORYBOOK

A Publication of Coastal Kids Home Care

Winter 2023

◆ A Wish for Everly ◆

Lexi Teska has three daughters under the age of three. As her youngest, Everly, was developing she noticed differences in her progress compared with her big sisters. Lexi brought her concerns to their pediatrician but was told "Let's wait a little while." By age 8 months, Everly scooted but did not pull to stand or try to put any weight on her legs. Her mom was worried that she was not crawling. Fortunately, Lexi connected with Trish Krall, the Director of Rehabilitation Services at Coastal Kids, through common friends. After speaking with Trish, they were able to reconnect with Everly's pediatrician and determine a diagnosis.

Soon, Trish began physical therapy with Everly. She taught Lexi and her husband simple exercises that Everly could do around the house. Everly's sisters got in on the action too. They join Everly at her physical therapy appointments, participating in the exercises alongside their little sister. Since Everly started physical therapy with Trish, she has made tremendous progress. Lexi stated, "In the five weeks since Everly started PT with Trish she has made so much progress. It's been incredible." Lexi's wish for help for her daughter came true with the support of Physical Therapy from Coastal Kids Home Care. At 14 months, Everly has a charming smile and a love for dancing to songs from Moana. What's next? For Everly, the sky's the limit.



Love and Magic



Benjamin spent the next three months in the hospital undergoing treatment to help fight Leukemia. The first month was the roughest for them. Benjamin was isolated from Gregory which was hard on both boys. Benjamin did not want to engage in activities and was quiet most of the time, frequently saying, "I can't do anything. I'm sick." On top of his parents adjusting to their new reality, they were also worried about Benjamin being separated from his brother and the emotional side effects this began to have on Gregory too. After the first month, Benjamin and Gregory were finally able to reunite. Once together, it was as if a spell had been lifted. They spent their time together playing video games and watching scary movies.

Benjamin is now in remission and continues to hold on to his positive energy. Coastal Kids helps limit the number of hour-long trips to the hospital by providing nursing check-ups and blood draws. His visit nurse, Emily, said, "I love working with Benjamin and his family. His mom is so involved, and you can see how much love, care, and thought she puts towards Benjamin." At ten years old, Benjamin enjoys swimming, video games, and scary movies, all with his brother. They especially love walking to their local ice cream shop and getting raspados (shaved ice) together. Benjamin and his family continue to believe in the magic of a positive attitude and the love of family. Through it all, they have grown closer than ever before.

On Father's Day 2022, Benjamin and his brother spent the day celebrating their dad and playing outside. That night, when his mom, Reyna, put him to bed, she noticed bruising on his body. After a long day playing outside with his older brother Gregory, Reyna just assumed the boys were playing too rough with each other. While she was inspecting the bruises, she noticed petechiae spots too. The next day, on his first day of basketball practice, Benjamin fainted. When his family took him to the hospital, they were told Benjamin had blood abnormalities and would need to undergo further examination. They were transported that day to Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford, where they discovered Benjamin had Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Both Benjamin and his family could not wrap their heads around it. How did he go from basketball practice to finding out he would have the fight of his life?

◆ Our Mission ◆

Coastal Kids Home Care meets the unique needs of medically fragile children in the comfort of their homes. Our clinical staff offers in-home nursing, specialized therapies, social services for children, and counseling for the whole family.



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A Rainbow in the Clouds

When Gabriel Strangis was born, he seemed to have difficulty breathing. Doctors soon discovered his lungs were underdeveloped. After seven weeks of hospitalization, he was diagnosed with ABCA3, a rare genetic disorder. Despite Gabriel's health conditions, his mom, Gizelle, thought of him as her rainbow baby. After the loss of her infant daughter, Gia, to SIDS, Gabriel's arrival felt like a step forward in their healing process. According to Gizelle, "Gia's death was hard to process, but Gabriel became the light at the end of the tunnel." His medical complexities shifted his family's thought process to "How can we better support Gabriel?"

Gizelle first heard of Coastal Kids Home Care while Gabriel was still in the NICU

at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital Stanford. A nurse practitioner referred them to Coastal Kids during the discharge process. Since then, Gabriel has received monthly palliative care nursing and social work visits. It was not until recently that Gabriel, now age five, also began shift nursing to relieve some of the caregiving burden for Gizelle, "Having a shift nurse has provided mental and physical relief. It has allowed me and my husband to give our oldest child Gianni attention."

Often, caring for a child with medical complexities can lead siblings to believe their needs are not important. With shift nursing, Gizelle can take a break from Gabriel's care and focus on Gianni too. According to Gizelle, "Support from Coastal Kids Home Care has been tremendous, and they have worked with



me to help ensure services and needs are met." Although non-verbal, Gabriel is a delightful kid. He enjoys flying kites at the park, watching movies, and going for walks with his family. With the support of his Coastal Kids team, he is progressing at his own pace.



Better Together

As the Heal Together program is coming to an end in December 2023, we are grateful to highlight the healing and hope our community has experienced over the last two years. One memorable note arrived recently. Inside a sweet note with a flower, it stated, "Heal Together saved my life. Thank you." That statement captures the essence of the whole program. In the wake of the pandemic, our community was reeling from the loss of life, and the loss of life as we knew it. Hospice Giving Foundation responded by gathering local funders and encouraging them to invest in healing and hope.

What happened next was magical. Coastal Kids and our partner agencies brought together more than 55 providers to share their compassionate expertise. Heal Together became a movement of therapists, educators, artists, and healers who encouraged our community to embrace connection and to have grace for ourselves and those around us – especially while grieving.

Through thousands of moments of connection in counseling sessions, bereavement groups, cooking, art and dance classes, therapeutic music performances and simple conversations, Heal Together fulfilled its mission to lift our community up. The impact will endure beyond the end of the program this year as the more than 4500 people served, carry the messages of hope and healing forward. Heal Together proved our community truly is better together.

Going forward Heal Together will continue to offer bereavement groups and one-on-one grief counseling for children and teens. Check our website at www.heal-together.org for updates.

In 2023, your donation supported these vital programs.

Nurses and therapists traveled more than 100,000 miles to provide in-home medical care to 462 children.

Counselors provided 994 clinic-based or telehealth sessions for 110 children and youth with mild to moderate mental health needs.

Families caring for children with medical complexity received over 71,000 hours of shift and respite nursing.

Comprehensive palliative care services were available to 85 children with life-limiting illness and 13 patients received compassionate end-of-life care at home.

In the last two years, over 4500 individuals coping with grief and loss experienced connection and healing through participating in Heal Together activities.

DONATE TODAY!

www.coastalkidshomecare.org

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