

# celebrations!

You are making amazing things happen to improve children's care.

Fall 2018 Issue



## Beating the Odds



When Gabe's life hung in the balance, **you** made sure he had the **best** possible care.

*Gabe and his family faced the biggest test of their lives when he suddenly became ill. His mom, Krista, shares how it took a community, including you, to rally around her son and save his life.*

Normal. That's how I would describe the weeks leading up to Gabe's medical emergency.

School had started, with Gabe entering Grade 8 and our youngest going into senior kindergarten in Amherstburg, Ontario.

Our biggest worry was finding the boys new activities to keep busy in the fall.

But a disaster was hurtling toward us.

We didn't realize then that our world was about to stop turning. And the only thing that would matter was our fight

to keep Gabe in our lives.

It all started with cold-like symptoms. Gabe took a couple of days off school to feel better. The first day back though, I got a concerned call from his teacher, to say Gabe wasn't acting like himself.

It was an understatement. He couldn't buckle his own seat belt when I picked him up. He wouldn't answer me. He just kept turning his phone on and off, on and off.

I was terrified.

**(continued inside)**



## Because of You...

- Peyton achieved a dream he never thought possible
- Keanna is getting the support she needs
- Justin has amazing news to share  
...and so much more!



*At just 13 years old, Gabe had to fight for his life due to rare complications caused by a sinus infection. He underwent four brain surgeries and was put into a medically induced coma. Thank you for helping him survive!*

## Beating the Odds (Continued)

### ON ROUTE TO LIFE-SAVING CARE

I called 911 as soon as we got home.

It turned out Gabe was having seizures. The local hospital didn't know why, and his condition was worsening. He had to be flown to London by Ornge helicopter.

With limited space onboard, my husband and I drove to Children's Hospital.

Speeding down the 401, it felt surreal that our son was ahead of us, racing to life-saving care.

I couldn't bear the thought that I could lose him. Gabe is such a beautiful soul.

One of the proudest mom moments I've had was at a track and field meet. In the middle of Gabe's 200m race, a boy fell. All the other kids kept running but my boy stopped to help him up.

I'll never forget Gabe looking at me with these apologetic blue eyes and saying, "Sorry Mom, I didn't win."

To me, he was the biggest winner out there that day. And I hoped furiously that, facing these unknowns, he would come out a winner again.

### MOUNTING DANGER

Shockingly, the life-threatening symptoms Gabe was experiencing were caused by rare complications from a sinus infection.

His care team at Children's Hospital told us his brain was swelling and they needed to relieve the pressure fast.

He would end up needing four brain surgeries.

It took a team of 15 people to get him to the operating room early on. He had 64 IV lines running and he needed so much equipment to stay alive.

**Amazingly, donors like you help fund 90% of Children's Hospital's medical equipment purchases. In a way, you were there helping to protect Gabe.**

Doctors later had to put our son into a medically induced coma to let his body rest. We were unsure how he was going to come out of it. His care team told us he might not be the child he was before.

I can't tell you how heartbreaking it is to hear that the child you raised might be replaced by someone you don't know. As a mother, I ached with worry.

### COMING OUT OF A COMA

Gabe slowly emerged from the coma after two weeks. He was paralyzed on the left side and unable to speak.

As parents, we accepted that this could be our new reality. We were ready to do whatever we could to accommodate our son. Gabe didn't want that though.

He gave everything he had to regain his former life, even though the journey wasn't easy for him.



***Above:** Gabe, right, smiles happily with his dad, Rick, and brother, Jaxson, while at Children's Hospital.*

***Right:** Gabe poses with his family on the day of his Grade 8 graduation, a milestone that might not have been possible without his care team and your support.*

“I remember it took a team of 15 people to get him to the operating room. He had 64 IV lines running and he needed so much equipment to stay alive.”

### ROAD TO RECOVERY

Gabe persevered with the help of all his doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and special team members, like Ollie the Therapeutic Clown and Karina the Music Therapist – roles you make possible and I truly believe were critical to Gabe’s healing.

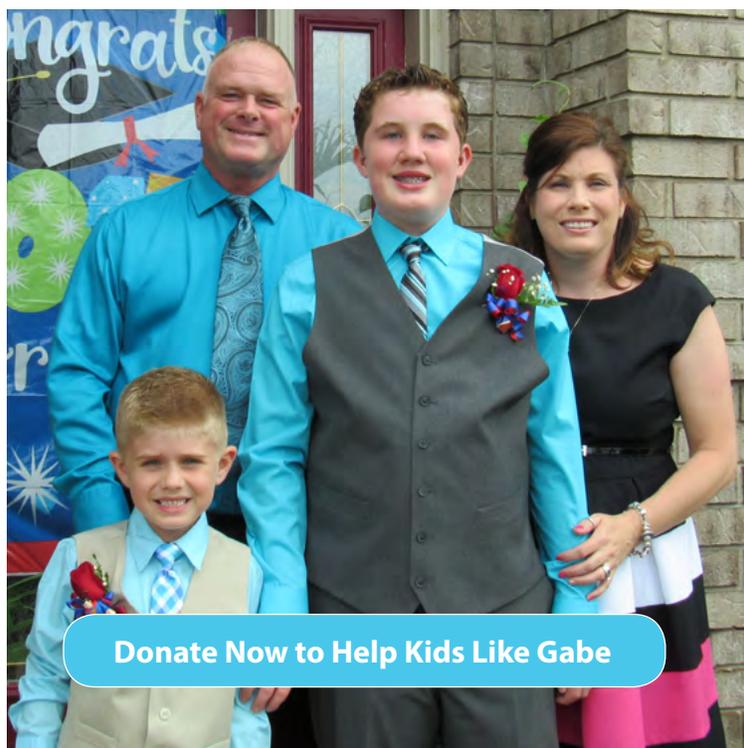
Gabe relearned how to speak, eat and walk. And through it all, he never stopped being the compassionate, loving boy that I so admire.

He always thanked his care team for anything they did, whether they brought him food, cleaned his hospital room or performed necessary but painful procedures on him.

Finally, after three and a half months at Children’s Hospital, Gabe was well enough to return home. It was a day we worried, many times, wouldn’t come. But with the best care possible and heaps of determination, Gabe survived.

He’s gone on to graduate Grade 8 and is now doing well in high school – I’m proud to say.

**We will spend the rest of our lives being grateful to Gabe’s amazing health care team and donors like you. Gabe is our miracle kid and without all of you he wouldn’t be with us today.**



[Donate Now to Help Kids Like Gabe](#)

## Why We Give

Donors like you share what inspires them to help strengthen children’s health care in our community.



*Denise Ingram with David (left) and her late son, Jesse.*

I give in honour of our son Jesse Ingram.

Jesse and his twin brother, David, were born by emergency c-section, nearly two months premature in November 2014.

Immediately, medical professionals whisked them off to Children’s Hospital’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Both our boys had bleeds on the brain and needed support with breathing and feeding.

Over four months in the NICU, we saw first hand how much care is given to babies. The nurses were great, and the boys were well looked after.

As they grew stronger, David’s brain bleed resolved but Jesse’s didn’t. He had to have a shunt put in to drain the spinal fluid off his brain.

At almost two years of age, Jesse experienced some unexpected complications and passed away Aug 22, 2016.

Jesse was our little superman. He was easy going and loved to dance, laugh and smile.

We cherished the time we had with him and like to give back in his name whenever we can.

– Denise Rowcliffe

## YOU Are Changing Lives

# Peyton's Dream Comes True

Do you remember learning to ride your bike for the first time?

That moment when you were breezing through the wind, realizing that your mom or dad was no longer holding on. You did it! You rode your bike, all on your own!

For kids like nine-year-old Peyton, this was only a dream. He longed to ride a bike, like his older brother. "It has always been a goal of his, but he was told he wouldn't be able to," explains his mom, Kimberly.

Peyton has paralysis in his left side from right hemiplegia, a form of cerebral palsy. Kimberly first noticed something was wrong when he was old enough to stand. Peyton just kept falling to one side. Through physiotherapy, he has regained some strength, though still struggles with certain movements.

"Peyton's journey is challenging because, at his age, you bond with other kids through sports; he feels left out," shares Kimberly. "He told me he wanted to learn to ride a bike, like the other kids, and I wasn't sure how to teach him."

Thankfully, Kimberly found the iCan Bike Clinic, put on by Thames Valley Children's Centre. During this five-day program, children progress through



Donate Now to Help Kids Like Peyton

*Peyton longed to ride a bike, just like his brother. He wanted to race down the road with the wind in his face. But, he was told he might never be able to, until his family found Thames Valley Children Centre. With your support, they boosted his spirits and helped him reach his dreams.*

different bike modifications in hopes of being able to ride on their own by the end of the week.

For Peyton, the program was a success!

**"When I was young, I was told I might not be able to ride a bike. But, when I heard about this program, I thought, 'I want to try,' and now, I can!"**

By the last day, Peyton was whizzing

around the parking lot all on his own. His mom was so overjoyed at the sight, making sure his brother caught it on film.

And when Peyton was asked how comfortable he felt riding a bike on a scale of 1-10, he proudly smiled and said "11."

## Are you receiving my e-mails?

As a donor to Children's Health Foundation, you are very important! I want to make sure you are kept up to date on all the ways you are making a difference in kids' lives. Help me keep you in the loop! **Sign up for exclusive updates from me, Scott Fortnum, President and CEO.**



Please, sign up today at [www.childhealth.ca/enews](http://www.childhealth.ca/enews)

# Justin Has Amazing News!

You helped Justin in his fight against cancer. Now, the teenager has a special update to share.

Do you remember Justin, a brave young man who spent his last year of high school fighting cancer?

In our spring newsletter, we shared how he had endured months of draining chemotherapy treatment and underwent a bone marrow transplant.

Justin, at the time, was doing well and seemingly on the road to recovery. His family hoped that they would soon be able to announce that he is cancer free.

Guess what? Their hopes have come true.

## **JUSTIN IS CANCER FREE!**

"There is no sign of leukemia cells in his blood," says his mom, Lorraine. "We are very optimistic that things will continue to stay that way forever."

During his difficult health care journey, Justin found solace in his one great love: music.

"Music has been something that has supported Justin throughout his treatment and oftentimes was the only thing getting him out of bed on those really tough days," remembers Karina, his Music Therapist.

"Despite not feeling well, he would pick up his guitar without hesitation and I could help him express himself,



*Justin looking well with his mom, Lorraine*

forget about everything going on or simply get lost in the beautiful melodies."

**Thank you for helping keep Justin's spirits high while he was in hospital.** Your support makes the role of the Music Therapist at Children's Hospital possible.

With a clean bill of health, the talented young artist plans to pursue his love of music. Look out Ontario Institute of Audio Recording Technology! Justin's coming your way in 2019!



**You can make the season extra special for kids who spend the holidays at Children's Hospital.**

We are now accepting new and unwrapped toys, games, craft items and more!

View our wish list at [www.childhealth.ca/gift-in-kind](http://www.childhealth.ca/gift-in-kind)

Items can be dropped off at 345 Westminster Ave or at the Foundation's hospital office in Zone B at Victoria Hospital.

# Lives You've Touched

Donate Now to Save And Improve Lives



## Natalie, age 7

**Hometown:** Elmira, Ontario

**Condition:** Born more than four months premature

**Likes:** Singing, riding her bike, jumping on the trampoline, playing card games and praying for sick babies who are in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). She also loves visiting the NICU staff.

**Her Journey:** You could fit a wedding band around Natalie's thigh when she was born. She weighed a mere 1lb, 6oz. Because of her severe prematurity, she had problems with her lungs and was on oxygen for the first five months of her life. She needed surgery at three weeks old to close the valve between her heart and lungs. She was also diagnosed with a severe brain bleed. But with the help of her care team, Natalie grew stronger bit-by-bit. Finally, she could go home with her family at five months old.

**How You Helped:** You made sure Natalie had the equipment she needed during the greatest fight of her life.



## Keanna, age 12

**Hometown:** London, Ontario

**Condition:** Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis, a rare kidney disease

**Likes:** Panda bears, playing outside, horseback riding, singing, dancing and giving back to the hospital through volunteering.

**Her Journey:** Keanna's life took a drastic turn at six years old when she was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease. Since then, she has spent months in hospital and had hundreds of appointments. She's also had transplant surgery, but sadly it was unsuccessful. Today, Keanna is on home dialysis treatment to clean her blood. She hopes one day soon to get another transplant.

**How You Helped:** You make sure Keanna has access to programs that bring her great joy while she's in hospital, such as Music Therapy and Child Life.

## Community Events

Get more event details at [childhealth.ca](http://childhealth.ca)

October 13 - London LAN for Extra Life: Powered by Northern

October 13 - 22nd Annual Fall Colour Ride with Hully Gully

November 3 - Extra Life Game Day - 24-hour gaming marathon

December 1 to 31 - LCBO Giving Back in Our Community Campaign

December 7 - Children's Magical Winter Ball

February 8 - Corus Radiothon for Children's

**Mark your calendars!**

Your last chance to give in 2018 is Monday, December 31!

   @CHFHope