

# Neighbor Kids



## Gabe's My Heart

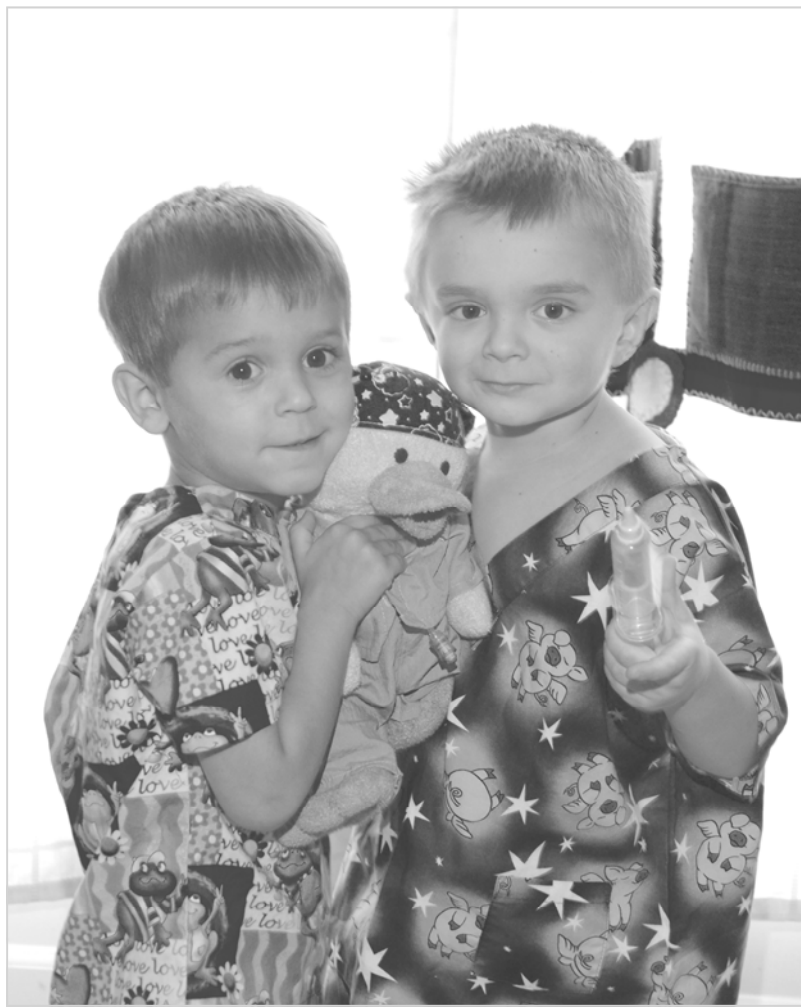
By Lu Sipos

It has been almost 5 years since Gabe finished treatment. Even now as Rob and I sit looking at our proud cancer survivor, talking about the day he was diagnosed brings us close to tears. It seems like it happened yesterday and the feelings are still so raw.

When you compound that with the emotions of watching Gabe facing the long term effects of treatments we agreed to, the guilt can become overpowering. When those feelings overwhelm us we can only remind ourselves of the reality that the guilt is a luxury; Gabe is still here with us. We have everything to be grateful for.

The week prior to Gabe's diagnosis, we visited the pediatrician three times

searching for the cause of his enlarged lymph nodes and his



**Gabe Sipos teaching his friend Huston Zabka about his Chemo Duck**

newly acquired lazy right eye. Antibiotics were not working.

In fact, it seemed like the symptoms were progressively getting worse. This series of events lead us to the E.R. on Christmas evening 2002. A CT scan that night revealed a large mass in his right sinus cavity. It was resting on his brain and crushing his optical nerve. That

night, as families all over the country settled into the winter evening, we heard the words no parent ever expects to hear. Our

beautiful baby boy, one week shy of his first birthday, had a malignant tumor. Even as the words escaped the doctor's mouth, my thoughts turned to a friend who had survived breast cancer. I squeezed Rob's hand and mouthed the words that became our mantra..."THIS IS NOT A DEATH SENTENCE".

Rob and I felt lost; cancer was an awfully mature word for such a little boy. The juxtaposition seemed both ironic and unreal. Our role as parents seemed to diminish by the minute, Gabe's fate was in the hands of the doctors and we could no longer "kiss him and make it better". Although our role had changed, Rob and

I knew that we needed to keep Gabe as comfortable and cheerful as possible to speed his recovery. We also understood

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that supporting the medical team would mean ensuring that Gabe took all medications and was calm during procedures.

The week after Gabe's birthday marked our first visit to clinic. I had no idea of the wake up call that awaited me. I'm not sure exactly what I expected, but I thought there would be a huge fuss made over my child...he had CANCER after all!!

As we walked into the waiting room I was met by at least 15 other families whose special children had cancer too. In an instant I knew that Gabe's story had become a part of something much bigger, part of "OUR STORY". Our story is a quilt of tales sewn with the threads of hope of families who shared our fate. Each narrative is unique, but familiar as your childhood security blanket.

In re-telling Gabe's story I am simply illuminating a story that happens to 46 families each day. Two whole classrooms of children find out that they have cancer every day in the U.S. The Sipos family is proud to be counted among the number of childhood cancer families; painfully aware of just how blessed we are to still have Gabe in our lives and honored to serve the families diagnosed after us in any way we can. As