A close-up of a sign

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**2024 Ben Straus Middle School Teen Essay Contest**

**Honorable Mention**

**Brooklyn Camp**

**His Story**

Everyone has a story, whether wild, sad or even adventurous. But his story is all of this.

     A goaled fifteen-year-old with many hopes to succeed was all crushed and torn to empty darkness. The worst had struck after doctors told him he couldn't do anything.

 In June 2022, he saw a doctor who told him he should try physical therapy for a while, but he and our mom wanted a second opinion after she noticed his knee starting to look like there was a golf ball in it. In September, he saw another doctor who took X-rays and MRIs and found a mass in his leg. The doctor said that it was almost a 100% chance it was going to be cancerous. He ended up getting a biopsy, and the results were of no surprise.

     Cancer was never on his mind, though what could have been so much more turned into months with no walking.  A tumor formed in his left leg, dissolving anything of his knee it could reach. As it grew, it became apparent that it would not stop soon. His knee and part of his shin were nearly just days, even weeks, away from breaking and causing astonishing damage. The pain was worse than breaking a bone or falling, which left him in tears. His pain was so bad that tears were slipping and sliding into each other down his face for hours at times.

     Over time, he started to lose weight, making him need to eat even when he was as stuffed as if you ate an entire Thanksgiving dinner. So, he took appetite stimulants so he could eat more. Aside from not eating much, he also didn't sleep a lot. Now that he's used to it when going for chemo, he doesn't get more than maybe 5-6 hours at a time, perhaps even less.

Eventually, after the first chemo session, his pain was gone or down to a minimum, which for him was excellent, and for the rest of us, it was a relief. Soon after, he had gone from a brace, wheelchair, and crutches to an entire surgery with a boot to finally using a walker.

     This boy, my brother, is braver than any animal in the wild.

He didn't expect anything of a positive outlook for himself.

Though he needed to stay positive to pull through, he was a little doubtful sometimes; most would've been, too.

         He has ended chemo after nearly nine long months of not walking or doing minimal movements. But with the help of physical therapy, he may be able to run by this April, June, or July. He may not be as active as he was due to all the movements he couldn't do and the relearning of running, jogging, and jumping because the surgery removed most of his leg and moved part of his calf muscle, so he only has a flap of calf muscle protecting the metal.

He has progressed faster than anyone could have imagined. The fact that he recovered from the surgery in a little more than two months was surprising. Even through all this, with him going to chemo and surgery and not knowing if it was going to come back or move to his lungs, even though he went through all the pain and scary visits, it still affected me and everyone who loved him deeply.

As a 6th grader who was extremely close to him, finding out he might not make it messed with my mind. As each long and tiring school day passed, I slowly lost focus on work, what I needed to get done, and what was late. I started having D's, E`s, and low C`s in all my classes. I would come home and lay in my bed, wondering how he was or if he was in pain.  My teachers were concerned with my lower grades, and I lost focus and started to get mad at myself for being unmotivated. I told myself that if I couldn't learn to focus, my grades and life wouldn't get any easier and that I wouldn't be put into the classes appropriate for my knowledge and abilities. Over time, as he improved and was much happier, my grades got better, and I started focusing and asking how I could improve my grade overall by doing all my work as best as possible.