13 YEAR OLD BOY WHO SURVIVED RARE CHILDHOOD CANCER TWICE SUPPORTS NEW FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

Friday 29 November, 2019

13 year old Ryan Savage, from Billingham in Stockton-on-Tees, features in a new Christmas campaign with Neuroblastoma UK, to raise vital funds for neuroblastoma research.

Ryan was first diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer, when he was just three years old. He was given a 5% chance of survival and doctors told his parents that he may not live to see Christmas.

This Christmas campaign aims to **#GiveHope** to families like Ryan's, by raising money for leading research projects which aim to deliver new, more effective and kinder treatments for children with neuroblastoma.

Ryan's mum Lisa says, "Christmas is Ryan's favourite time of year - he's not a child who asks for much but he is always just so happy to celebrate Christmas with his family. Every time Christmas comes around, it's a precious reminder to our family that another year has passed since Ryan fought this terrible disease twice, and won.

"Ryan was first diagnosed with neuroblastoma on 29th October 2009 - a date that will be etched on my memory forever. He came home from nursery complaining of stomach pains. He wouldn't eat and the pain got worse, so I took him to A&E that night. Doctors thought it was constipation or trapped wind but two days later, he had a high temperature, was in extreme pain and, worryingly, he couldn't move his legs.

"We took him back to A&E and they did an immediate MRI scan. They found a tumour wrapped around Ryan's spine and we were told that Ryan could have less than two months to live, and he might not see Christmas.

Our world was turned upside-down by a cancer we had never even heard of before."

Ryan began chemotherapy immediately, followed by surgery to remove the majority of his tumours. After a gruelling year of cancer treatment, Ryan was in remission and the family could celebrate another Christmas together.

But two years later, doctors found another tumour in his chest and their consultant said it was the worst case that she'd ever seen.

"Our little man endured another two really tough years of treatment including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, a stem cell transplant and major surgery. He also needed ribs removed as the cancerous tumours had wrapped around his little bones. By March 2012, the only tumour left in his body was a growth behind his heart. In October 2013, the heart tumour no longer appeared on his scans.

Ryan endured years of treatment including chemotherapy, radiotherapy, a stem cell transplant and major surgery, after having neuroblastoma twice.

"Seeing what Ryan went through, it breaks my heart to think of all those children fighting neuroblastoma this Christmas. They should be at home enjoying the fun of the festive season with their families. I know from personal experience that their parents will be hoping against hope that the treatment their children receive will help them beat neuroblastoma too.

"Little children simply don't deserve to be robbed of their precious early years, nor should they have the threat of their cancer returning constantly hanging over them. But there is still so much more research that needs to be done to prevent children suffering like Ryan did."

Katherine Mobey, Fundraising Manager at Neuroblastoma UK said, "Neuroblastoma is a cancer that almost exclusively affects children, with around 100 children diagnosed every year in the UK. Christmas is a time when families should be together and having fun, not going through harsh cancer treatment.

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“With our new fundraising campaign, we want to give hope to more families like Ryan’s. By funding more vital research, we can help scientists search for new and kinder treatments, give children with neuroblastoma a better quality of life after treatment, and move closer to finding a cure.”

To make a donation, visit www.neuroblastoma.org.uk/christmas.

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