

30 Years & 30 Heroes

Hero #17 of 30



(Clockwise from top): Gavin's 2012 camp portrait; with camp friends (he's on the bottom); and posing with his sister, Krysta, during treatment in 2010.

"Rare and incurable" - those are words that no parent wants to hear, but that's what **Gavin's** parents were told in 2009 when he was diagnosed with severe aplastic anemia (SAA). After six months of drugs, as well as weekly blood and platelet transfusions, Gavin's condition was showing no improvement and it soon morphed into what was called pre-leukemia. His doctors prescribed an immediate trip to Duke University in Durham, NC, for a bone marrow transplant. (That's a not-uncommon destination for our campers whose cancer treatments are not going well.) He received 8 rounds of full body radiation and 4 rounds of chemo during his nearly two months on the BMT unit at Duke. He and his family spent 4 months in Durham until finally, on post-BMT Day 101, they received the news they were waiting for: "You can go home."

Gavin's family began attending family weekend outings last fall, but this year was his first trip to Camp Fantastic, which Gavin declared a big success. "Camp helped me learn to swim above water!" he said, adding, "I felt great at camp because everybody had things like me. I didn't feel left out." Gavin's post-camp aspirations include being able to climb to the top of the rope in gymnastics and do a round-off. His parent's hopes are a bit simpler:

"We want Gavin to realize he can be like everyone else after seeing other kids who have struggled like he has. Thanks to camp, he now knows there are lots of kids who understand what he has gone through."

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