



Three-year-old Brady Bliss was diagnosed with [Acute Myeloid Leukemia \(AML\)](#) on March 27, 2013. I took him to the doctor, thinking it was the flu or just a bad cold. After several tests, it came back that something didn't look right on his CBC, his white cell count was off. I got a call saying that something was not right, and to head to the University of Iowa Children's hospital, with really no idea what was going on or what they thought it was. At that time, I had many thoughts running through my head, but never imagined in a million years that my son, my little boy would have the dreaded C word.

Now, imagine having two places you want to be, and having to decide which you will be at. Our family had a difficult choice to make as far as who would be there to stay with Brady at the hospital, knowing he would be there for a month, home for a week, etc., for four rounds. At the time, we were a single income family, I was the only one working. What I really wanted to do, was to be there with Brady, but then if I wasn't working, we would be a no income family. Six months of no income was a little bit of a stretch, on top of driving back and forth from Cedar Rapids and Iowa City and eating our meals in a cafeteria. Brady's dad was currently not working, but he would have rather gone to work than stay at the hospital all day. We made the choice for dad to stay with Brady during the week while I was at

work. Brady's grandma was also able to take some time off of work (paid, I might add!) to come down and be with him during the day. On top of that, Brady's brother, Tayton, was 11 months old when Brady was admitted to the hospital. We stayed in the Rossi house when there was a room available, and traded off who got to sleep in a bed and take the baby, and who got to sleep on a chair in Brady's room. Let me tell you, there are lots of cords and things for a baby to get into in those hospital rooms! Chasing around a baby while still caring for Brady and making sure he had what he needed took some multi-tasking!

Brady endured four rounds of chemo throughout the summer, staying at the University of Iowa Children's Hospital for a total of 17 ½ weeks. Throughout this time, Brady didn't get to live his life as a normal three year old would. He rode the **Hot Wheels bike** around the halls of the hospital, but couldn't take it outside to enjoy the fresh air, many times attached to the IV line. He ate lunch in bed instead of at a table and he had the remote to the TV at his fingertips. He learned just how yucky the taste of bubble gum was, yet he took his medicine like a champ every day. He figured out that if he let the doctors come in and check him over, they would go away faster. He had to learn things about chemo & his port, which most adults don't know anything about.

There were endless activities to go to thanks to Dance Marathon. There were movies, crafts, and activities. I swear, it was almost like moving out each time we went home! Brady had so many new toys and blankets, he got spoiled for sure! There were also activities for parents, like walking group that gave Brady some time to rest, but also Mommy some time to take a walk and get some fresh air! There was also a few times they dropped off gift cards, so we got the chance to eat some real food not made in cafeteria! The activities provided by Dance Marathon made the days go a little bit faster and gave him something to look forward to. Plus, was way more fun then lying in bed watching TV all day!

Some days were harder than others, but each day, you could count on Brady to cooperate, keep a smile on his face, and tell his brother Tayton to stop touching his trains. Brady has been **cancer free since April 26, 2013**. He is the strongest little boy we know, and fought that cancer as hard as he could. Team Brady came

together to encourage his strength and to show that we are all in this fight together. In a way, you can see that he was a lucky one, going through only one treatment plan, where his body responded like it should have and no more hospital stays or illnesses since then.

Since Brady has been home, we have been to almost all of the Dance Marathon events, and this year will be the fourth big event! It's amazing to see all of the dancers and volunteers supporting this cause! It's also a great experience to get to spend time with other families who know what you have been through and who are also raising little fighters! It is also a nice opportunity to take the kids to do some fun activities and not have to worry about how much its going to cost; it's not exactly cheap to spend that much time at a hospital 😊 I still spend a lot of time worrying each time I think Brady is getting sick or is coming down with something, the dance marathon activities are just another time where we can relax, not worry about anything, and have a good time!