

GIVING CANCER A KARATE CHOP



I GOT INTO KARATE BECAUSE I JUST WANTED TO SEE HOW YOU DO IT. LET'S JUST SAY, SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO HURT ME, I MEAN I KNOW KARATE AND THAT'S GOOD.

SHE JUST LOVES IT AND SHE PRACTICES. ZOE IS A SELF-MOTIVATOR. SHE JUST HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMEBODY WHO GETS THINGS DONE. ZOE WAS IN KINDERGARTEN. WE WERE AT HOME, SHE HAD JUST WOKE UP FROM A NAP AND I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG. SHE HAD A SEIZURE. WE DIDN'T KNOW, AND THE DOCTORS DIDN'T KNOW, AT THAT POINT, EITHER, THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING MORE. THEY DID A C-T SCAN. THEY IMMEDIATELY FOUND OUT THERE WAS A TUMOR ON THE PITUITARY GLAND CALLED CRANIAL FRANGINOMA.

ACH, IT WAS LIKE SOMEONE RIPPED MY HEART OUT, THAT TYPE OF PAIN, YAH. MY MOM TOLD ME AND I WAS LIKE, WOW. THEY REMOVED MOST OF IT. THEY COULDN'T GET ALL OF IT. THREE MONTHS LATER, IT BEGAN TO GROW AGAIN. THEY DID NOT WANT TO DO ANOTHER SURGERY. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO RISKY.

ZOE'S NEUROSURGEON MENTIONED TO US ABOUT COMING TO SAINT JUDE. A WEEK AND A HALF LATER, WE WERE HERE. GETTING OUT OF THAT SHUTTLE, IT WAS TRULY A MAGICAL EXPERIENCE FOR US. EVERYBODY IS SO WONDERFUL. EVERYBODY IS SO KIND HERE. IT WAS PERFECT FOR WHAT OUR NEED WAS. SAINT JUDE OFFERS PROTON RADIATION WHERE THEY PINPOINT THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE TUMOR AND THEY ARE ABLE TO EXACTLY SHOOT THAT AREA WITHOUT IT DESTROYING OTHER PARTS OF HER BRAIN.

MY JOB IS TO HELP MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND WHY THEY'RE HERE, PREPARE THEM FOR ALL THAT THEY DO AND HELP THEM ADJUST TO THE HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT. THE FIRST TWO DAYS, SHE WAS SEDATED BACK TO BACK AND IT BROKE MY HEART. THE WHOLE DAY WAS GONE, GROGGINESS COMING OUT OF SEDATION. THE TREATMENTS, THIRTY TREATMENTS, IT'S ABOUT SIX WEEKS, MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY.

WE TALKED TO CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST AMY. WE WERE ABLE TO PRACTICE A FEW TIMES AHEAD OF TIME TO DO THE RADIATION WITHOUT SEDATION. RADIATION TREATMENT IS VERY PRECISE. IT'S IMPORTANT THAT YOU REMAIN STILL THE ENTIRE TIME. IF THEY'RE ABLE TO DO AWAKE, IT MINIMIZES THE TIME THAT THEY HAVE TO SPEND IN THE HOSPITAL. SIX AND UNDER IS TYPICALLY SEDATED.

ZOE, SHE HAD IMPULSE CONTROL OF A TEENAGER, ALMOST. SHE WOULD SIT STILL WHEREAS TYPICAL FIVE-YEAR-OLDS, IT'S LIKE: SQUIRREL! I THINK THE DISCIPLINE FROM THE KARATE HELPED HER. KEPT TELLING HER, YOU SHOULD BE SO PROUD OF YOURSELF THERE'S NOT MANY KIDS YOUR AGE THAT ARE ABLE TO DO THIS. ANY TIME YOU GET TO WATCH A CHILD ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING THEY COULDN'T OR OVERCOME SOMETHING, IT'S AMAZING TO WATCH. I WANT LIFE TO BE BACK TO NORMAL. I DON'T WANT THIS BIG TUMOR IN MY HEAD. THEY WERE AFRAID THAT IT MIGHT AFFECT HER EYESIGHT BUT WE HAVE BEEN SO BLESSED THAT IT HASN'T AFFECTED