

Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation

Supports Families Battling Pediatric Cancer

by Lindsey Guerrero



From left, Jackson, Lacy and Wyatt, who was diagnosed with cancer.

The Taylor Family was devastated when they received the news: Their son Wyatt was diagnosed with Burkitt's Lymphoma. They quickly educated themselves about this form of cancer, Burkitt's Lymphoma, or small noncleaved cell lymphoma. It's a type of non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, a cancer found in the lymphatic system, that was causing cells in Wyatt's lymphatic system to abnormally reproduce, causing tumors to grow. Considered the third most common childhood cancer, they worried the non-Hodgkin disease cells would also spread to other organs and tissues in his body.

Wyatt's mother and father, Lacy and Michael, and brother Jackson rallied to provide the crucial emotional support Wyatt would need through his treatment. In remembering the precise day Wyatt was diagnosed, Lacy recalls also learning that she was pregnant with Wyatt's soon-to-be little sister, Mia. Struggling between the sheer excitement of bringing a new life into the world and dealing with Wyatt's diagnosis, the Taylor family grappled with their new reality. Lacy made the difficult decision to quit her job in order to focus on getting Wyatt to his medical appointments and ensure he had the best care possible to get him healthy again. Though at the time it was the best decision to make given the circumstances, the financial and emotional toll it took weighed heavily on the family.

The Taylor Family was then introduced to Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation (TBCF), who stepped in and helped pay the Taylor's rent and assisted with car payments. This was a huge relief for Michael and Lacy who were able to better focus their attention on Wyatt. "Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation provided our family with financial and emotional support when our son was diagnosed with cancer," said Lacy. "With the loss of one income and huge medical bills, Teddy Bear was our lifeline. Their financial support allowed us to keep our heads above water." The Taylors also received educational support, counseling services, and participated in Family Fun Days put on by TBCF. Lacy also took part in a day of rest and pampering when TBCF hosted a Mothers Spa Day event through the organization's Care For The Caretakers program.

"After Wyatt was cancer free, the TBCF provided much needed counseling services to Wyatt and our entire family. This was something that we did not expect to need," said Lacy. "However, Wyatt has had a difficult time adjusting after his treatment was completed. The counseling was instrumental in helping our entire family get back on track."

Additionally, TBCF provided Wyatt with education counseling in order to pinpoint some of his problem areas so that the Taylors were better able to focus on his needs. As a result of those counseling sessions, he has been enrolled in a small private school where he's currently succeeding.

With Wyatt in remission, the Taylors have participated in TBCF's *Pay It Forward* program, designed for past TBCF Program Recipients to support new and future families by donating their services to the organization for the benefit of others. They shared their story at the 2013 Saks & The City fundraising event. "We are grateful for everything Teddy Bear has done for us," said Lacy.

Unfortunately, the Taylor's story is not a unique one. The TBCF helps more than 630 individuals annually who have similar circumstances when faced with pediatric cancer. For more than 10 years, TBCF has been providing financial and emotional support to families of children with cancer living in Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties.

This month TBCF continues its inaugural eight-week awareness and fundraising effort, the Gold Ribbon Campaign, in recognition of National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. The volunteer-driven Gold Ribbon Campaign runs from mid-September through October and seeks to further public awareness about TBCF and pediatric cancer, raise \$200,000 from a minimum of 1,000 individuals and create supportive communities for families who are experiencing childhood cancer. For more information or to make a donation, please visit www.teddybearcancerfoundation.org or call 962-7486.

Lindsey Guerrero is executive director of the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation.

Create a site to raise money online for family and friends with cancer and share news and updates on patients health and needs

<http://www.youcaring.com/>