

CALLIE TALBOT
ST. IGNATIUS SCHOOL

I think I affected everyone around me when I was diagnosed with cancer. On November 17, 2002, when I was eight years old, I was diagnosed with stage four rhabdomyosarcoma. It is a soft tissue tumor, usually found in your head or neck. My tumor was located in my sinuses, wrapped around my sphenoid sinus and pituitary gland, pressing on my optic nerve and my brain.

From that day on, my life was about to change forever. I think the initial shock hadn't set into anyone's brains until a few days later. I had to go into surgery to get a biopsy, get a mediport, and spinal tap. My tumor was inoperable because of the location in my head. The next day I started chemotherapy and radiation.

The chemo made my hair fall out and I lost a lot of weight. The radiation made my taste change. I didn't even like chocolate anymore.

I know that my diagnosis had a hard impact on my family, especially my little brother and sister. I was in the hospital at least once a week, and they were so small at the time that they spent a lot of time at my grandparents' house. They barely ever got to see me and we didn't get to go on vacation that summer. They also didn't get to see a lot of my parents because they spent most of their time with me. My dad didn't get to go to work every day and my mom was there whenever I felt sick.

At school I was the little bald headed girl with the yellow hat. All but one of my friends completely ignored me. I think that most of them were scared that they would catch cancer if they hung around with me even though someone from the hospital came and talked to them about cancer. I'm sure most of the kids forget that I even had cancer, but I always think of what I would look like and who my friends would be if I never had cancer.

Through my cancer experience I have gotten to participate in many activities. One that I like the most is a summer camp for kids who have had cancer. It is also one of the most unique because I have made many friends with many different experiences, though similar to mine. I have also gone to the hospital to hand out gifts to cancer patients staying in the hospital. We also sang songs to them to try and cheer them up even though we probably were pretty bad. I know we helped cheer them up and gave them something to do because the hospital can get pretty boring when you stay there for so long.

Overall, my experience has been both a tough and rewarding journey. Sometimes along the path I used to question God saying, "Why? Why me? Why now?" But now I understand that the Man upstairs has a plan for us all, even if it's bumpy and uncertain in some spots along the way.