

Eric Speicher Jr. Memorial Scholarship

Eric was your typical kid. He grew up loving baseball and his dad's favorite team, the Boston Red Sox. He loved to play baseball for the West Pittston Little League. He was the catcher for the MOOSE team and had every hope to play for the Warrior's when it was time. He proudly wore #34 on all his baseball uniforms since coach pitch. When he wasn't playing baseball, he would come straight home from school and get his homework done. He would go down the street with his best friends from the neighborhood and play street hockey until it got dark.



If it happened to be raining, they would play in our living room! However, Eric loved someone more than any sport, his little brother Chase. He and Chase had a bond like no other. He was so caring and loving with him, even given their almost 8 year age difference. He always made sure Chase was included and would protect him at all costs. Eric was an amazing young man. He was extremely smart, loving and oh so sweet. Eric endured more in his 14 years of life than any child should ever have to. He accepted what life gave him and took it all with grace and dignity. This is Eric's story:

On June 9, 2011, after two weeks of unexplained headaches, nausea and vomiting, an MRI revealed a mass in Eric's brain. Eric endured his first brain surgery on June 14, 2011. It was after this surgery that we were informed that Eric had brain cancer, a grade 3, Anaplastic Ependymoma. Eric went on to receive Proton therapy (a form of radiation therapy) at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. The post radiation MRI was beautiful, his brain was healthy and back to "normal."

Unfortunately, our excitement and relief was short lived. In April of 2012 a routine MRI revealed a recurrence of the disease. We had decided at this point that it was time to turn to a hospital that strictly dealt with cancer. Eric began a chemotherapy trial at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City shortly after this reoccurrence. He began with a clinical therapy trial to try to shrink the tumor, this failed.

Eric underwent his second brain surgery 2 weeks before his 13th birthday. After surgery he had another 6 weeks of standard radiation to his brain. Three months later post radiation scan revealed another recurrence in a different area of his brain. In October of 2012, Eric underwent his 3rd brain surgery. This surgery was done to remove the new tumor and also to place an Ommaya Reservoir, a special port placed in the brain, which

would be used to inject a special radiological antibody into Eric's cerebral spinal fluid. This was also a new clinical trial. In late January we found that Eric's disease had again recurred. Again, Eric underwent more radiation. Again, this failed. He went on to join 3 more clinical trials in the hopes that one of these would finally kill the horrible, relentless disease.

On December 23, 2013, Eric finally became cancer free. He gained his wings at 8:29PM. He is forever 14.

Throughout his ordeal, Eric always tried to stay upbeat and as positive as possible. He did have his moments of anger, fear and sadness, but he did not let those feelings overwhelm him. He always said: "I'll do whatever the doctors tell me because I just want to get better." Eric continued to hang out with his friends, watch football and baseball games, attend parties and have sleepovers. He wanted to play basketball for Wyoming Area but when he realized he couldn't actively play, he became a manager for the freshman team for 2 years. This allowed him to stay involved and be part of the team. Eric continued to attend school between treatments and travel, and when he could not physically attend, he worked hard at home and was able to maintain an A average. He was very proud of this achievement. He became active in Immaculate Conception's youth group and helped fill and deliver baskets during the holidays. He worked as an altar server and was a member of the live Stations of the Cross. Eric also managed to help many of his West Pittston friends and family during the flood of 2011. An event that really sums up Eric's kindness and compassion: On Eric's last day of his first round of radiation therapy in Philadelphia, September 7, 2011, he returned home and instead of celebrating he went directly to a friend's home (in the flood zone) and helped the family move items to higher ground. The next morning at 7:00 AM he returned to help some more. When he was done at this house he went to another. He didn't stop until he was physically too tired to continue. This was Eric.

To keep his name alive and to try and help fight this horrific disease that takes away so many of our special loved children, we have formed a foundation in Eric's name. Little Eric's Foundation has been created to bring awareness and raise funds to help support research for all pediatric brain and childhood cancers.

NO CHILD SHOULD EVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT LOSING THEIR CHILDHOOD OR THEIR LIFE TO CANCER.

This thoughtful, generous \$1034.00 scholarship has been established by Eric's parents/family in his memory. A Speicher selection



committee will select the recipient of this scholarship. Finalists for this scholarship may be interviewed as part of the selection process.

CRITERIA for selection:

This scholarship will be given to a graduating Wyoming Area senior who will be attending an accredited 4 year college/university. Preference will be given to a student planning to enter a medical or science related field. Student must be an active member of a Wyoming Area sports team, preferably baseball or softball. Student must have a minimum cumulative (Grades 9, 10, 11 and Semester 1 of Grade 12) QPA of at least 90.

ESSAY: in a solid essay of at least 500 words, tell us:

Throughout the later part of Eric's life he was faced with many obstacles. He exhibited courage and strength throughout this adversity and was able to impact change around him. What have you done to overcome difficulties in your life and how will you use this scholarship and your educational endeavors to impact change for the better?

***Remember do NOT use your full name on the ESSAY page or in your essay that you submit for this particular scholarship. Use your initials including your middle name initial at the top of each essay page. Finalists for this scholarship may be interviewed.