

Day by Day- A Family Story

Like most families with four kids and two teen-agers, the White family was busy. Caitlynn, 17, had gymnastics and Zachary, 13, had football. Five-year-old Hunter was in kindergarten at Barbara Jordan Elementary in Odessa and 1-year-old Brooklynn was just learning to walk and getting into everything.

That was before Hunter was diagnosed with childhood leukemia on Oct. 17, 2016.

“In some ways it was a relief because we knew something was wrong,” said Nina, Hunter’s mother. Hunter began complaining about his legs hurting last July, so they used Ben Gay on them, she explained. “But then it got so he couldn’t walk a lot, and the doctors treated him for anemia.”

“One night, his legs started hurting at 2 a.m. and by 2 p.m., he couldn’t walk at all,” Nina explained. Hunter’s parents went with the ambulance to a Lubbock hospital. “It was scary, but I was glad to finally get some answers,” she said.

“The Ronald McDonald Family Room® at the hospital saved us the first month,” Nina said. Her mother-in-law quit her job and stayed at the hospital with Hunter. “We used the beds, the showers, and the washers and dryers. Otherwise, people would have to keep bringing us clean clothes.”

Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Southwest® serves a 68-county area of West Texas and Southeast New Mexico, which includes the Permian Basin, the Concho Valley, Abilene and West Central Texas and Lubbock and the South Plains.

After the first month, Hunter’s treatment progressed to six different kinds of chemotherapy, some which required an overnight stay. He might be at the hospital one, two or four days a week.

“We have stayed at the Ronald McDonald House® in Lubbock a total of about 100 nights. We eat meals served there and sometimes fix our own in the kitchen. We might hang out in the living room with Hunter, watch TV and eat popcorn, or we can go downstairs to a game room with pin ball and Pac Man machines and video games,” Nina said. She and her husband, Rusty, take turns.

The shuttles provided from the Ronald McDonald House to the Lubbock hospitals simplified the routine of caring for Hunter during treatment.



“The most helpful thing is that we do more family stuff when we are all there together,” she said. The whole family has stayed there at times, which relieved the stress of always tag-teaming for parents.

“Without the Ronald McDonald House in Lubbock, I’d probably have to get up at 5 a.m. and drive,” Nina explained. “I don’t know if I could work.”

“Jax (the therapy dog at the Ronald McDonald House) has really helped too because Hunter just loves him to death,” Nina said. “Hunter comes back to the house and plays with Jax outside, and if Hunter’s tired, they will just sit together.”

Hunter just celebrated his sixth birthday, and he is in remission right now. It’s a three-year battle until he’s considered cancer-free. “We just have to keep it at bay,” Nina explained. “To me, this is the new normal, and we’ll take it day by day until then.”