

HEALTHBRIDGE CHAMPION MAYZ GONZALEZ



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After experiencing worsening headaches, six-year-old Mayz Gonzalez underwent multiple tests that identified a brain tumor near the cerebellum. He underwent a tumor resection and further tests, concluding the tumor was cancerous. Mayz was diagnosed with medulloblastoma, the second leading type of cancer in children his age. A later MRI also identified a small tumor in his frontal lobe and other seedlings—or sprouts of possibly cancerous cells—throughout his brain and spine.

The first step in treatment was a tumor resection. After surgery, Mayz acquired a postoperative syndrome called posterior fossa. This temporary syndrome severely affected his ability to move his limbs, eat, swallow, and speak. When he finished the prescribed radiation and chemotherapy, Mayz’s physician at a local Orange County hospital recommended intense rehabilitation at HealthBridge, a Nexus Health Systems facility.

“Mayz’s doctor said he could be in therapy three hours a day, six days a week,” explained his mother, Heather Miller Gonzalez. “I thought to myself, ‘Why would I pick anywhere else for him to go?’”

The Gonzalez family toured HealthBridge and met with the Director of Admissions. Mrs. Gonzalez remembered the team to be very encouraging and loving, plus the facility was close to their home so they could eat dinner together as a family.

“My favorite part was Mayz could go outside,” said Mrs. Gonzalez. “I would take my son and we would do laps. It was just great.”

Mayz was at HealthBridge for three weeks before he returned to the children’s hospital for more chemotherapy. During his stay, he took part in physical and occupational therapy as well as speech-language pathology.

“He had a special connection with Leah, his speech therapist. Mayz really started working for her and he was swallowing and starting to make sounds before we left,” said Mrs. Gonzalez. “Physical therapy was also so encouraging, too. They had him standing.”

Mrs. Gonzalez also explained that HealthBridge made her feel part of the team helping Mayz get better. She was able to have input on his goals and felt like the therapy team listened to what she wanted. Mrs. Gonzalez also shared the nursing staff was encouraging and nice.

“I want Mayz to come back right after chemo...I would be ecstatic if he could go back to HealthBridge,” shared Mrs. Gonzalez. “I’ve already seen much growth. If we can keep getting that great therapy, I just know he’ll come out the syndrome. I’m so appreciative of all they did while we were there. We’d go back in a heartbeat.”

Some of the best news yet is that four weeks after the radiation and chemotherapy combination treatment, Mayz’s brain scan was totally clear. His mom explained that even the doctor couldn’t believe the tumor in the front of his brain had gone away and the spots on his spine had definitely decreased. Although Mayz is between the third and fourth stages of medulloblastoma—which gives him about a 50% survival rate—his family is hopeful for what the future will hold.

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