**Connor Johnson – 2017 Cabin Fever Fighter**

At the age of 13, Connor Johnson was a typical Rochester teenage boy. He was attending John Adams Middle School and loved playing baseball and video games. He is a huge sports fan and especially enjoys watching hockey and football. Suddenly, things drastically changed. In the fall of 2015, Connor was having persistent headaches, double vision and was vomiting. A trip to his doctor did not reveal anything out of the ordinary. Since Connor’s symptoms persisted, his parents, Kathy and Curt, took him to the eye doctor to see if his vision was the culprit. The ophthalmologist noticed that his optic nerve was severely swollen, and in response, made an appointment for Connor to have an MRI performed the following morning. The MRI revealed an egg-sized, malignant tumor in the back of his brain that was limiting necessary blood flow and increasing the pressure on his brain and spinal fluid. The tumor was diagnosed as Stage 4 Medulloblastoma, a cancerous tumor pressing against his brain stem.

Connor was immediately admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) following his MRI. After two days of attentive monitoring, he was scheduled for surgery to remove the tumor. On Thanksgiving Day, he had a second MRI to check if the tumor had spread to his spine. Thankfully, Connor’s spine was tumor free. Finally, some good news! He was only allowed a bland hospital turkey lunch that Thanksgiving because he was scheduled for a big surgery the following day. The surgery to remove the brain tumor took 6 hours. The possible side-effects and outcomes of the surgery were terrifying, but Curt and Kathy knew their son was in good hands with the staff at the Mayo Clinic. Three days after brain surgery, Connor was able to return home. He needed to use a walker to help him get around. He also lost all expression and emotion for a short period of time, but Connor’s friends and family were overjoyed to see him return to a “new normal” shortly thereafter.

During his recovery after his surgery, Connor was given a rigorous cancer treatment schedule including one year of chemotherapy and six weeks of proton beam radiation. Proton beam radiation is completed daily, Monday through Friday, during those 6 weeks. For each day of therapy, Connor needed to remain completely still, lying on a hard table for one to two hours, non-stop. The slightest wiggle of his toe could cause the staff the need to stop the procedure and reset the machine. The fact that an active teenage boy could accomplish this torturous task is a testament to Connor. Not once did he ever complain!

After 30 radiation treatments, Connor reached a major milestone; he was able to ceremoniously ring the bell which signified his completion of radiation therapy treatments. Regrettably, Connor’s journey did not end there. He still needed to endure nine additional months of continued chemotherapy. Finally, on January 19th, 2017, Connor completed his last dose of chemotherapy. This was a major hurdle for Connor and it was an unbelievable relief to finish all of his treatments. After his first post-treatment MRI, on February 9th, 2017, Connor was given the long awaited news that he had no evidence of disease!

Connor is an amazingly strong and courageous kid with a caring heart. He never felt sorry for himself during the tumultuous journey he endured. He remained positive and continued to battle this unforgiving disease each and every day with his hard working attitude. Connor’s dream career was to become a radiologist even before his battle with cancer, and this experience has solidified that career path for him. When asked, “Why do you want to become a doctor?” Connor will earnestly respond, “…because I want to help people.” That response exemplifies Connor Johnson. No matter what he endures, he is always looking to help others during their difficult times. He has an amazing ability to make those around him feel at ease. We know that he will undoubtedly provide this feeling to his radiology patients when the time comes. One of his doctors was quoted as saying, “Connor has the courage of an adult, but the attitude of a child.”

Connor’s older brothers, Trevor, Grant & Garrett, their extended family, friends and community provided much needed support during his treatment. Connor and his family are amazed and eternally thankful at all the good that has come out of this tragic experience.  The support that they have received from those who they’ve come in contact with throughout this journey has been remarkable. It has taught them to enjoy all parts of life and be thankful for each and every day.

As previously noted, Connor is a huge sports fan. He bleeds Purple due to his love for the Minnesota Vikings. Fittingly, Marcus Sherels, cornerback and All-Pro return specialist for the Minnesota Vikings will be Connor’s Hero and partner during the 2017 Cabin Fever Fighter Round.