

STRONG KIDS NEWS



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Crosby Wilmot

— CAMPAIGN UPDATE —

Wilmots create “Crosby’s Fund” in memory of their beloved son

At just 13 months old, Crosby Wilmot was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare cancer of the sympathetic nervous system that accounts for half of cancers diagnosed in infants. By the time of diagnosis, the disease has already spread throughout most children’s bodies. The same was true for Crosby, who bravely battled for 11 months. He passed away on August 4, 2011, just one month shy of his second birthday. Crosby’s spirit, however, continues to live on in many ways and has been honored by his family with the creation of Crosby’s Fund, a local philanthropic initiative, through the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center and Golisano Children’s Hospital at the University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC). It funds research in

childhood cancer, with a focus on neuroblastoma.

“Crosby spent 85 percent of his illness in the hospital,” said Zoe Wilmot, Crosby’s mother. “We knew when he relapsed that we would want to one day help raise money for neuroblastoma research.”

In order to raise the significant level of funds that would be required to finance research, Crosby’s parents, Kevin and Zoe Wilmot, have made Crosby’s Fund a part of community events, including George Eastman House’s PhotoFinish 5k and Rochester’s Midtown Athletic Club’s Ultimate Xtreme Challenge. They also promote giving through social media sites,

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Crosby Fund

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such as Crowdrise, an online fundraising site.

Crosby's Fund has raised a total of nearly \$500,000, with \$250,000 coming from the first year of participating in the PhotoFinish 5k in 2011. "It is amazing to see how many people get involved and simply want to help," Zoe said.

Determined to make the largest impact with the funds raised, Crosby's family met with many doctors, researchers, and administrators from Strong Memorial Hospital, the Wilmot Cancer Center, and Golisano Children's Hospital at URM. Their efforts led them to Nina Schor, M.D., Ph.D., William H. Eilinger Chair of Pediatrics and pediatrician-in-chief of Golisano Children's Hospital. Schor is nationally known for her research in neuroblastoma and leads the Laboratory for Pre-clinical Neuropharmacology, a lab funded by the William H. Eilinger Endowment (and, now, the Crosby Wilmot Fund for Pediatric Cancer Research). The lab focuses particularly on research of drugs to target neuroblastoma cells and their resistance to chemotherapy.

"We were excited to find someone who was as excited about neuroblastoma research as we are," Zoe said.

"Only 1 or 2 in 10,000 children develop cancer of any kind," Schor said. "For this reason, when finances are so limited, funding for childhood cancer is very low compared to that of adult cancer and, therefore, depends more and more heavily on foundations, like Crosby's Fund,

that specifically fund childhood cancer research." With the support of Crosby's Fund, Schor was able to recently expand her lab and hire Xingguo Li, Ph.D., as a research assistant professor. Li's research is focused on the Sine Oculis Homeobox (SIX) family of proteins that play a large role in cell proliferation and growth in healthy cells and in many cancer cells, including neuroblastoma.

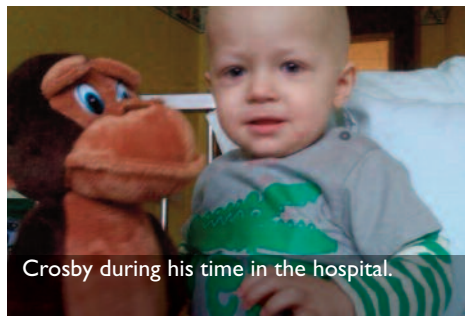
The researchers hope to use the proteins to differentiate enough between normal cells and tumor cells so that they could aim a drug to kill only tumor cells, without harming the normal cells.

In addition to supporting Li's position, Crosby's Fund also finances a seed grant focused on neuroblastoma. The grant was recently awarded to Mark Noble, Ph.D., professor of neurology, genetics, neurobiology, and anatomy and director of the University of Rochester Stem

Cell and Regenerative Medicine Institute. He is one of the pioneers of stem cell research and directs research on a number of topics, including cancer. With the award, Noble will develop new research that he hopes will prove competitive for future NIH funding. The seed grant started Jan. 1, with \$50,000 of backing possible for the first year.

"We heard the message over and over again when we were in the hospital that there is not enough money for pediatric cancer research," Zoe said. "We feel that we owe it to Crosby and all of the other kids that aren't getting the research to make a difference for them and, hopefully, one day find a cure."

To find out how you can support Crosby's Fund, or how to create your own fund, please contact Scott Rasmussen, assistant VP for URM Advancement, at (585) 273-5932.



Crosby during his time in the hospital.



"Nina's Neuroblastoma" lab team at the PhotoFinish 5K.



Crosby with his siblings Davis, Lola, and Kassidy.