

The Thurn Family's Story

Tim Thurn's mother died from Hodgkin's Lymphoma, so the moment he felt a familiar lump on the back of his neck, he had it checked out. "The doctors were able to detect it early," Tim said. "I went through traditional chemotherapy and hoped for the best. I didn't have any noticeable outward signs, so I didn't think it was having an effect on our son Noah."

However, in the summer of 2007, when Noah was 8 years old, Tim's cancer recurred. It was then he and his wife Cynthia realized they needed help as they tried to communicate the reality of the illness with Noah. They were having a very difficult time coping and knew they didn't have the skills to handle the situation with Noah on their own.

"One day, after Tim's recurrence, we were going to play Putt-Putt golf," said Cynthia, with tear-stained cheeks. "Tim was in pain, and Noah sensed that something was very wrong. He was so traumatized about his father's failing health that he broke into tears. To reassure Noah and to ease his sadness and fear, Tim joined the family outing. But we knew then that we needed help," she said.



The Thurns learned about Wonders & Worries from a brochure at Texas Oncology, where Tim received his treatments. But they didn't know at first if it was something that was right for them.

Fortunately, they quickly realized what a tremendous help Wonders & Worries would be for their family. "We found great support and a kind, sincere staff throughout the organization," Tim said. "They are the nicest people I have ever met, and they are more genuine than any other organization I have ever been involved with."

At Wonders & Worries, Noah was able to get the support he needed to help him accept the changes in the family due to his father's illness, working with child life specialist Farya Phillips.

"Farya is nice," Noah said. "We did the feeling tree, aroma therapy, and we made a target that represented cancer and threw toilet paper at it!"

Noah began to understand that cancer isn't contagious and that there are medicines and procedures that can help treat his dad's cancer – but that dad wouldn't always be able to go out and have fun with him. Noah's newfound knowledge of the disease helped him manage his anxieties and fears.

Wonders & Worries gives children hands-on experience so they can become aware of what is happening with their parent's illness. And, the organization likes to mix in a little fun as well.

"I got to meet the Longhorn football players," Noah said. "It was the best day of my life!"

"I have really enjoyed all of the events and meeting other families, but the biggest effect that Wonders & Worries has had on me was their help for Noah," Cynthia said. "He was having all sorts of emotional and physical reactions, and it was terribly painful to watch. Wonders & Worries helped him realize that there were some things we couldn't do for him, and he was able to learn about cancer in a way he could understand. I think it is very important that if you are taught how to cope, it can help you for the rest of your life."

"Wonders & Worries fills such an important need," said Tim. "I don't know how we could have done it without them. My hope is that they can expand their services beyond Austin to help families like ours around the state and around the country."