

# A New Path

Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program

“ We want them to thrive after cancer. ”

— Dr. John Gates, Director, Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program



Breanna Estrada, 20, Madera

A teenage girl smiles nervously, her parents sitting beside her as the pediatric oncologist eagerly tells her she no longer needs cancer treatment. The family feels a mix of excitement, relief and worry. It's been a long road, one that Valley Children's well-established Pediatric Cancer and Blood Diseases Center has followed with them for two years.

Now a new path begins—survivorship. Questions abound. Will the cancer return? Will it be difficult to go back to school? Will I live a normal life?

About 80 percent of children diagnosed with cancer become long-term survivors, meaning they are cancer-free five or more years. But the same treatments that cure cancer can have long-term effects. Powerful yet toxic radiation and chemotherapy treatments may affect a survivor's ability to have children, cause hearing loss or result in a second cancer.

Valley Children's helps survivors create a better future through its Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program. Tailored to the survivor's specific needs, the team includes pediatric oncologists, dietitians, clinical psychologists, neuropsychologists and social workers,

along with access to numerous pediatric specialties if necessary, all with one goal: to increase a survivor's chances of living a full, healthy life.

The only one of its kind in the Valley, the program is available for all childhood cancer survivors, regardless if treated at Valley Children's. Survivors learn about their individual health risks, exercise and diet habits, recommended routine medical tests, and potential education and financial assistance.

About 1,000 childhood cancer survivors throughout the Valley will require these annual services, only about 350 of whom the program currently assists. Program Director Dr. John Gates, a pediatric hematologist/oncologist and childhood cancer survivor himself, says only funding for increased staffing stands in the way of success: "We don't want kids just to survive cancer. We want them to thrive after cancer."

Fellow survivor, Breanna Estrada, 20, plans to do just that, especially when she finishes her education and becomes a pediatric nurse.

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