

# Teaming up to Beat Cancer

“We’re glad families can get help for their children where they live.”

- Esther Saldana, Kash's mom



“Mommy, that’s me!” 5-year-old Kash Saldana told his parents David and Esther when they took him to see him featured on several Valley Children’s Healthcare billboards. The signs display the boy with the words: “Kash. Cancer-Free.”

“We knew something was wrong,” Esther explains, telling their story. “He stopped wanting to eat. His legs were giving out.” The couple took Kash to various pediatricians, not settling for the answer, “He’s just in his terrible twos.” They persevered. “As a mother, you just say to yourself, ‘Something’s up with my baby,’” Esther says.

When Kash got a rash of tiny red dots and began throwing up, still unable to walk, Esther and David drove quickly to the emergency department at Valley Children’s Hospital. “The ER doctors recognized the rash as petechiae, and we went to the front of the line,” Esther says. “‘Your child has leukemia’ – how fast your life changes with a couple of words.”

Kash had Burkitt leukemia, an aggressive type of blood cancer. Pediatric hematologists/oncologists Dr. Wendy Tchong and Dr. Vonda Crouse treated Kash.

“Chemotherapy began two nights later,” mom recalls. “The doctors were on top of it.”

“We modified the treatment plan for Burkitt leukemia,” Dr. Crouse says. “The outcomes are better if we treat it more intensively over a shorter period of time.” Kash received chemotherapy treatments nearly back-to-back for two months.

“Kash’s parents were here to provide support for their son. Their presence made it possible for him to thrive,” Dr. Crouse says. The medical and nursing team’s full support staff were vitally important to the Saldanas’ experience. “Everyone was incredible,” David says.

The Saldanas celebrated Kash’s final chemo treatment on June 27, 2014. “We’re glad families can get help for their children where they live,” Esther says. “We’re grateful Valley Children’s is here,” David adds.

*Futures Worth Fighting For.*