

Our Hero: Liam

At just three months old, Liam was seriously ill. Suffering from a fever and gastrointestinal problems, his mother Mercedes took him to the hospital. Within a few days, Liam was on life support with no diagnosis for his condition.

In July 2011, Liam was transferred to Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital and was diagnosed with hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH). HLH is a rare and life-threatening blood disorder. In his first seven months in the hospital, Liam received chemotherapy as well as a life-saving bone marrow transplant in September 2011.

Shortly after his operation, he developed graft vs. host disease (GVHD). Two years later, Liam received a new combination of medicines that cured his GVHD.

As a single parent, Mercedes stayed in the hospital with Liam for almost three years only going home for two months at a time. "It was incredibly difficult to be there for Liam and to be present for my 3-year old who bounced between friend's homes," she said. "Watching him undergo 18 surgeries and endure such painful treatments was the worst feeling I have ever experienced."

Hope & Heroes knows there is more to fighting these diseases than just the treatment. That's why we fund an integrative therapies program that supports patient families going through crisis and helps relieve treatment-related symptoms— all free of charge.

"Thanks to Hope & Heroes, both Liam and I found ways to relax during those difficult times. We absolutely loved acupuncture, massage, Reiki, and meditation," said Mercedes.

Although Liam is off medication, he continues to experience side effects, such as hearing loss and receives physical, occupational and speech therapy. But Mercedes is thankful for the treatment and support her son received. "As a parent of a survivor, I can say my son had a second chance in life, thanks to Hope & Heroes and the research that allowed him to be cured."

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and National Blood Cancer Awareness Month. Join Hope & Heroes in raising awareness and support to help local children and families fighting these diseases. Visit hopeandheroes.org/September.