

HEALTHIER TIMES

# Fighting Back Against Cancer

September Is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Seven-year-old Caleb Gulizia is a second grade student at Reeder Elementary School in Omaha and so far in his young life he has experienced more than any child should. Caleb has Brain Stem Glioma, a rare type of brain cancer. Most children with this cancer die within 18 months of diagnosis. Only several hundred children nationwide have been diagnosed with the disease.

"Caleb has endured countless surgeries, six weeks of daily radiation therapy and more than 18 months of chemotherapy," Caleb's aunt, Jamie Svatos, said Sept. 7. Svatos is a Douglas County Farm Bureau member.

Because of the aggressive treatments used to save his life, Caleb started having strokes. To stop the strokes, he went through very complicated brain blood vessel bypass surgery in March at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

"Through it all he always has a smile on his face and is an inspiration to everyone he meets," Svatos said. She has been so moved by Caleb and her family's experience that she has become the Nebraska chapter director for The Cure Starts Now Foundation of Nebraska, an organization which fights for the cure for children with brain stem glioma.

"In the four years since Caleb has been diagnosed, no new treatments have been approved by the FDA. A child diagnosed today will ultimately suffer the same fate as Caleb or worse. All of my crying and anger did not make a difference for Caleb; I pray that raising money for the Cure Starts Now Foundation will," she said.

While the surgery has stopped the strokes



Seven-year-old Caleb Gulizia of Omaha was diagnosed with Brain Stem Glioma, a rare type of brain cancer.

and has allowed Caleb a chance to regain some of his independence, doctors believe the strokes will come back and he will need similar surgery on the opposite side of his brain.

"I have to do something to try to improve the outcome for these amazing kids. Because September is Childhood Cancer Awareness month, I am starting a fundraiser selling cookbooks," Svatos said. The \$20 cookbooks are a hardbound, three-ring binder of recipes from children all over the United States who are battling brain cancer. The cookbooks will sell at gift shops and craft shows and can be purchased at [www.thecurestartsnov.org](http://www.thecurestartsnov.org).

For more information about pediatric brain cancer and The Cure Starts Now Foundation of Nebraska, contact Jamie Svatos at 402/557-8371 or 402/250-6030 or email [jamie.svatos@thecurestartsnov.org](mailto:jamie.svatos@thecurestartsnov.org).

## Brain Stem Glioma

- Gliomas can occur anywhere in the central nervous system (CNS). The name given to a glioma is often based on its location. For example, a glioma found along the optic nerves is called an optic nerve glioma. A brain stem glioma is located in the lowest, stem-like portion of the brain.

- Symptoms depend on the exact location of the tumor. For example, the cerebellum aids in coordinating voluntary movements and maintaining balance and muscular tone. These are the functions that would be affected by a tumor in that area. A glioma in the cerebrum is likely to cause headaches, nausea, vomiting, weakness of arms or legs, visual disorders, seizures, or intellectual and behavioral problems.

- Other symptoms of a glioma may include paralysis of a single part of the body or one side of the body, tremors, hormonal abnormalities or diabetes. The tumor may cause hydrocephalus or "water on the brain," creating pressure that can cause headaches, nausea, vomiting or visual disturbances. In babies and very young children whose skull bones are not firmly set, hydrocephalus can actually cause the skull to increase in size.

- If you have any questions about pediatric brain cancer, please go to [thecurestartsnov.org](http://thecurestartsnov.org)

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