

Brooks from California

As most parents can attest, the day your child is born changes your life forever. This could not have been more accurate when on May 23, 1999 our first born, Brooks Matthew entered the world. Five months after the emergency C-section followed by 7 days of NICU we saw a neurologist because Brooks wasn't using his hands equally. We were then told that he had suffered a stroke at or during birth and had cerebral palsy. Shock doesn't quite explain our initial response. Obviously our world changed forever.

MRI confirmed Brooks' massive stroke and two weeks later he had his first seizure. Treatment followed and we had three years of seizure freedom, but with many difficulties as well as conflicting opinions on management.

Fast forward to May, 2004. Brooks' seizures became out of control. We decided to home school him as his behavior was increasingly difficult, and he was unable to work within a classroom setting. At that time, we were in the process of changing his medications again, and our world seemed out of control.

After lots of discussion we were told that Brooks was a candidate for epilepsy surgery. We first interviewed several top west coast medical centers. Then we were referred to Cleveland Clinic. After we met the Cleveland Clinic's epilepsy and neurosurgery team, we knew that surgery was the right decision for Brooks and that this was the right place to do it. I remember meeting the neurosurgeon, and getting teary eyed, not because of what he was saying, but rather because I immediately felt comfortable with him, his confidence and expertise. That has been the sentiment we hold for each and every team member that has worked with Brooks at Cleveland Clinic.

On January 13th, 2005 Brooks had a functional hemispherectomy. At that time he was on three anticonvulsants and still breaking through. Two years later he is seizure free and on a very low dose of Depakote. For Brooks it was like a light bulb was turned on and he was finally able to work as efficiently as his brain would allow with the damage he had suffered. He is a different, happy child, and our little hero. We are grateful for every single seizure free day and don't take any of these days for granted.

We strongly support the Cleveland Clinic Pediatric Epilepsy Support Group. To take a family member and even consider epilepsy surgery, let alone do it, is such a daunting decision. Few can truly provide support and be lifesavers like those who walked in these shoes. Our experience before, during and after surgery was wonderful. We have found true friends, and know that Brooks life was forever changed.

Brooks' parents