

# HELP FOR GOOD

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Brooklyn



Stark County  
Board of  
Developmental  
Disabilities



# Brooklyn

Meet 2-year-old Brooklyn Russell, our July ambassador. Brooklyn was diagnosed with [Stage 3 Anaplastic Ependymoma](#), a rare cancerous tumor in her brain at just 2 ½ months old. She has since undergone five surgeries and six rounds of chemotherapy. In February of 2023, Brooklyn finished up chemotherapy. Things are starting to look up for Brooklyn and her family.

According to mom Megan, “Brooklyn loves animals and knows the sounds that a dog, cat, duck, chicken, cow, snake, tiger, giraffe (don’t ask), sheep, and horses make.” She also loves to swim and her favorite television show is Bluey.

Brooklyn has been working with physical and occupational therapy specialist to gain skills that were affected by the chemotherapy and makes strides in every session. She is learning to give hugs and kisses, walk, stand, and has mastered 55 words in her vocabulary. Brooklyn’s parents Megan and Ben, credit Stark County’s Early Intervention (formerly known as Help Me Grow) for helping her to learn how to walk by lending a gait trainer and providing her physical and occupational therapy.

According to Sylvia Kiefer, Stark DD’s Early Intervention Physical Therapist, Brooklyn was referred to Early Intervention services at the age of 4 months.

“She had already been through 4 surgeries secondary to her diagnosis of a malignant brain tumor and numerous members of her family were present for the evaluation. It was quickly clear that this family was all on board to do whatever was needed to ensure



Brooklyn's optimal progress. At that time, Brooklyn did present with numerous delays with her physical abilities, however she was alert and social and her big personality was already beginning to shine," said Sylvia.

"The Early Intervention model of coaching was explained and the family has been easy to coach on how to embed small therapeutic activities within the daily routine for repeated opportunities to practice, probably due to mom's experience as an athletic trainer and dad's as a track coach. For the next year and a half, Megan did an awesome job of balancing Brooklyn's chemotherapy and other appointments with her EI appointments to ensure that Brooklyn was feeling well and ready for our visits together."

Coaching has focused on gross, fine and visual motor skills with communication and cognitive development, and has always been embedded in the activities. "Brooklyn has made tremendous gains and is now moving around the home on her own, using her "helper hand" much more spontaneously, feeding herself, helping with dressing and communicating well using a combination of words and signs. She has learned so much through her parents setting up the just right level of challenge to ensure success and confidence and through her own self determination to move and explore. I'm excited to see what the next year will bring in terms of new skills and successes," said Sylvia.

Brooklyn's mom says that she is "Fearfully and Wonderfully Brave." If you would like to know more about Brooklyn's journey, follow the family's blog by visiting the link below:

[Fearfully and Wonderfully Brave.](#)

