



The Fresno Truck Center
Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program

Jakob

“My life was saved by the wonderful doctors and nurses at Valley Children’s and I want to be able to help kids just like myself.”

-Jakob Barrera, Valley Children’s Childhood Cancer Survivor



Meet Jakob. Everything he does is with the most sincere intentions and through his volunteer work as a Vacation Bible School youth leader, fifth grade camp counselor and Merced Union High School District blood drive advocate (just to name a few), Jakob is a beam of light that has brought hope and inspiration to many. However, the path he has paved did not come easily.

At 2 years old, extreme fatigue and unexplained fevers led to several doctor visits and additional testing, and in December 2003, Jakob was diagnosed with pre-B cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Over the course of three years and two months, Jakob had three chemo port surgeries, multiple spinal taps and bone marrow biopsies, which required many inpatient stays at Valley Children’s. His earliest childhood memories include playing on hospital beds, enjoying portable video games and the faint sounds of beeping machinery.

“Being so young, this was the ‘norm’ for me because I didn’t understand what was going on, and for many years, I did not want anyone to know I grew up battling

cancer because I thought being ‘different’ was a bad thing,” reflected Jakob.

On Christmas Eve, after receiving his thirteenth round of chemo treatment, Jakob learned that he was in remission, but he still had a long road ahead to healing emotionally, socially and physically.

“Childhood cancer affected my fine motor skills, which led to me taking extra time during my school day to write out my homework because it was difficult to hold a pencil. It also affected the nerves in my legs, which led to difficulty performing physical activities. And it affected my cognition, which made it challenging to retain information. I always felt that I had to put in twice the amount of work compared to my peers,” shared Jakob.

The hard work Jakob put in academically never wavered and he also became a member of the very first cancer survivor committee at Valley Children’s Hospital – the Survive and Thrive Squad. Jakob was also asked to be a main speaker in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Student of the Year campaign, where he exceeded all fundraising goals.

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"I have noticed that ever since I've embraced the pride of being a cancer survivor, I have increased my social skills and academic performance, and I have been taught an abundance of life skills that will be so valuable in my future," said Jakob. "There is a constant joy and happiness that runs through my system, and sharing my story has been one of the greatest decisions I have made in my life."

Today, Jakob is a public health major at Fresno State and a recipient of The Fresno Truck Center Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program's scholarship award. He remains

passionate about helping others, and there is no doubt he will continue to inspire those around with his positive mindset and sincere kindness.

"Persevering through any obstacles along your path will show how physically, mentally and spiritually strong you are destined to become," added Jakob.



The Fresno Truck Center Childhood Cancer Survivorship Program works with cancer-free patients who are at least three years from completion of treatment. Program services range from annual screenings to coordinating referrals to other specialties to providing late effects education and more.



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