



Randy Palya was a little boy whose undying spirit touched the lives of many people in a very big way. Randy lived in Spring Grove, and attended Richmond Grade School. He was very ambitious and involved in many activities. He played baseball, soccer and golf. Randy also loved music and began to play piano at the age of four. He was recognized at school for his artwork, and won "Young Authors" awards twice, including an all school Caldecot Award for his illustrations in his book entitled, "If Only I were 8". Randy and his older brother Dean, won first place in the McHenry County Fair Talent Contest in 2002, performing a "hip-hop" dance. From this, they were invited to perform at several events and charity benefits.

The Lord blessed Randy with many wonderful gifts, and it seemed the greatest of these were his golden heart and his love of life. Randy seemed to be everyone's "best friend". He had a beautiful way of helping others feel good about themselves. He was sensitive to others feelings and always had an encouraging word for someone who needed it. He was fun to be around and had a special knack for lending just the right amount of humor to any situation. So many have expressed that there was "something special about Randy".

At the age of 8, Randy's life of school, sports, music, dance, and friends came to a crashing halt when a school vision exam detected a problem. Randy's parents took him to an ophthalmologist for what they thought would be a routine exam, but the doctor expressed concern about the sudden onset of symptoms and an MRI was ordered. The test revealed an inoperable brain stem glioma.



Suddenly, Randy's life became a blur of doctor's appointments, medicine, symptoms and side effects. Randy endured 6 weeks of radiation treatments and 7 months of chemotherapy. Amazingly, Randy's "can do" spirit remained incredibly high throughout his illness. Friends and family were awestruck by his ability to wrap them up in his "live for the moment" attitude, as though each challenge and hardship he faced was just another adventure in his life. His willingness to always look on the bright side was an inspiration to all who knew him.

Throughout his illness, Randy attended school as often as possible, and though his appearance began to change his wonderful and loyal friends never seemed to notice. Randy's family is eternally grateful for this. Many were amazed by how Randy continued to score goals in soccer and strike out batters in baseball, even though his vision was failing. His doctors were astounded by his energy, determination, and performance in these activities. He continued to play piano and perform in recitals as well as play golf, placing 7th in a summer tournament.



About 7 months after his diagnosis, it was obvious that Randy's balance, coordination and vision were declining further, but incredibly, his joyful spirit was continuing to shine. Randy wished for an English Bulldog puppy from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. Randy's love and tender care for his puppy, and "Buddy's" special bond with Randy was evident from the moment they met.



In early July of 2003, conventional treatment was no longer effective for Randy. The family decided to seek alternative treatment, so they traveled to Houston to begin treatment at the Burzinski Institute for Cancer Research. After 4 weeks of intensive training to administer the infusion pump therapy, the family returned home to a supportive and loving community that provided help in many wonderful ways.

While facing extremely difficult physical and emotional challenges, Randy's positive attitude and will to live never waned. Randy's brother, Dean, and younger sister, Dayna, were entirely committed to aiding in the constant care of their ailing brother.

On February 22, 2004, Randy lost his courageous battle with cancer. His unforgettable smile, his positive attitude, and his empathy and concern for others throughout his illness was an inspiration to so many people.

The "Run for Randy" is an opportunity to share Randy's undying spirit with even more people. This year, proceeds from this event will be distributed to various charities including the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Richmond/Spring Grove Food Pantry and Home of the Sparrow, as well as the MASF Randy Palya Memorial Scholarship providing soccer scholarships for deserving children.

We hope that you will join us and run, skip, walk or whatever you like to do to celebrate the life of this very special boy.