

Family Time Health

Children's Cancer Partners helps families on their journey

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

By Chris Worthy

Colt Becker has spent a lot of time traveling. But it hasn't been about vacations or field trips. Colt's trips have saved his life.

Colt's family, which includes his mother, father and older brother, moved to Clemson in 2013 when he was just six weeks old.

"A year later – three weeks after his first birthday – he was diagnosed with neuroblastoma," Kathy Becker, Colt's mother said.

The rare form of cancer resulted in an abdominal tumor.

Becker said Colt had great care, including chemotherapy, at Prisma Health-Upstate (then Greenville Health System), but when he needed to see a physician who specialized in his condition, the family had to travel to New York to Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. He had surgery there in February 2015.

"They removed a softball-sized tumor from his abdomen," Becker said.

By April 2015, Colt's cancer was considered cleared. That trip to New York was financially draining, but it was just one of many the family would face. By February 2016, Colt's tumor returned in the same place. Some of his treatment took place in Greenville and some in New York. A social worker in Greenville told the family about Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas, a nonprofit organization based in Spartanburg that provides comprehensive support to families whose child has cancer.

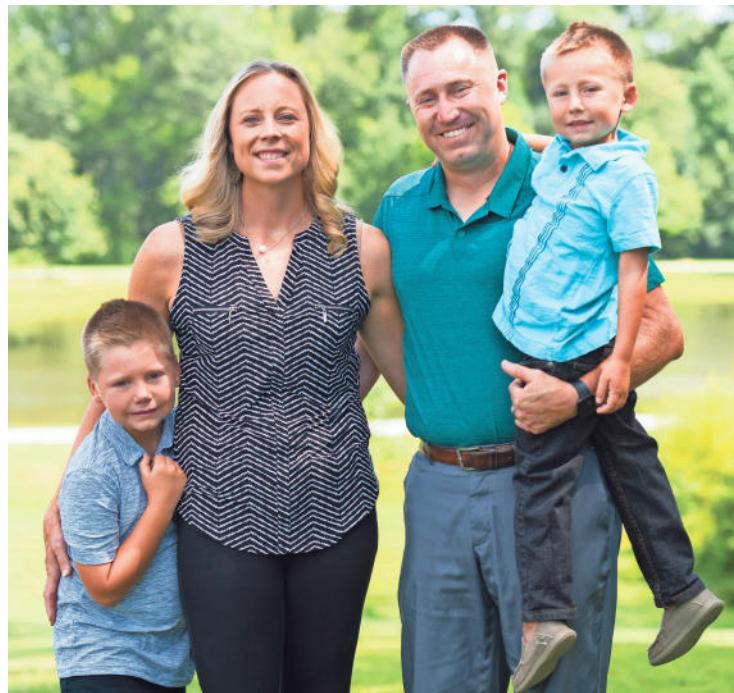
"It was huge," Becker said.

Following another surgery in New York, Colt was in intensive care for several weeks. The support from Children's Cancer Partners helped the Beckers travel and more.

"Not only did they help us all go up for the surgery, but they really helped us stay together as a family and all be there to support Colt," Becker said. "I think we've been to New York 18 – 20 times in the last three years. Sloan Kettering is the specialist in neuroblastoma. Without Children's Cancer Partners, we would not be able to maintain that connection and get the best care for Colt."

Now that her family is on a different path, Becker is an out-spoken advocate for the nonprofit – she wants to encourage others to donate and volunteer, but she also wants families touched by pediatric cancer to know that help is available.

"Colt is clear as of April 2018," she said. "We still have to do scans every three months. We alternate between Greenville and New York. I don't know if we would be able to keep seeing the specialists without Children's Cancer Partners. They have been



The Becker family from left to right, Paxton, 8, Kathy, Pete and Colt, 6. NATHAN GRAY/UPSTATE PARENT

huge for us. But they've also been a great support on the home front."

Becker said that because of the frequent medical travel required, her family doesn't get true vacation time. They have enjoyed Children's Cancer Partners' family camp in the summer and other events that connect them with families who understand what they have been through.

"The most important thing is to take care of your child," Becker said. "When you have somebody like Children's Cancer Partners who can take some of those stresses away for you, you can focus on your child."

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. It is estimated that more than 11,000 children will be diagnosed with cancer in the United States this year. Learn more at <https://www.childrenscancerpartners.org> and <https://www.cancer.gov>.