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The terms hero and warrior can mean different things to different people.

Like when Gronk used to truck down the field and bowl over five players before finally getting tackled, we might say “wow, what a warrior.” Or when we hear stories of regular people administering emergency CPR on a fallen co-worker, we think “that guy is a hero.” In fact, in this very room, we have a collection of men that could be the picture next to the dictionary definitions of Hero or Warrior.

As a parent, we hope that we can set examples and lead a life that allows our kids to look up to us as heroes. No parent ever thinks they will be the ones looking up to their kid as the hero. After all, that would probably mean their kid is either sick, and had to fight for their life at some point, or their kid is just considerably better than they ever were at sports.

Well, my 15-year-old boy Mason is my hero, and he was never any good at sports. At 18 months, Mason was diagnosed with an in-operable brain tumor.

Having to watch your kid endure round after round, and year after year of chemotherapy, and all of the side effects that come with it, that changes you as a parent. There is a helpless feeling inside of you. But the more your child keeps fighting and facing each day with courage determination and will to live, the more that child gains hero/warrior status in your eyes.

But make no mistake about it, there have been tough days along the way. Days where Mason wanted to throw in the towel. Days where giving up seemed easier than the inevitable pain in the days ahead. It is in these times that being a parent can be the most challenging. That no matter how much we encourage or lend our hand for support, sometimes it is just too difficult to take that next step.

That is where One-Summit comes in. It was during one of these difficult times that our family was first introduced to this amazing foundation. Mason was in the throes of treatment and each day was a challenge. A challenge not only for Mason, but for my wife and I and our entire family including Mason’s younger brothers and sister. Cancer is brutal. All aspects of it. It has the ability to take down the strongest person and leave tears, pain, and hopelessness in its wake. Now just imagine that the one staring down this beast is a little boy, and the ones watching him go to battle are his younger brothers and sister.

It is a scenario that I hope none of you have to live through personally, but unfortunately, it is one that so many do.



ONE SUMMIT

One Summit's mission pairs kids fighting cancer, along with their siblings, with a Navy SEAL mentor. These mentors help to nurture a sense of resilience in these kids during a day full of fun, storytelling, and rock climbing. Through these activities, the kids learn about trust, inner strength, and perseverance. And with each step climbed and each obstacle tackled, they learn about overcoming adversity. And when the fun is over, and the climbing ceases, these kids are left with a sense of accomplishment and the knowledge that they can persevere through the most difficult challenges in life, just by putting 1 foot in front of the other and believing in yourself. But most importantly, each kid leaves their One Summit climb knowing that they are NOT ALONE.

One Summit has had such a positive impact on my family. My kids talked about their climb for weeks and even stayed in touch with their mentor through letters and phone calls. It is hard for me to put into words just how powerful One Summit has been to me personally, so I will leave you with a few poignant memories from my son's climb five years ago.

In the days leading up to the climb, I can remember saying to Mason how lucky he was to be able to hang out with some of the bravest warriors and truest heroes this world has ever seen. During the actual climb, I looked high up at that wall and watched Mason's Navy seal mentor urge him to take one more step even though he thought he couldn't. With tears in my eyes I watched him take that step. And then I thought to myself how lucky he was to be up on that wall with such a brave warrior and a true hero. How lucky he was to get to know someone who has been to hell and back and lived to tell about it. How lucky he was to know my son Mason.

Thank you.

Mark Giove