

Boy Wonder

Sam Lack

The littlest superhero

With his impish grin and a flock of guardian angels sitting on his shoulders, Burlington's Sam Lack, 5, is a tiny, perfect philanthropist.

His journey began at 18 months old when Sam was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a rare and deadly form of cancer. Luckily his family doctor detected a lump in his abdomen during a check up. Twenty-four hours after his diagnosis, the toddler was at McMaster Children's Hospital undergoing surgery. When tests confirmed the post-surgery chemotherapy wasn't working, Sam, mother Andrea, father Jay and brother Ben, then 6, were told the remaining cancer was inoperable.

Refusing to accept the diagnosis, Sam's family got a second opinion at Toronto's Sick Children's Hospital. He underwent a second successful surgery and today, Sam remains cancer free.

During his trips to the hospital, Andrea began thinking about establishing a fundraiser to celebrate his road to wellness and help fund research that might find a cure.

"We started planning Sam's Day when he was still sick," says Andrea referring to her co-organizer and sister Jill Voytek. "So many people in the community and our friends and family were asking what they could do to help us."

The annual event, full of games, entertainment, food and fun, has raised \$130,000 in the past four years for The James Fund for Neuroblastoma Research at Sick Kids, with a portion going to McMaster. The Sam Lack Drug Discovery Program has resulted in two promising drugs currently in clinical trials.

"I want to raise as much money as I can to help my friends who are still fighting cancer," Sam says. "I like having my name on the wall" (the plaques he's received in recognition of his philanthropic efforts at Sick Kids and McMaster).

For more information visit www.samsday.org.

—Claudia D'Souza

