

Perspective

Closer Than You Think

“St. Jude research doesn’t just benefit the children who walk through the doors of the hospital, but kids everywhere—in the United States and around the world. I’m a direct beneficiary of that research.”

By Kevin Sharp

When I was a teenager living in California, I thought Memphis, Tennessee, was very far away. I had heard of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital because of watching the TV programs from time to time, but I didn’t dream that their work would ever affect me or anyone I knew.

Then I got cancer.

It was Ewing sarcoma that had spread from my leg to my lungs. I was treated in a California hospital—on a protocol from St. Jude.

Memphis suddenly seemed a lot closer.

Since that time, I’ve learned that St. Jude shares its discoveries freely. Their research doesn’t just benefit the children who walk through the doors of the hospital, but kids everywhere—in the United States and around the world. I’m a direct beneficiary of that research.

I’d be surprised if there is anybody who hasn’t been affected by cancer on some level, whether a friend or family member or themselves. I think a lot of people are under the impression that, wherever they live in the country, Memphis is far away. They might wonder why they would ever benefit from donating to St. Jude. The answer to me is obvious. Since I have been affected by cancer, I want to be a part of trying to find the answers that will eliminate this disease.

And what a blessing it is that St. Jude treats children regardless of their ability to pay. I was fortunate, because my family had insurance when I got



Cancer survivor Kevin Sharp visits St. Jude, extending hope to a young patient and his family.

cancer as a teen. If we had not had that coverage, it would have destroyed my family financially. It’s hard enough to deal with the fact that you may lose a loved one or a child; on top of that to be worried about financial needs is just way too much. St. Jude realizes that.

I’ve had the opportunity to visit St. Jude numerous times, even sharing my experiences with families at the hospital’s Survivor Day celebration. As a patient, it’s beneficial to hear that there is life after cancer—that you can continue and that you can succeed. Sometimes situations are far more difficult than we seem to be able to handle. We all have our cross to bear and our different tragedies and trials in life, and it’s important that people know that they can see it through to the other side—that it’s tough, but it’s worth it. Spreading that message is just a part of who I am.

I’ve also had opportunities to support St. Jude through my role as part of the country music community. It’s a way to thank the hospital for what they did, not just for me individually, but what they do for childhood diseases and cancer treatment around the world.

St. Jude definitely will always be a part of my life. So many people and organizations played a role in saving my life. I can’t imagine going through those experiences without helping to make opportunities available to others. ●

Kevin Sharp is an award-winning country music artist, entertainer, author and motivational speaker. He recently published Tragedy’s Gift: A Cancer Survival Story, a chronicle of his battle with cancer and the lessons he learned from that experience. To learn more about his work, visit www.kevinsharp.com.

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Madelyn, 5 - Neuroblastoma

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