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Sunday, Aug. 28, 2011

This Angel is resolved to help children in hospitals

7-year-old with brain tumor starts charity.

By Maggie Reeder

KANNAPOLIS Angel Thompson is much like any other 7-year-old girl. She loves playing on playground equipment, mothers kids younger than her and wears pink proudly.

Unlike most 7-year-olds, Angel has a Juvenile Pilocytic Astrocytoma - a rare childhood brain tumor, usually benign, and slow-growing. She was diagnosed at 5, after teachers at Grace Academy in Rockwell, where she attends school, noticed her odd behavior and off-balanced walking.

In addition, her eyes were changing, sometimes crossing, or looking as if she had lazy eye.

For Angel's dad Alan, it's unlike anything he's ever imagined. Children with the tumor that surgeons can remove all of it have a 90 percent chance of a full life. For children like Angel, whose tumors are wrapped or even inside the brain stem and surgeons can't remove all of it, the prognosis is only 45 percent.

"She's doing remarkably well," said Alan. "We put it in God's hands."

Angel goes every three months for MRIs and at her regular oncology appointment in early August, the doctor recommended Angel get her MRI early. On Tuesday, Angel had an MRI, which confirmed what the doctor suspected. Her tumor is growing again and she'll require surgery and chemotherapy.

Angel is already preparing herself for the surgery, clinging a little closer to mom Myra and Alan, who took her to the beach to break the news.

Myra and Alan are taking life one day at a time, and admit that "there are a lot more people with kids worse off than she is."

Because of what she's gone through, Angel started a charity game drive in May. After a month in the hospital after her first surgery, she noticed there was a lack of games for the kids to play with. Right after her surgery, she asked her parents if she could start collecting games to take to Levine Children's Hospital, where she spent the majority of her recovery playing games like "Hi-Ho-Cherry-O" and Bingo.

Angel decided to name her charity "Gifts from Angels" because the games aren't from her, they are from all of the people who donate the games - the real angels, she said.

Angel has taken games up to the hospital twice, donating 418 games so far. She and her family will continue to collect games, and Angel said she hopes the drive grows to include other hospitals in the area as well. "It's not about her," added Alan. "It's about helping other kids. She wants to help other kids. This is her thing."

Maggie Reeder is a freelance writer for North Neighbors. Have a story idea? Email her at momreeder@gmail.com.

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