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## The Carr Family Story



Heidi McLelland Photography

On September 26, 2010, Chad Carr was born into a true “maize and blue” Michigan family.

His parents, Tammi and Jason, are both Michigan alumni — Jason a former quarterback — and his “papa” is famed football coach Lloyd Carr, whose 1997 team won the national championship. His maternal grandfather, Tom Curtis, also played for Michigan and is an All-American safety — the greatest pass interceptor in Big Ten football history.

The youngest of three boys, Chad was always unique. His older brothers, C.J. and Tommy, *loved* sports. Whatever they did had to include a ball, bat, net,

or goal. Chad was different. He was the only one who loved playing with toys, his favorite being Paw Patrol.

He loved to get a rise out of others — especially his family. Pledging allegiance to Michigan State or wearing green just to tease his Wolverine family was common for Chad. He also had eclectic taste in food. Miso soup, tofu, pickles, and olives were some of his favorites.

Life couldn’t have been better for the Carr family. Vacationing, spending a lot of time with family and friends, enjoying sports, and attending school was their normal.

That all changed on September 23, 2014.

### The Worst Day

Chad fell and broke his nose. Tammi and Jason took him to the emergency room at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital. When they were leaving, he fell again. They recognized something wasn’t right and took him back to the hospital for tests.

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Waiting for the results, Jason and Tammi knew something was off. They braced themselves for the word “cancer,” ready to fight whatever Chad had. They were prepared to get him through any treatment and discomfort he would have to endure.

What they weren’t prepared for was the complete absence of hope.

Doctors informed Tammi and Jason that Chad had a rare, aggressive, and inoperable brain tumor in his brain stem called diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma, or DIPG. There was no known cure and the prognosis was 9-12 months.

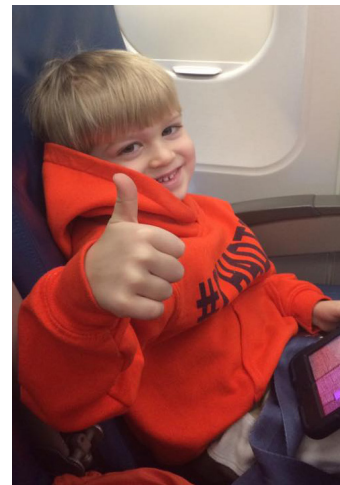
Tammi fell to the floor and didn’t get up for a long, long time.

### **Hope in the Face of Hopelessness**

Faced with the unthinkable, Tammi took to Facebook, writing, “We now need prayers and it’s my hope that this goes viral and millions fall in love with my little man and send him prayers. It’s going to take a miracle and I believe it can happen and I hope you will help and spread his story!!”

Her plea was embraced nationally. Not only did she receive prayers and support, she started a movement. “#ChadTough” became a mantra within the Ann Arbor and Saline communities, across nationally-broadcasted media, and on social media.

Deep college rivalries were broken down. Ohio State and Michigan State carried “#ChadTough” on their helmets, shirts, and wristbands to raise awareness. Strangers sent gifts, money, love and prayers.



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The world fell in love with Chad.

Behind the scenes, Chad underwent 30 rounds of radiation at Mott and was accepted into a clinical trial in New York. The Carr family carried the hope that the radiation and experimental treatment would work and heal Chad. As they hoped and prayed, they made a lifetime's worth of lasting memories.

### **The Devastation of DIPG**

Despite promising MRI results following his clinical trial that showed Chad's tumor reduced to almost nothing, his symptoms returned with a vengeance in June 2015. DIPG went on to rob him of the ability to walk, see, speak and eat, and he entered hospice care in early November.

"We are still praying for a miracle because we know the power of God and it is infinite," wrote Tammi on November 11, 2015, "but we are also praying that if it is God's will to take him home, that he not suffer. This is so very hard, but it is also hard watching your baby with such extreme limitations ... we want him to be whole and well."

Three days after she wrote those words, the Carrs celebrated an early Christmas with their entire family. Chad was so excited to open his presents. The heartbreak of seeing the beautiful spirit of a little boy trapped inside a body that was failing him resonated with countless people.

Nine days later — exactly 14 months to the day after his diagnosis — 5-year-old Chad lost his battle with DIPG.



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## **Building Chad's Legacy**

Having prayed for a miracle and believing it was possible, the loss of Chad was devastating. Still, Jason and Tammi have kept their faith and channeled it into building Chad's legacy through ChadTough, bringing much-needed attention and funding to DIPG research.

Now, with the support of the University of Michigan and its talented team of doctors and researchers, Jason and Tammi Carr believe progress in treatment — and, ultimately, a cure — is imminent.

It's about making sure that when parents are faced with DIPG, they don't have to crumble to the floor, because there will be answers in how to treat it and how to defeat it.

It's about making sure there's hope.

