

Throughout his fight with cancer, Quonziah Ford has turned to his parents Quonshella and Willis, brother Quondaruous, and sister Quondajah for support

**HYFL
Spartan
and cancer
survivor
Quonziah
Ford helps
inspire
others**

Katy Football WARRIOR

*Written by
Heather Lowrie*





Photo by Suzi Issa

Wearing his Spartan football jersey, Quonziah Ford, known as Ziah for short, loves leading his Houston Youth Football League (HYFL) team to victory on the field. His passion for the sport has prepared him for what happens during game time, but nothing could have prepared the Katy third-grader for hearing the word “cancer.”

When Ziah complained of pain and swelling in his jaw, his mom Quonshella Ford knew something was wrong, but she didn't know exactly what. She hoped for a simple solution like a quick visit to the doctor or medicine to clear up an infection and never suspected cancer was to blame. “The day was like no other,” Quonshella recalls. “When we got to the doctor's office for the biopsy results, the nurse had a look on her face that spoke louder than words.”

Learning the Diagnosis

The nurse's voice cracked as she went on to tell Quonshella that her son was going to grow up and become a great man. After witnessing this heartfelt exchange, she knew they would not be getting good news. “When the doctor said ‘cancer,’ my breath was just sucked from me,” recalls Quonshella. “I couldn't even cry at first, because I was just so devastated and in disbelief.” They learned Ziah suffers from rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive, fast-growing cancer of the soft tissue that must be treated immediately to reduce the chances of it spreading.

Hearing the news from the doctor was the first step on this unexpected journey. Now Quonshella and her husband Willis had to tell their son. After getting advice from their oncologist, the Fords thought it was best not to wait, because Ziah definitely had questions and they wanted to answer them as honestly as possible.

Quonshella held back tears and tried to control her emotions, so Ziah wouldn't be afraid. He responded with the courage of a warrior as he said, “At least we know what's wrong now.” People often say that children are resilient, but in this case, Ziah was inspiring! He also wanted to know if he would be able to play football again and if he was going to lose his hair.

Tackling Cancer with Treatment

Sept. 1, 2010 marked the day Ziah learned his diagnosis, and treatment started the very next day. Life had clearly changed, and a new path was being forged to rid Ziah's body of every cancerous cell in his soft tissue. There were bone scans, injections, CT scans, a port placement, and bone marrow extraction all within the first week of diagnosis.

The mass on his face went from the size of a pea to the size of a grapefruit within a months' time. There were setbacks, fevers, infections, reactions, lumbar punctures, chemotherapy, weight loss, radiation treatments, tube feedings, answered prayers, victories, and waiting on various test results to come back throughout this unwanted journey.

“My faith was surely tested, because it is a hard thing to come to terms with the fact that you may have to bury your child,” shares Quonshella. “It took faith in God to submit to and believe that He is able, and we needed to trust Him regardless of the outcome.” She remembers a time in the ICU when things were getting worse quickly and she was truly at a low point, both mentally and physically exhausted. “A peace came over me and I felt like I had been revived; like I had gotten a second wind to keep running the race,” she recalls. Supported by Katy friends and neighbors, Quonshella felt the full impact of their prayers in her family's life that day.

Even a Warrior Needs Support

Ziah was unable to attend school at Holland Elementary during this fragile period, so he had tutors that came to his house. Throughout his treatment, he stayed on course and was able



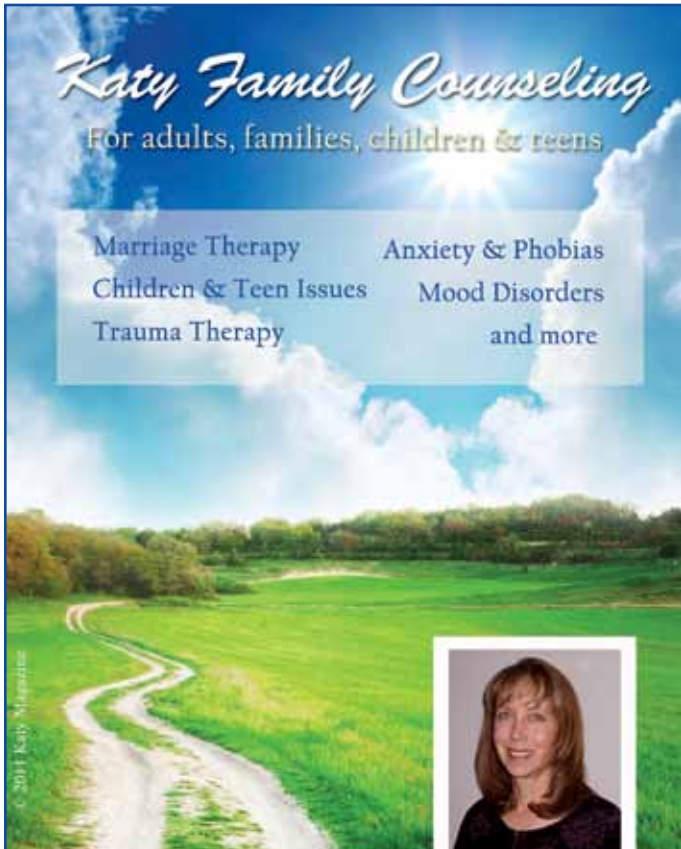

Photo by Suzi Issa

Quonziah has held on to his dream of playing football and hopes to return to the field this season, a healthy Spartan once again

Katy Family Counseling

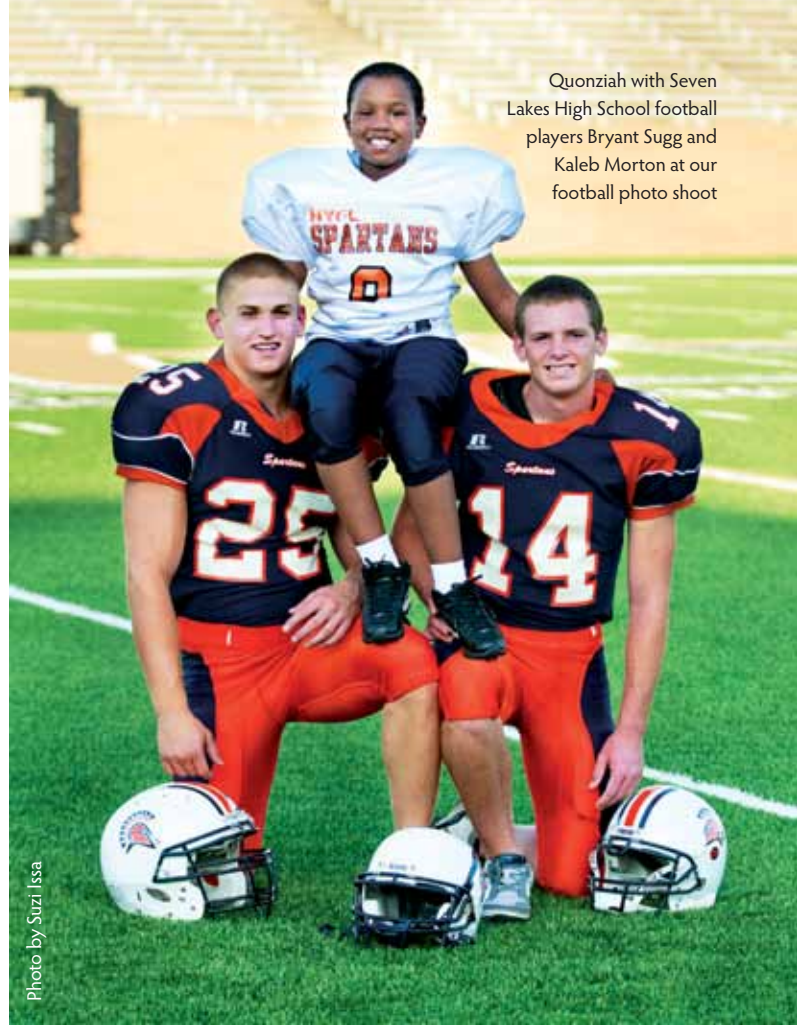
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Quonziah with Seven Lakes High School football players Bryant Sugg and Kaleb Morton at our football photo shoot

Photo by Suzi Issa




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to finish all of his requirements to complete the third grade. He recently began fourth grade, excited to start the new school year with his friends all in the same grade level.

Throughout his struggle to regain his health, the HYFL has served as an amazing blessing to this family. They had a concert fundraiser and have also set up a donation site at any Tradition Bank location. The Fords appreciate the continued prayers of their Katy friends and neighbors, along with all of the financial support they have received. As Ziah's primary caregiver, Quonshella has been unable to work since Sept. 2010. With the medical bills piling up quickly, the Fords remain full of faith. She shares, "We know that if we have to leave our home, God will provide. He hasn't brought us this far to leave us now."

Staying Strong as a Family

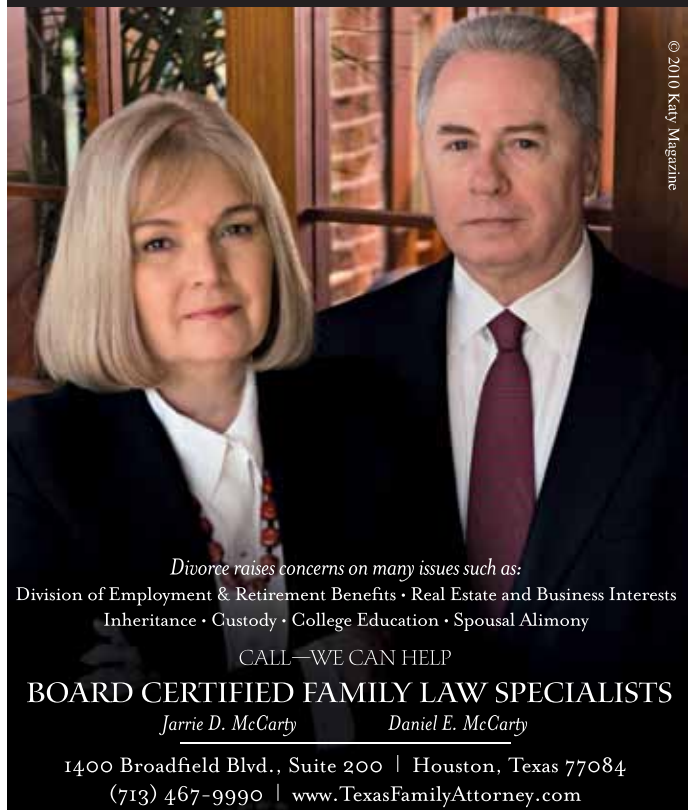
The strength shown by this Katy family is truly inspiring, as Ziah proved with his first experience receiving chemo. "He was so sick and in so much pain, and he began to shake violently and vomit," says Quonshella. "Ziah told me, 'Mommy, what have they done to me? Please pray with me and pray over me.' I was so encouraged at his strength to call on God first."

Ziah has proven himself as a warrior and fighter both on the field and off. In the middle of his battle with cancer, while he waits on the results and further treatment options, he continues to shine and will grow up to be a great man, indeed! KM

HEATHER LOWRIE is a freelance writer who loves encouraging people through her writing. With this story, though, it is the Ford family who has encouraged her and strengthened her faith.

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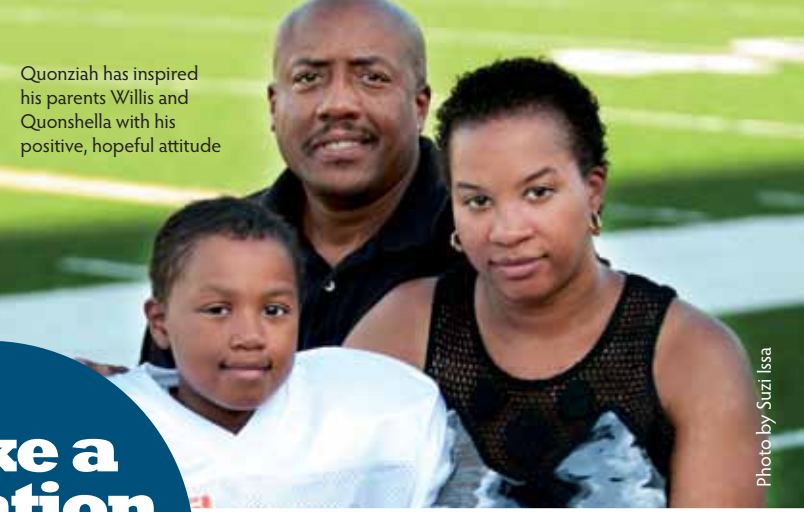
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Quonziah's Spartan teammates and cheerleaders hosted a fundraiser, called Ziah the Victorious and set up a fund at Tradition Bank to help with his medical bills

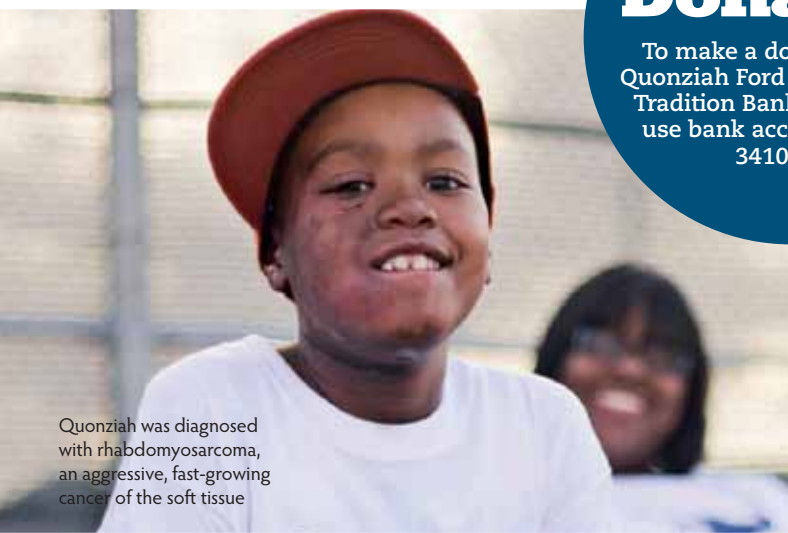


Quonziah has inspired his parents Willis and Quonshella with his positive, hopeful attitude

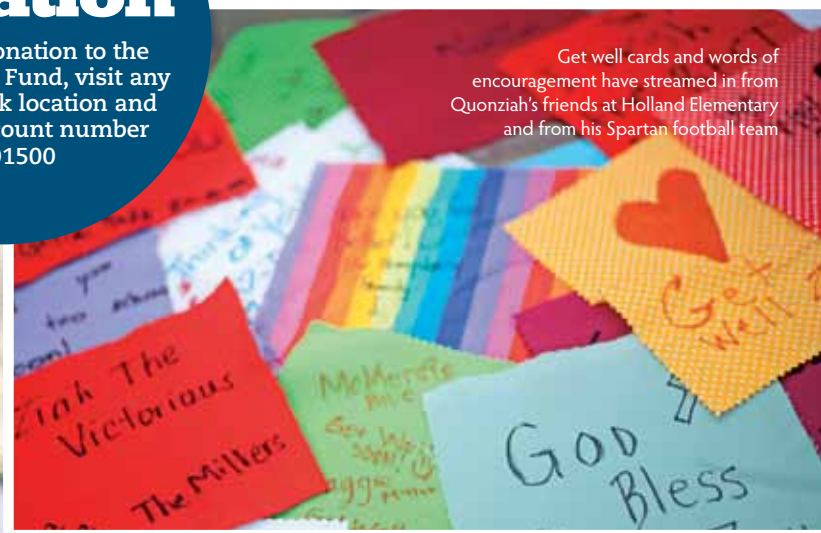
Make a Donation

To make a donation to the Quonziah Ford Fund, visit any Tradition Bank location and use bank account number 34101500

Get well cards and words of encouragement have streamed in from Quonziah's friends at Holland Elementary and from his Spartan football team



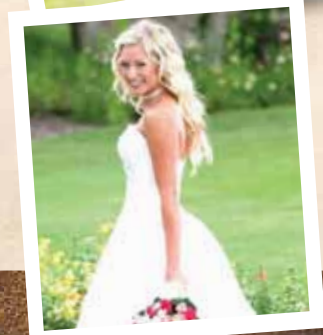
Quonziah was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive, fast-growing cancer of the soft tissue



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