

Parker Brown suffers from hydrocephalus, but doesn't let it keep him from having fun



Parker's Journey

Parker Brown, a 5-year-old Katy boy with hydrocephalus who loves cars and blowing bubbles, shows others that living with a disease can't stop him from enjoying life

*Written by Lana Timbs
Select photography by Christi Hartwell*

The path of life is different for every family, with unique plans for everyone. A big part of the Brown family plan was revealed over five years ago, when Dave and Leah Brown found out they were going to be the parents of a very special little boy.

At Leah's 20-week ultrasound, where doctors commonly check the anatomy of the growing baby inside the mom, it showed that Parker had an excess of fluid in his brain, a condition called congenital hydrocephalus. The fluid surrounding Parker's brain was not allowing his brain to grow as a normal one would, and was causing great damage. Fluid was pushing his brain to the outside of his skull, making the brain appear almost non-existent.

Parker Mason Brown was born at 36 weeks on September 16, 2011 via C-section. Two days after his birth, Parker had his first brain surgery, where the doctors removed two pounds of fluid, and inserted a brain shunt. A shunt is a device with tubing that allows the cerebrospinal fluid from the brain to flow out through a tube down to the abdomen where the fluid is absorbed back into the body. Parker's first shunt was placed at the back of his skull, near his neck area.

Parker was at Texas Children's Hospital in the care of the NICU for 16 days following his birth. "Saying that now, it sounds very short, only 16 days, but when you are going through all of that, those days feel like a lifetime," says Leah. Leah and Dave learned how to feed baby Parker through the use of a feeding tube enabling them to bring him home.

Getting Through as a Family

A side effect of hydrocephalus is epilepsy, and at 3 months old, Parker began having seizures. His seizures, controlled with a daily medication, usually occur now when he outgrows his dosage. “You learn to deal with it and how to handle it,” says Leah, as this is just part of her everyday life.

At 6 months, his brain shunt failed. Shunt failure is very common, and Parker had a second brain surgery to receive a new one placed near the front, right side of his head. When Leah discusses the shunt and the procedure, little Parker will reach to the top of his head and feel for it. He doesn't mind if others see and touch it; he's even proud to show off the scars on his neck and abdomen.

Living Life

Currently, Parker attends a PPCD (preschool program for children with disabilities) in Katy. He has a daily routine and seems to love school. Leah and Dave want Parker to be around other children his age because he rarely is and interacts mostly with adults. When asked what his favorite part of school is, Parker says, “riding the school bus,” which makes sense, as Parker is infatuated with cars and garages. He loves to go for rides around the neighborhood, and different neighbors will swing by to take him for a ride. Parker says shyly, “My favorite car is a Corolla.” He loves them so much that a Corolla even made his Christmas list!

Parker works with physical therapists to build up his weaker muscles, on applied behavior therapy for life skills, and occupational therapy for motor skills. Parker is about the size of his little sister Emery who is 2 years old. Leah says that Emery and Parker are starting to interact some, and Emery has a sense that Parker is not typical. She often lends him a hand with things; for example, when they are playing with bubbles. Parker has a tremor with his arm and hand so sometimes it is hard for him to hold the bubble wand, so Emery will help her brother out.

The Most Loving Boy

Sweet and cuddly definitely describe Parker. He loves to touch, feel, and be loved on. Leah recalls a time when they were out shopping, waiting to check out, and Parker reached out and started rubbing on another shopper's behind. “It is quite embarrassing. People look at us as if we are crazy because my son is rubbing on them. They don't realize that he doesn't know not to do that to strangers,” says Leah.

In the words of Leah, “Parker is truly one-of-a-kind, no one in the world is like him.” She means that literally, as no one in the world has the same amount or type of brain damage as Parker. **KM**

LANA TIMBS is an Aggie and mother of two who loves spending time with family and friends.



Parker developed congenital hydrocephalus while in utero and was in the Texas Children's NICU for 16 days



Parker had brain surgery at 2 days old



The Brown family loves spending time together at the park

READ MORE about Parker and his journey at parkermasonbrown.blogspot.com