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The Mikey Czech Foundation funds critical research for children with DIPG

James Michael “Mikey” Czech was diagnosed with diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), a debilitating and ultimately fatal pediatric brain tumor, when he was just 11 years old. In celebration of his life, his parents, Steve and Jennifer, created The Mikey Czech Foundation and pledged to establish a world-leading translational research laboratory in an effort to eliminate the disease.

Mark Kieran, MD, PhD, director of the Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Center at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, was one of the experts who helped to advise them through their ordeal. Kieran’s expertise, combined with Dana-Farber’s state-of-the-art research facilities and world-class neuro-oncologists, was a key factor that influenced the initial \$500,000 gift from The Mikey Czech Foundation in support of DIPG research.

“Mark was the only one who had a proactive approach, to try and prevent recurrence of the tumor, rather than just reacting,” said Steve Czech, chairman and co-founder of the foundation.

DIPG tumors are among the most aggressive and deadly forms of brain tumors in children. They affect the cranial nerves, and as they grow, tumors cause physical deterioration accompanied by excruciating pain. Neurosurgeons have traditionally considered these tumors too risky to biopsy because of their location in the brain stem.

“Little progress has been made in the treatment of DIPG during the past 50 years and the outcome for these children remains dismal,” said Kieran. “The Mikey Czech Foundation has been an integral part of supporting a new national clinical trial for the biopsy of patients with newly diagnosed DIPG and the early identification of potential treatments, allowing us to individualize the treatment of a child’s tumor based on the unique abnormalities of their disease.”

Steve and Jennifer Czech are committed to continuing Mikey’s legacy through the foundation. They have received numerous

accolades as a result of their efforts, including the “2013 Light A Fire Award,” from Mofly Media, which celebrates those who have gone above and beyond in the name of philanthropy and volunteerism.

“What matters in life is not what you have, but what you do with what you have,” said Czech. “We are fortunate to have the resources to bring awareness to DIPG, not just to benefit pediatric patients at Dana-Farber, but for all who suffer from this deadly form of brain cancer.” ■



Steve and Jennifer Czech established The Mikey Czech Foundation, which supports cutting-edge research at Dana-Farber to cure pediatric brain tumors.