AZ Giving Spotlight: Maya Thompson from The Ronan Thompson Foundation

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Maya Thompson lost her son, Ronan, to neuroblastoma, three days before his fourth birthday in May 2011. The tragic loss gave life to something positive when Thompson decided to establish The Ronan Thompson Foundation in memory of her son. Recently, country superstar Taylor Swift performed a song she wrote in honor of Ronan and his battle, which has since increased public awareness about the organization.

AFM: What is neuroblastoma?

MT: It is a childhood cancer. It is actually one of the deadliest childhood cancers there is. It is what Ronan was diagnosed with when he was three: - a cancer of the sympathetic nervous system with pretty much no symptoms. When we found it with Ronan, his left eye was starting to look a little bit droopy. We asked our pediatrician and it ended up being stage four neuroblastoma and no leading symptoms, it was immediately stage four. It had obviously been in his body for a while but we had no way of knowing that.

AFM: Why did you choose to start writing the blog, “Rockstar Ronan,” during your son’s battle with neuroblastoma?

MT: I originally did it because with Ronan’s diagnosis I knew we were going to get inundated with phone calls and emails from people wanting to know what was going on. So it was basically my way of being able to keep everyone updated on his progress and what we were doing as far as treatment goes. So we cut back on a little bit of that, everybody calling and all that. I just thought you could maybe go to the blog and read. But “Rockstar Ronan” became my outlet for feelings. When you are going through something like this there are so many feelings and emotions; it’s easier to just sit down and write about it than verbally explain all of it. It really became my outlet and my kind of therapy I guess.

AFM: How did the song “Ronan” from Taylor Swift come about?

MT: Taylor started reading my blog, Rockstar Ronan, and after he passed away… I didn’t know who the woman was or that she had been reading my blog until the minute meeting her before the concert and that’s when she told me she had been reading and was so sorry. It made her think about life so much and things that pretty much changed her life. About a year later, telling me she had written me a song for us and had gotten the words from off of my blog, so that’s why she wanted to make me cowriter of the song. And we turned it into a beautiful song.

AFM: What other ways have you spread the word about your organization and raised awareness?

MT: A lot of interviews. Talking to people is a huge part of the awareness and helping get the word out. We were on the “Katie Couric Show.” It all about raising your voice and getting the word out anywhere you can. Keeping up our work within the foundation helps a lot with the awareness part of it as well.

AFM: What does The Ronan Thompson Foundation do to help other families who are currently facing the disease?

MT: Right now we are basically funding clinical trials to help us in our research. Our goal is to open a neuroblastoma care and research center.

AFM: Do you have anything coming up with the foundation?

MT: We have our Second Annual Gold Party coming up. That is Sept. 27 at the W Scottsdale.

For more information on The Ronan Thompson Foundation, click http://arizonafoothillsmagazine.com/afm-concierge.html?sobi2Task=sobi2Details&catid=39&sobi2Id=1165.