

Dear friend of UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center,

Have you ever wondered whether your contribution to the UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center (CMC) has made a difference? *I assure you that it has.*

Let me tell you about the day that changed our lives. We call it "diagnosis day."



We'd driven an hour to Boston for what we assumed was a routine appointment for our 10-year-old son, Braden. Other than being a little tired — he'd stayed up late the night before to watch his beloved Patriots win the Super Bowl — Braden felt fine.

A nurse practitioner told us only that they ran Braden's urine analysis twice because the results were "a little off" and that we should schedule a follow-up with his pediatrician in the next couple of weeks. We had no cause for immediate concern.

After seeing the results faxed over from Boston, our local pediatrician's office called us that same afternoon. They told us we needed to take Braden to the ER *immediately*. A nurse was waiting for him at UMass Memorial's pediatric emergency department with a wheelchair.

It turned out that Braden's urinalysis was more than a little off. His blood sugar reading was more than six times higher than it should have been. Soon he was hooked up to IVs and the doctors were throwing around terms we had never heard before, like diabetic ketoacidosis. ***I was shocked and scared.***

The staff at the CMC did a thorough job of not only bringing Braden's blood sugar under control, but also explaining what was going on and what would happen each step of the way. Braden was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes (formerly called "juvenile diabetes").

After the fear passed, the hard part was enduring the long, tedious hours of recovery and the adjustment to a new way of life.

I wanted to keep him home and have him sit out sports and other activities until I was sure he was OK. But our CMC nurse, Nancy McShea, said it was vital that he jump right back into his routine so that he wouldn't be afraid.

So, trusting Nancy and the CMC, we let him participate in a playoff basketball game just two days after he left the hospital. I have to confess: **I don't think I breathed the entire**

please turn over to keep reading

time! But Braden was fine, and Nancy was right. Having an informed, caring staff helped Braden – and our whole family – regain a sense of normalcy.

Although Braden has put the terror of “diagnosis day” behind him, he hasn’t forgotten about it. And so, he put together “diagnosis anniversary” bags for kids being who have since been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the CMC. The bags contain games, Legos and coloring books to keep kids occupied, plus calculators, measuring cups and notebooks to ease kids into the process of self-monitoring, which will become a part of their lives when they return home.

Braden wasn’t sure at first whether his gift bags had an impact. But he’s been receiving thank-you emails, including one from a little boy who has decided to donate bags of his own because Braden’s gift had meant so much to him!

I’m sharing our story with you in the hope that we all can continue providing the support to maintain and strengthen the CMC right here in Central Massachusetts.

To have a world-class facility so close by — ***where we know our kids are getting the best care*** — is monumental.

So, I hope that you’ll join us in supporting our local children’s hospital—UMass Memorial Children’s Medical Center—and make a gift right now.

And please know that your contributions, like Braden’s gift bags, *do* make a tremendous difference in children’s lives.

With deepest gratitude,

Kristen

Kristen (and Braden!) O’Connor



*Now I feel just the way I did before
I was diagnosed with diabetes.*

– Braden