

# Lulu's Story★

10-year-old Lulu has the strength, courage and bravery of a mini superhero. Her mum Josi says her daughter has an amazing zest for life and a fighting spirit beyond her years. She's even learning the saxophone which is bigger than she is!

Sadly, Lulu has faced enormous battles her whole life since being diagnosed with Stage 4 Neuroblastoma at just eight months old.

Lulu had been an active, bubbly baby when she suddenly became lethargic with a persistent fever. Her mum took her to the doctors where tests revealed a tumor the size of a grapefruit in Lulu's abdomen. "I was living a fairy tale life with a beautiful new baby when I heard the four words that no mother ever wants to hear 'Your child has cancer.' My world was shattered, it was a nightmare," Josi said.

Lulu's cancer had spread to her bones and bone marrow and she needed urgent treatment at the Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick. The next four years of Lulu's life were spent in hospital enduring five surgeries, 12 rounds of chemotherapy, plus bone marrow, radiotherapy and immunotherapy treatment.

Josi said, "The aggressive treatment meant fevers, anaemia, nausea, vomiting and constantly being at risk of infection. That's incredibly taxing on anyone, let alone a small child."

Lulu's illness and treatment meant years of birthdays and Christmas' spent in hospital. Instead of seeing her daughter learn to walk, play in the park or ride a bike, Josi was watching her daughter suffer unimaginable pain and sadness.

Thankfully, Lulu and her mum have Captain Starlight and the Starlight Express Room helping them cope with the reality of hospital and treatment.

Lulu loves visiting the Starlight Express Room at every opportunity now as an outpatient. Playing dress ups, having her nails painted and having fun with Captain Starlight helps Lulu take a break from the stress and pain of her illness and treatment. In the Starlight Express Room, she can just be a kid.

The Starlight Express Room is a safe haven for Lulu, where she knows that there are no horrible needles or treatment - just



joy and laughter. "Starlight doesn't just help the children, but also the families of sick kids. They give kids in hospital something to look forward to - the light that's taken away by disease. Often, when kids are sick, they're robbed of their happiness and Starlight helps bring that back," mum said.

And thanks to Starlight supporters, Lulu has just received an incredible gift of happiness with her Starlight Wish recently being granted.

Ever since she can remember, Lulu has wanted a dog, so for her Starlight Wish she asked for a special puppy, a new best friend. Her mum said Lulu wanted to take on the responsibility of caring for a dog, and her new furry companion will help ease her anxiety towards her ongoing medical appointments.

"I honestly can't explain the happiness and joy her wish has already brought her. When she talks about her puppy, her eyes light up," Josi said.

**"When you give to Starlight you are helping families going through their worst nightmare. You help bring normality back into their tumultuous worlds."**

Lulu and her mum spent many happy hours researching breeds to find the perfect size and temperament. The anticipation and planning gave Lulu something positive to focus on.

Lulu finally decided on an adorable Pomeranian pup! As soon as the puppy arrived, Lulu's face lit up and she exclaimed, 'This is the best day of my life!'

She's called her pup Toto because she loves the Wizard of Oz, a movie she started watching in hospital to take her mind of treatment. The pair are now inseparable- wherever Lulu goes Toto is never far behind!

Lulu's Starlight Wish is a gift of joy that she will remember forever and will help her when times get tough.

Josi is so thankful to Starlight supporters. "When you give to Starlight you are helping families going through their worst nightmare. You help bring normality back into their tumultuous worlds. Children light up with joy instead of being struck down with pain."

