

## Opinions

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**RICHARD AND SANDY PERKINS** OUR TURN

# Gilbert parents relentlessly seek cure for brain tumors

"Team Arizona" headed to Washington, DC this month. For some of us this is our fourth consecutive year volunteering to participate in the "Head to the Hill" advocacy day sponsored by the National Brain Tumor Society during Brain Tumor Awareness month. We are relentless in our determination to find more effective treatments and ultimately a cure for this dreaded disease.

No one wished to become a member of "Team Arizona." What we have in common as teammates is each one of us has lost a loved one to a brain tumor.

During our trip to DC, our team will share our personal stories in an effort to bring an awareness of the impact of brain tumors to our Arizona legislators. In addition to our experiences, we will share that:

» Brain tumors are diagnosed in more than 220,000 Americans of all ages, races, socioeconomic status and gender each year and the number continues to rise annually.

» Malignant brain tumors are among the deadliest forms of cancer with just a 34 percent five-year survival rate.

» 1,540 people in Arizona will be diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2015; 272 will not live.

» Brain tumors are now the leading cause of cancer-related deaths in children under the age of 14.

Despite the daunting facts associated with brain tumors, there is reason for hope.

Arizona is attracting the best and the brightest researchers in the world and is home to Barrow Neurological Institute, Phoenix Children's Hospital, Translational Genomics Research Institute, and the U of A Arizona Cancer Research Center. We have watched these individuals and organizations dedicate themselves to providing a higher quality of life for brain tumor patients and one day eradicating this debilitating disease.

Arizona is home to Students Supporting Brain Tumor Research, the state's only student run non-profit organization. SSBTR provides researchers with 93 percent of every dollar earned and to date the students have contributed \$2.4 million for brain tumor research.

Congressman Matt Salmon has launched a new initiative in Washington



PERKINS FAMILY

**Gilbert residents Richard and Sandy Perkins with their son, Sam, who died in 2011 from a brain tumor.**

ensuring that funding cancer research is a top federal priority.

Governor Doug Ducey has proclaimed May as Arizona Brain Tumor Awareness Month

Mayor John Lewis has proclaimed May as Gilbert Brain Tumor Awareness month.

If you would please encourage your senators and representative to support cancer research funding for the National Institute of Health, National Cancer Institute, and the Department of Defense's Medical Research Programs this encouraging progress will not be interrupted. Those living with brain tumors and those who may be diagnosed do not have the luxury of time.

If you would like more information or to make a contribution, please contact the National Brain Tumor Society.

If you would like to be inspired by what Arizona's youth can accomplish or to contribute, please contact Students Supporting Brain Tumor Research.

*Richard and Sandy Perkins are Gilbert residents whose son, Sam, was diagnosed with a DIPG brain tumor on Jan. 28, 2011 at the age of 19. Sam passed away on Nov. 14, 2011. The Perkins now devote themselves to organizations funding brain tumor research and supporting the researchers and those providing care to patients with brain tumors.*