Meet Blake, our rambunctious three-year-old friend. Blake loves jumping on his trampoline and playing with his twin brother, Bowen, and older siblings, Jenna and Brody. He is all about cars, trucks, and anything with wheels... And like many of his favorite motor vehicles, this kiddo is “Built Blake Tough.”

At twenty weeks in pregnancy, Blake’s family was informed that he had enlarged kidneys and a 10% chance of living. He made it through the pregnancy, and he and his brother Bowen were born in the spring of 2011. Blake spent his first 70 days in the NICU at University of Iowa Children’s Hospital. When he got to join his family at home, Blake's days continued to include dialysis each night. For two and a half years, he received all food and medication through a tube in his abdomen, and his family searched desperately for a kidney donor.

In November 2013, the search finally ended and Blake received a new kidney. However, after the transplant, complications followed. Blake saw his home a mere 10 days between the months of November and April. From life threatening infections to fears that the kidney was rejecting his body, tough little Blake fought to survive with the help of University of Iowa Children’s Hospital.

While at the hospital, Blake was directly affected by Iowa State University Dance Marathon. The funds raised by our organization directly support families like Blake’s, from providing critical medical supplies to simply covering the costs of parking. Blake’s stay at the hospital would not have been as successful and seamless without Dance Marathon’s help. But more importantly, Blake and his family had a family of students and community members who were rooting for them and fighting beside them everyday.

Each and every child, regardless of illness, has the ability to benefit from Iowa State University Dance Marathon. Whether it be the library we support or a piece of equipment that keeps a child breathing, your partnership with Iowa State University Dance Marathon will save the lives of children across the state of Iowa and beyond.