



**B THE DIFFERENCE®**  
THE BRANDON MERRITT CHARITABLE FOUNDATION



## Making a difference, one family at a time.

B the Difference was formed by Jessica Roberts and Stephanie Johnson in 2011 to honor the memory of their brother [\*\*Brandon Merritt\*\*](#). Brandon passed away from complications due to Neurofibromatosis (NF) when he was 22 years old.

**“Some people don’t need as much time on this earth to make an impact.” - Drew Leathers**

# MISSION STATEMENT

**B the Difference** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed to provide support to individuals and their families battling Neurofibromatosis (NF) through our B Happy and B Kind programs.

## WHAT IS NF

Neurofibromatosis (NF) is a group of complex genetic conditions—encompassing NF1, NF2, and schwannomatosis—that trigger the growth of tumors on nerve tissue throughout the body. NF causes tumors to grow anywhere in or on the body, which can lead to blindness, bone abnormalities, cancer, deafness, disfigurement, learning disabilities, excruciating and disabling pain, and more.

NF can occur both spontaneously or genetically. Roughly 50% of cases are inherited from a parent, while the remaining half occur through spontaneous mutations in families with no prior history of the condition. Some type of NF occurs in one in every 2,000 births and affects millions worldwide. NF is worldwide in distribution, affecting both sexes equally and has no racial, geographic, or ethnic distribution.

"I sit on numerous national boards for NF, **there is not one organization like B the Difference.** They let them forget about the symptoms and just be a family. That can't be done with research and clinical care."

Dr. Frank Buono  
Associate Research Scientist  
in Psychiatry  
Yale School of Medicine

# ABOUT BRANDON

Brandon was the embodiment of a “Gentle Giant.” After growing up in South Florida, Brandon traded the heat and humidity for the mountains of Colorado. His mountains were his happy place—people accepted him for who he was despite his physical limitations, and although he missed his best friends from childhood, he found his second family out west.

In the days following his passing, “B” snow sculptures started popping up all over the mountain, hand-carved by co-workers. He truly was loved by all who were blessed to have known him and touched so many of our lives during his short time with us.



# B KIND

B Kind provides vital **financial and practical support** to families managing the challenges of NF. The assistance is broad in scope, covering grocery assistance, rent assistance, travel expenses for surgeries and appointments, co-pays, medical procedures, specific medical equipment, school supplies, laptops, and more.

The only criterion for a nominee to be referred is an NF diagnosis. Self-referrals and referrals from immediate family members are not accepted. We accept referrals from members of the medical and NF community, such as doctors, social workers, or physicians, who can verify the family's needs.

***"This means we can have actual meals. Not just scraps of food found in the freezer or something in the cupboard to eat. This is one less stressor – trying to figure out how to come up with money for the basics like food."***

- Tracy Peterson, B Kind recipient



# B KIND FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Every day from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, B Kind for the Holidays provides a **\$500 gift card** to alleviate the financial strain often exacerbated during the holiday season.



*“The kindness of this gift grants us the ability to take a step back from the weight of medical decisions and expenses, and allows us to **focus on creating special memories** together as a family.”*

- Tyler, B Kind for the Holidays 2024 recipient

# B HAPPY

The Merritt family saw firsthand that even the smallest escape brought so much joy to Brandon. The ability to step away from life with NF, even for just a few days, was monumental. Their mission was to provide similar experiences to other NF families. **B Happy provides all-expense-paid, five-day hosted vacations** for individuals with NF and their families.

These trips are designed to offer a much-needed escape from the exhausting routines of medical care, including hospital stays, chemotherapy, and frequent MRIs, allowing families to focus on making lasting memories. Eligible participants must be 13 or older and living in the Contiguous United States.

*"Thank you doesn't seem to be a big enough expression to articulate the level of **gratitude** we have for everyone involved. This trip isn't only about Hannah but it's **honoring Brandon** as well."*

- Jennifer, Hannah's mom



Hannah's B Happy Trip, 2022

# NF SUMMIT SCHOLARSHIP

To further empower the community, the NF Summit Scholarship facilitates access to the Children's Tumor Foundation's annual NF Summit. The NF Summit brings together NF patients and families, volunteers, researchers, clinicians, patient advocates, and friends; all who have a connection to NF. It is a chance for **education, empowerment, networking**, and a way to connect with others on a similar journey. This scholarship is designed to remove financial barriers by providing assistance with transportation, hotel accommodations, and event registration fees.

*"There were many great aspects that are all on my list as favorites. But the number one: **Being understood**. I was amongst an entire population that understood and didn't turn away. I would not have been able to attend the Summit without the **B the Difference Scholarship** due to the expense."*

- Amy, NF Summit Scholarship recipient



Amy Reay, 2025

# For more information



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