

Finish of cancer treatment close

By ESTHER TAUNTON

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ALMOST nine months after being diagnosed with cancer, seven-year-old Rory Gardiner is just one operation away from a purple heart.

In March scans revealed Rory, the great-grandson of former New Plymouth mayor Alf Honnor and grandson of Surf Life Saving Taranaki life member John Honnor, had two brain tumours, one just a little smaller than a tennis ball.

A gruelling schedule of surgeries, radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments followed, with Rory collecting more than 700 of the Child Cancer Foundation's Beads of Courage.

Children with cancer are given one bead for every challenge they overcome and Rory is now just two weeks away from receiving a purple heart – the bead representing completion of treatment.

Discharged from Auckland's Starship Hospital last month, Rory is due to have an IV line removed from his chest on December 17.

His mother, former New Plymouth woman Leigh Honnor,



Brave battle:

Seven-year-old Rory Gardiner has one Bead of Courage for every challenge he has overcome since he was diagnosed with cancer. With a final operation on December 17, Rory will receive a purple heart, the bead representing completion of treatment.

Photo: SUPPLIED

said she was hopeful Rory had beaten the cancer.

"He's been through an awful lot this year and obviously every parent who goes through this with their child hopes that what the doctors recommend has been enough," she said from Auckland.

"I think hope is really all we can have."

Rory would have his first MRI to check for any trace of the cancer in January, she said.

"Hopefully that will come back clear and then we will basically leapfrog from MRI to MRI."

Brother Sam, 10, had been keeping Rory company at home since his release from hospital.

"We moved from Dargaville during the chemotherapy stage of his treatment so the boys haven't had a school to go to," she said.

"I don't think Rory could cope with school at the moment – he can only walk short distances and he gets tired easily.

"We're hoping he'll be able to go back to school next year."

Mrs Honnor said support from the Taranaki and Northland communities during Rory's illness

had been fantastic, with more than \$20,000 donated by the public.

"[Rory's father] Sean and I haven't really been working much over the last eight months and the money has been spent on keeping our family afloat, really," she said.

"We've also used some of it for Rory's therapy programme from an expert in Australia.

"Without the support of the community we would really have struggled."

People can track Rory's progress on his website, rorygardiner.co.nz.