Cindy Sturm had so many teachers tell her that daughter, Grace, was their favorite student that “I thought they must say that to every parent,” she said. A typical kid, Grace played piano and soccer and loved to ride horses. She enjoyed school and had fun going to the local nature center to explore with her father Andy.

In 2008 Grace (pictured with her Dad) started the second grade. During the year she began to develop problems with her balance; that summer she started having headaches. The Sturms took their daughter to many doctors - with no success in diagnosing the cause of her symptoms. Then, about a week before an appointment with a neurologist, Grace became very ill.

Lethargic, vomiting, with a pounding headache, Grace’s condition suddenly became acute, and Cindy and Andy rushed her to the emergency room. A CAT scan revealed that Grace had a benign brain tumor the size of an apricot; she was quickly airlifted to Westchester Medical Center.

Treatment should have been straight forward, with a week of recovery in the hospital followed by a month of rehab. However, “Grace suffered a massive seizure one week after the operation, and was in a coma for five weeks,” said Cindy. When she finally awoke, she began the long journey back to health, having to re-learn how to do virtually everything.

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Grace experienced many issues with her eyes, which had a negative impact on her recovery. She couldn’t close her right eye completely, which led to a host of ocular problems. They consulted a number of ophthalmologists; most suggested sewing the eye shut. Finally, a cornea specialist suggested BostonSight® PROSE, and the Sturms took Grace to see Jessica Ciralsky, MD, and Michelle Lee, OD, at Weill Cornell Eye Associates in New York.

“I only wish we had known about PROSE sooner. Grace was a perfect candidate, and it has made such a big difference,” said Cindy. “Her eye doesn’t flare up anymore, and she can actually see out of it.” Grace’s PROSE device improved the vision in her right eye to 20/70, and the therapeutic environment of the device protects her eye from the environment and allows it to heal.

Grace’s recovery is a work in progress, but happily she continues to improve every day, thanks in part to PROSE. “Grace is so resilient and inspiring,” said Dr. Lee. “At follow-up appointments, her mother reported that her handwriting, posture, and hand/eye coordination have improved, she is not bumping into things and hallway walls in school, she is able to stand up straight on the treadmill at physical therapy when she used to lean to the left, and she is horseback riding and swimming! Grace always came to her appointments with a new joke and enthusiastic laughter. To be part of her recovery process has been such a joy.”

Grace touched many lives, both before and after her surgery. Her school librarian, Jane Martellino, was moved to start Yes! Grace Rocks, a foundation that provides support to families with children with brain tumors or injuries. You can read more about the foundation and Grace’s journey at yesgracerocks.org.