



Call to Courage

Jason's Friends Foundation Semi-Annual Bulletin Published Fall 2017



Our Mission

The mission of Jason's Friends Foundation is to assist Wyoming families whose children suffer from childhood cancers and brain or spinal cord tumors by providing critical non-medical financial assistance, advocacy and encouragement.



Impacting Wyoming families

Since 1996, Jason's Friends Foundation has provided over \$4,200,000 in assistance for non-medical expenses such as rent or mortgage payments, utilities, groceries, and travel costs for families traveling out of town for their child's medical care.

Jason's Friends served 92 families in 2016 and has enrolled an additional 10 new families so far in 2017. We currently have 114 families enrolled in our program. Each of these families is receiving critical assistance for their financial needs while their child battles childhood cancer and brain or spinal cord tumors. Donations to Jason's Friends will assure that we are able to provide help for every Wyoming family in our program seeking assistance.

A Note From Our President

September marked another Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Jason's Friends honored the month by featuring stories on our Facebook page about some of the Wyoming kids that are, or have been, part of our program. Thirty powerful and heartfelt stories were presented - one for each day of the month. I hope you had the opportunity to read them. They are still available to see and read. Visit our Facebook page and "Like" Jason's Friends Foundation.

Mark your calendars and join us for the upcoming 20th Annual Bowl for Jason's Friends event. It takes place on Saturday, March 3, 2018 at El Mark-O Lanes in Casper. This is our primary fundraiser. It is a fun event involving nearly 1000 bowlers and even more donors and sponsors. Hope to see you all there!

Is your child battling cancer?

Do you know a family who could use our help?
Contact us TODAY!

Jason's Friends Foundation

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Email: info@jasonsfriends.org

Visit us online: jasonsfriends.org

Donate online at jasonsfriends.org/donate



Happy Birthday my friend

PLEASE JOIN US IN HONORING THESE HEROES WHO ARE FIGHTING HARD OR HAVE OVERCOME THEIR ILLNESS

October Birthdays

Kolton, 12 - Douglas
 August, 5 - Gillette
 Stevie, 10 - Gillette
 Rahne, 13 - Cheyenne
 Tayah, 20 - Douglas
 Dawson, 21 - Cheyenne
 Kira, 19 - Casper
 Patrick, 8 - Cheyenne
 Joshua, 17 - Rawlins
 Brooke, 15 - Gillette
 Jared, 11 - Lovell
 Francheska, 10 - Lusk
 Jason, 7 - Sheridan
 Jaeson, 12 - Riverton
 Teagan, 9 - Cheyenne
 Tennyson, 5 - Cheyenne

November Birthdays

Austin, 7 - Laramie
 Colton, 12 - Cheyenne
 Paden, 11 - Lander
 Marley, 9 - Casper
 Kyle, 18 - Laramie
 Treston, 7 - Worland
 Demetrius, 11 - Cheyenne
 Austen, 18 - Casper
 Aavah, 4 - Cowley
 Connor, 5 - Gillette
 Odalys, 7 - Rock Springs
 Felicity, 19 - Gillette
 Adalee, 8 - Casper
 Henry, 7 - Casper

December Birthdays

Trippy, 12 - Rock Springs
 Travaras, 10 - Cheyenne
 Ariana, 20 - Laramie
 Asher, 8 - Sheridan
 Ra Dene, 20 - Riverton
 Michaela, 19 - Gillette
 Brenden, 19 - Gillette
 Macey, 18 - Byron
 Nathan, 16 - Kaycee

January Birthdays

Karina, 16 - Casper
 Zander, 5 - Cheyenne
 Olivia, 18 - Gillette

February Birthdays

Matthew, 9 - Thayne
 Ivy, 18 - Big Piney
 Alexis, 17 - Lovell
 Aubry, 14 - Sheridan
 Cesar, 13 - Rawlins
 Zerrian, 11 - Thermopolis
 Sophia, 6 - Cheyenne
 Ella, 9 - Jackson

March Birthdays

Callie, 7 - Evanston
 Trevor, 16 - Lovell
 Kevin, 21 - Rock Springs
 Amaya, 16 - Sheridan
 Samantha, 18 - Cody
 Silas, 8 - Cody

Rodeo Kid

Since 2014, the Powder River "Let'Er Buck" Ranch Rodeo in Kaycee, WY has had a special presentation at their event and highlighted in their program book a recipient of the Children's Western Wish Foundation.

Connor was the 2017 Children's Western Wish Recipient at the rodeo on July 15, 2017.

Connor was diagnosed on September 29, 2016 with an inoperable brain tumor. An eye exam showed discolor in his optic nerve and twitching in his eyes. He was then sent to Rapid City to an eye specialist who sent Connor back to Gillette for an MRI. This revealed a tumor shaped like a smashed boiled egg behind his optic nerves. At this point he was not using his right arm, always holding it up, and then his right foot started to pivot inward. Connor was sent to Children's Hospital Colorado where he started chemo for three Thursdays which constituted one round of chemo and had pictures and exams of his eyes. It was determined that it would be easier for the family of 7 to have chemo at home in Gillette with a quarterly MRI in Denver at Children's, along with follow-up eye exams. Chemo would continue for at least a year. The tumor has shrunk some. Connor continues to have bad vision and wears glasses. He will have physical therapy in the future for his right side.

Connor is 4 years old and lives in Gillette.



Connor at the 5th Annual Powder River "Let'Er Buck" Ranch Rodeo July 15, 2017.

Thank you Triple V Rodeo, Children's Western Wish Foundation and Murdoch's



Camp Courage Wyoming

Camp Courage Wyoming was held August 4-6, 2017 at Crooked Creek Guest Ranch near Dubois, Wyoming. Ten families attended the 5th annual childhood cancer camp. The camp is funded through grants, sponsors and private donations which enable families to attend Camp Courage free of charge.

This is a family camp which includes components for the child with cancer, the parents and their siblings. Activities include horseback trail rides, ATV trail rides, art projects, horse painting, fishing, movie night, parent social hour and Saturday night live music. In addition, a mini petting zoo and the Wyoming Highway Patrol visited in 2017. It is a fun family weekend of recreation and camaraderie.

Wyoming families whose cancer child is 18 or under prior to camp, whether in treatment or post treatment, are eligible and encouraged to apply. Children without a recent diagnosis as well as long-term survivors are welcome. The 6th Annual Camp Courage will take place August 10-12, 2018. Applications are available through the Jason's Friends office or at jasonsfriends.org/camp-courage beginning in March 2018.

Donations can be made directly to support Camp Courage by visiting the Jason's Friends Foundation website jasonsfriends.org, clicking on the DONATE button and selecting Camp Courage as the donation type.

"Made a stronger relationship with a family that lives close to us."

"Our son was able to connect with other kids that have gone through similar experiences as he has."

"We would definitely come back."

"It has been great to put cancer aside and have a fun and relaxing weekend."



"Didn't want to leave!"



Go Gold for September Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Thank you Jason's Friends families for sharing your child's cancer journey

Jase was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia on June 21, 2016 at the age of 2, turning 3 only a month after. He had caught a cold and it was getting worse every day. Finally, on June 20th, his father and I took him to the ER for a fever we could not break. He was very weak and grayish in color. The doctors checked his blood levels and knew right away what it was. They kept saying the word, 'blasts,' which we had no idea what that meant, as a parent the last thing that comes to mind when your child is sick is that they have cancer. Within a couple hours we were being life flighted to the Colorado Children's Hospital. Jase was so weak he just watched as they strapped him into the plane. When we finally talked to the doctors in the Children's Hospital, they told us that the leukemia was in 90% of his blood. They acted fast and Jase's body responded very well and fast to the chemo being clear of the 'blasts' within the first days of treatment.

Today, we are so happy he is in remission, having two years left of treatment. He takes chemotherapy orally every night and through his port once a month, with a spinal tap every three months. Jason's Friends Foundation has been one of our biggest blessings through all of this. They have helped us get through the scariest and toughest time of our lives. Without this foundation we would have lost everything and would have had nothing to come back to. We were able to focus completely on Jase and for that we are forever grateful. To this incredible foundation and the people that worked so hard to help us, thank you, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you. Jase is 4 years old.



Mckenzie was diagnosed with A.L.L T-cell at 14 months old, Aug. 2015. Mckenzie has been life flighted 3 times due to being neutrapenic, fevers, bacterial infections and more. Mckenzie has had a rough road, but has always come out on top and with a smile on her face. Mckenzie is a happy girl and full of life. She has 1 more back poke and 4 months left of treatment. She will be followed very closely after treatment until in full remission.

Mckenzie is so excited to start preschool this fall.

Thank you Jason's Friends for all you have done and continue to do for our family! Mckenzie is 2 years old.



Dominic's story started his senior year. He has always been very involved with baseball, football, and track. His busy schedule with sports came to a halt after a CT in June 2016. His symptoms began at the end of his junior year in May 2016 with congestion. Through the month of June he developed numbness in his left cheek, headaches, eye swelling and blurred vision. After a few treatments for a sinus infection with no improvements on antibiotics, we requested a CT. On June 30th, 2016, the CT showed a

large tumor in his left sinus cavity. The biopsy came back as a neuroendocrine carcinoma. We have had a long year of surgeries, radiation, and chemo and at one time he was in remission for a few months. Unfortunately the tumor is fast growing and has a high recurrence rate so he has just finished another round of treatments ending August 27, 2017. He has been staying positive, brave, and keeping faith through this difficult time. We have made several trips to Denver for all of his treatments. Through it all he graduated high school in May and still participated in track his senior year. He is now enrolled in the fire science program at Casper College determined to not let anything get in the way of his dreams. He makes us proud on a daily basis and continues to amaze us all with his determination and strength. Dominic is 19 years old.

Paden had been squinting his right eye and then closing it all together for about a week. He'd struggled with developmental problems since we adopted him as a newborn, especially concerning motor skills and balance so I guess what seems so obvious now didn't alarm me as much. I called around and talked to people who convinced me that he just had a "lazy eye". He woke up one night screaming "OW, OW" and holding his head. I took him to the pediatrician on Monday. He examined him and also concurred that he was fine but if I was still worried, I should take him to the hospital for a CT scan. I did. After 2 CT scans and several hours they informed us that we needed to get on a life flight that night to either Colorado Children's or SLC. We chose Colorado Children's. Paden was diagnosed with a Medulloblastoma - basically a lemon sized tumor in the cerebellum region of his brain. He had surgery, 3 months in the hospital, another six weeks of 5 day a week radiation and 2 years of chemotherapy after that.

Today, he is a happy, healthy wonderful 10 year old. He will always have major issues medically and developmentally and will never mature to a point that he can be independent, but I wouldn't trade him for anything. I don't know how our family would have coped without the support from Jason's Friends. They were and continue to be a Godsend! We were lucky to attend the first Camp Courage. It meant so much to Paden and he still talks about it. Thanks so much for all you do!!



Featured Friends

Propped on his knees behind the pitcher's mound in a crisp red Douglas Mighty Cats jersey, 8-year-old Bray Morrell watches the empty plate and waits. Purple storm clouds hover over Bartling Park in an ominous clump as the gusty wind kicks up dust along the hardpacked field. Yesterday's coach-pitch game was canceled due to storms and tornado warnings. Bray doesn't want a repeat. In the bleachers parents bundle under layers of sweatshirts, bemoaning the abrupt return of cold weather. On the diamond, the players don't seem to notice. Bray spits out a pumpkin seed, a nod to his all-time favorite Rockies player Trevor Story. Story chews sunflower seeds but Bray doesn't like them. Pumpkin is close enough. Underneath Bray's ball cap, his reddish-brown hair is shaved on one side with a sweeping part in imitation of Story's.

On the mound, the butterflies swarm in Bray's stomach as the batter leans in for the first pitch - a line drive down the infield. Bray springs into action, dragging his body through the dirt to nab the ball, at which point he hurls it to the first baseman with the full force of his entire upper body, wobbling backwards to catch his balance. Before the second pitch is thrown, his knees are already crusted in dirt.

Later, his mother Nicole will have to wash the blood off his knees and put on bandages like she did after last week's season opener. This week they tried to ease the damage with kneepads but they kept slipping down Bray's calves. He'd rather play on scabby knees than be slowed down. Despite the pain, underneath the shaded bill of his cap, Bray's smile can be seen from the bleachers.

For as long as he can remember, Bray wanted to play ball and watching his hero play only made the desire more intense. Last year, his mother made him sit out at which point he bargained for next year and she tentatively agreed. To seal the deal, he drafted a contract and insisted she sign. Half-heartedly, she scribbled her name.

Though Bray was already active in other sports like wrestling, golf and basketball, Nicole nonetheless worried about crushing Bray's dream. She worried it might be too competitive and that the coaches or teammates wouldn't respond well to having a kid in a wheelchair on their team.

Bray had no fears. He knew he could show his mom that he had what it took to hold his own on the team, and after his first game last week, he now has the stats to prove it. Three hits, a couple earned runs. Admittedly, his batting still needs a bit of work, he concedes, but his infielding skills are pretty up to par.

Nicole has to admit that she's been pleasantly surprised by the welcoming reception by both the coaches and players, particularly the camaraderie between Bray and his teammates. Coach Dax McCarty loves having Bray on the team.

"There's no quit in him," McCarty said. "No matter what you put him up to, he'll keep up and do it just as good as the other kids. They really like having him around."

Last week after Bray played his first ever ball game, which Nicole missed due to an out-of-state conference, he called to tell his mom that it was the best day of his life.

At 15 months, Bray was diagnosed with spinal neuroblastoma, the third most common childhood cancer after leukemia and central nervous system, according to com. Neuroblastoma are cancer cells in the nerve tissue of the adrenal gland, neck or chest, or in Bray's spinal cord. Removing his led to permanent spinal damage. As a result he has his life confined to a wheelchair. Doctors told Bray's parents that the idea of walking again - even with the aid of crutches - was pretty much out of the question, let alone playing sports.



Today, not only can he easily amble around on crutches, he's also now working with a physical therapist to pare it down to one crutch. He's always been like this, according to his parents, Brad and Nicole. He works his tail off and doesn't get frustrated or give up. "We never let him feel sorry for himself or dwell on what he can't do," Nicole said. "Every once in a while he'll complain about hating his wheelchair or not being able to play football (the only sport in which a wheelchair really doesn't work), but it quickly passes and he's back to his cheerful self." He puts his heart into everything, she adds, and along with all the sports at school, he also takes part in several wheel-chair sport camps every summer in Denver, and is always practicing to get better.

To date, there is no cure to reverse Bray's paralysis though there are some promising signs that it's at least getting better. He now feels a tingling in his legs and has a wider range of hip movement. And who knows what the future might hold in terms of medical advancements, Nicole adds. "Maybe one day he'll be able to walk?" she shrugs. "Either way, he's going to do his part to make it happen."

Sitting in his child-size wheelchair with his eyes shielded behind sporty blue lenses, Bray swings the small aluminum bat above the rubber wheels of his chair and misses the first pitch. He scrunches his face in concentration but misses again. Three more pitches get past him, but each swing is as hard as the first, and the smile never leaves his face. He's still grinning, even after the fifth missed ball, when coach wheels over the T-ball stand.

With an echoey twang, the ball bounces into the infield and over the second baseman's head, while fellow teammate Tristan Palmer pushes Bray's chair safely onto first. The next batter's hit sends Bray to second. Another knocks the ball into left field where outfielders scurry after it with gloves extended. Tristan and Bray round third. A wolf whistle from the crowd erupts as Bray fist pumps the air. Another notch added to his scorecard as his wheels kick up dust and he crosses home.

By Jen Kocher, Douglas Budget



PRCA Rodeo "A Tribute to The Great American Cowboy"

Saturday, November 4, 2017
7:00 PM

The Arena
Central Wyoming Fairgrounds

Henry Iverson is the 2017 Children's Western Wish Recipient

Attention Young Adults with Cancer Have you heard of Stupid Cancer?

Celebrating its 10th anniversary, Stupid Cancer, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, is the largest charity that makes cancer suck less for those touched by young adult cancer. Want to learn more? Go to stupidcancer.org for more information.

Are you a high school senior seeking scholarship opportunities?

Apply for the American Cancer Society Great West Division Scholarship. Packets can be requested by calling the Great West Division Patient Service Center at 1.866.500.3272 or the National Cancer Information Center at 1.800.ACS.2345.

save the date!
20th Annual Bowl for Jason's Friends
Saturday, March 3, 2018
10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Wyoming Soccer Association is partnering with Go 4 the Goal and Jason's Friends Foundation to Lace Up 4 Pediatric Cancer to show their commitment to kids battling cancer in Wyoming. \$3.00 from each pair of laces will go towards financial support for patients and \$1 from each pair will support Camp Courage Wyoming 2018. Go to Go4theGoal.org to purchase your pair of shoelaces.



Spirit of Giving Holiday Drive

Though we are enjoying fall, the holiday season is coming soon. We invite you to help our 95 active Jason's Friends families to create special holiday memories for their loved ones without having to stress over the financial burden of food and other costs. Jason's Friends Foundation provides each active family with a \$75 grocery store gift card for their Thanksgiving meal.

Additionally, for each child under 18 in their family, the parents receive a \$100 gift card to purchase Christmas gifts. We appreciate your help towards this effort. Click DONATE at www.jasonsfriends.org and comment "2017 Holiday Drive" or mail to our office at 340 W. "B" Street, Suite 101 Casper, WY, 82601.

THANK YOU!



You can support Jason's Friends by shopping at Amazon smile and selecting Jason's Friends as your non-profit choice. We will receive a portion of your selected purchase total.



WE ARE SEARCHING...

Jason's Friends is looking for volunteers to build our Bowl for Jason's Friends fundraising team. Meetings are held weekly during the preparation of our fundraiser (January - March) and monthly luncheons are scheduled for the committee to stay connected during the "off" season. If you are interested in getting involved with this great cause and sharing your time, please contact Christine Robinson at christine@jasonsfriends.org.

Jason's Friends Foundation Board of Directors

Lisa Eades - President

Tisa Bilek - Vice President /Secretary

Rocky Eades - Treasurer

Karl Killmer - Director

Mary Garland - Director

Karel Loraas - Director

Risa Petrie - Director

Phil Schmidt - Director



Chase and his Grandma Vicki at the 2017 Poker Run. Chase just celebrated his 2 year cancer remission date.

It was another successful Poker Run held on July 22 at Alcova Lake. The 13TH ANNUAL event brought in \$36,975 for Jason's Friends families. The theme was Pirates of the Caribbean. A HUGE thank you to all of the sponsors and participants. A special THANK YOU to Larry and Vicki Rubis for their ongoing support of Jason's Friends.



We appreciate our reoccurring monthly donors. Thank you for choosing Jason's Friends!

Jordy Quilts continue to be enjoyed by Jason's Friends children during their cancer treatment. When a family enrolls in our program, they are sent a welcome box that includes one of these beautifully handmade quilts by a Casper mom. Thank you so much for the time and love you put into these quilts.



A BIG SHOUT OUT to all of the groups, schools and other organizations that have chosen to raise money for Jason's Friends Foundation!

Jason's Friends was honored to be chosen as the recipient for the annual Wyoming Child Support Association Conference in Casper. Lisa Eades spoke at the conference on August 30. We received \$1800 from the group. Thank you Sally Padilla and WYCSA.

Thank you to Sarah Goodman, Pepsi Sales Rep, for choosing Jason's Friends Foundation as one of their beneficiaries for the mini carnival held on June 24 at Smith's Grocery. Your donation of \$648.85 will assist families with their travel to Denver for appointments.

Thank You
Goodstein Foundation Board of Trustees
for the \$1000 grant.

The 25th Annual API Chili Cook-Off was held on February 18. Thank you to the API Board of Directors for the \$5,250 donation to our cause. Thank you for supporting Jason's Friends for over 10 years!

On Friday, June 23 Jason's Friends Foundation was presented a check in the amount of \$10,220 from Arch Coal Company's Black Thunder Mine. Funds were raised through the mine's behavior based safety process called the SABERS Process. Jason's Friends was selected as the cause for May 2017.



Pictured left to right: Joe Parker, Clint Copping, Black Thunder Mine; Connor Gaston, JFF Family; Gabe Gaston; Mary Garland, JFF Board Member; Linda Chivers, JFF Office Manager; Donald McCreary, Black Thunder Mine; Logan Gaston; Devon Gaston; Alexander Gaston; Megan Gaston; Sondra Gaston



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Sadly,
there will be others.
Leave a legacy
of support.

**Please designate Jason's Friends Foundation, Inc.
as a beneficiary of your will or trust. For more
information on planned giving, please contact us.**

Tax ID #83-0316451

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Like Jason's Friends
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Become a monthly donor and make a difference in a family's life!

Did you know donating even
\$25 a month can provide
a family gas to travel to a
doctor's appointment or a
cafeteria card for meals?



The vital help Jason's Friends Foundation provides
to our families is made possible solely through the
generous donations of individuals, businesses and
foundations who support our work.

Please consider setting up a reoccurring gift
at jasonsfriends.org/donate.