



# Jason's Friends honored by Garth Brooks

by Michael Moore

Nearly five years ago, Clayton Loraas was undergoing treatment for leukemia.

Last Saturday night, he was on stage with arguably the biggest country music superstar in the world.

Loraas and his family traveled to Las Vegas last weekend with members of Jason's Friends Foundation when the organization was honored by the Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids Foundation.

Jason's Friends was one of only three charities nationally honored by Brooks' foundation for its work assisting children and their families.

"Garth Brooks is a worldwide organization that funds many different children's charities," said Lisa Eades of Jason's Friends. "So it's quite an honor for them to come to little old Jason's Friends Foundation and want to honor us."

The Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids Foundation hosted an event July 16 in Las Vegas to honor three charities that had received a grant from Brooks' foundation.

Last year, Jason's Friends received a \$13,000 grant through the Smiles for Life teeth-whitening program from Drs. Stuart and Melissa Youmans of Aspen Ridge Dental Care. That grant came from Brooks' foundation.

Each charity was asked to select a family they had helped to share their story, and Brooks' foundation paid for the entire trip for the Loraas family. Clayton was able to share the stage that night with Brooks.

"He just really fit the bill perfectly," Eades said of Loraas. "He is a child who had a rare form of leukemia, was treated for that down in Denver and ended up with a recurrence. He had to go to the Twin Cities for seven months to undergo a

bone marrow transplant."

Eades and her family decided to make the trip to Las Vegas a family outing as well.

"As involved as I am with Jason's Friends, I couldn't miss the opportunity to go down there and be part of the recognition as well," Eades said last week while packing for the trip. "I won't be up on stage like they are; the idea is to showcase a child, which I think is wonderful."

## Remembering Jason

Jason's Friends was established in 1996 in memory of Jason Eades, who died at the age of 9 in 1995 after an 11-month battle with a brain stem tumor.

The foundation was established to help families deal with the financial and emotional costs that are typical when a child is battling cancer.

Last year, Jason's Friends helped more than 40 Wyoming families with

children who were being treated for various types of cancer.

"It's varying degrees of assistance," Eades said. "Some of those families are in dire straights, and some of those families are just doing a three-year, follow-up checkup, and we're just helping with travel expenses."

Being selected as one of only three national charities (the other two are from California and New York) honored by the Garth Brooks Teammates for Kids Foundation was extremely rewarding, Eades said.

"This lends even more credibility to what it is that we're doing here," she said. "It just says a lot for Wyoming and the kind of people we are, and that's what the Garth Brooks Foundation recognized."

"We're a group that wants to help our own. We're not going to sit around and wait for the government or somebody else to come in and do it."

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