



# Racing to Help Others

By Dawn Berryman, the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society

The word CANCER can be a very scary word. Whether you're hearing it used to describe your child's diagnosis or having to explain to your young children that you have it, it's not an easy thing to hear or share. Unfortunately, too many families in the Mason area have had to deal with this word over the past 10 years.

As scary as a cancer diagnosis is, these families have all been given hope by 20 to 30 years of research that has resulted in much higher survival rates. In some cases, the survival rate has increased by 60%.

For children diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the most common type of childhood cancer, there has been especially good success. A child diagnosed today with ALL has a nearly 90% chance of beating their cancer as compared to less than a 20% chance 30 years ago. Much of this research can be attributed to fundraising organizations such as The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS).

## Race to Anyplace

The mission of LLS is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and to improve the quality of life of patients and their families. They raise money towards their mission through a variety of fundraising campaigns such as their newest one, **Race To Anyplace** (Race).

The next Race will be held at Mason Community Center from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, February 18. It's an action-packed, stationary bike event where teams of 4 to 12 riders compete on stationary spin bikes to see who can "ride" the farthest. Every 15 minutes, a new rider jumps on as a new heat begins. A DJ plays pumping music throughout to keep the riders motivated and moving. Complimentary food and drinks are provided to keep everyone fueled.

There are two levels of competition: competitive and friends/family. It's a great event for supporters of all ages and physical abilities...as long as they can reach the pedals! Riders can spend the entire day at the Community Center or just the time it takes them to complete their heats. And, to help everyone pass the time, Mason Community Center is offering a free day pass for all participants along with half price admission for the participants' family members. In addition, the Community Center will be offering a special membership promotion to any participants who join the day of the event.

## Mason Community Efforts

Because of the number of children and adults who have been affected by a blood cancer over the past 10 years in the Mason area, LLS has had much fundraising success here. One of the biggest fundraisers is Light The Night, an evening walk where supporters and survivors carry illuminated balloons in honor of, support of, or in memory of their loved ones. This event moved to Mason four years ago and has been growing by leaps and bounds since its arrival. This past fall, it outgrew its original location at the Mason Sports Park and had to move to Mason Municipal Center.



The Honored Teammates of this year's Race To Anyplace event are, from left, Ken Murawski, Joel Brown, Jennifer Reckers, Maya Collins, Hannah Berryman, Annie Coyle, Vince Hopkins, and Liz Lothrop (not shown). Maya stayed inside to avoid exposure as she recovered from a bone marrow transplant.

The Tri-State chapter's largest fundraising team was a Mason team, Blazin' with <3, that raised over \$30,000. The schools have done their part as well, spurred on by the number of children in the schools who have been diagnosed over the past few years. In the last three years, Mason High School has raised over \$77,000 through the LLS Pasta For Pennies campaign. Last year, the high school's total of nearly \$28,000 earned them 6th place overall in the country! The middle school has also championed the cause, raising over \$21,000 since 2009. This school level success shows you the power of kids and how they rally around their peers to do whatever they can to help in times of need.

While these events raise money for LLS, they also help to raise awareness and put faces to blood cancer. Eight members of the Mason community are the Honored Teammates of this year's Race To Anyplace event: Maya Collins (3rd grade, diagnosed 4/2011 with AML), Jennifer Reckers (5th grade, diagnosed 1/2002 with ALL), Hannah Berryman (7th grade, diagnosed 12/2002 with ALL), Joel Brown (Junior, diagnosed 6/2008 with ALL), Liz Lothrop (Junior, diagnosed 10/2008 with ALL), Annie Coyle (Senior, diagnosed 3/2006 with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma), Vince Hopkins (diagnosed 10/2005 with follicular lymphoma) and Ken Murawski (diagnosed 7/2005 with AML). All have been diagnosed with a blood cancer and are considered either cured or are currently in remission. Each child hero will share a video of their cancer story at Race, throughout the day, to help remind everyone why the money they've raised is so important and to show them that it does truly make a difference. Ken and Vince, our adult heroes, will be riding on their respective teams, showing everyone that cancer hasn't slowed them down.

While no one wants to hear the word CANCER, Mason families and friends have stepped up to the occasion by raising money and awareness, and showing their love and support to the many families who have. As a mother who has faced the challenges of childhood cancer with my daughter, Hannah, I am forever grateful.

## Learn More

If you'd like to learn more about Race To Anyplace, join the Mason Community Center house team, or start a team of your own, please visit [www.racetoanyplace.org/soh](http://www.racetoanyplace.org/soh). And, if you'd like information on any of the other fundraising campaigns that LLS hosts, or the patient services offered, please visit [www.lls.org/soh](http://www.lls.org/soh) or call 513.698.2828.