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## Teacher Gifts Fight Kids Cancer

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It's the time of the year when parents and students are searching for holiday gifts for teachers. One group of educators is pushing for donations to Teachers Curing Kids' Cancer.

The program started with Killian Owen, who was diagnosed with leukemia at the age of 5. When Killian's coach heard him say on the radio that he didn't mind having spinal taps because he got a treat afterwards, he jumped into action.

"He decided he would like his basketball team, instead of giving him a gift at the end of the season, to collect the money as usual but donate it to the hospital," Killian's mother, Grainne Owen, said.

Killian passed away but his smile, his spirit and determination inspired Coaches Curing Kids Cancer -- a program to help fund childhood cancer research. Sports teams give a donation in honor of a coach and the coach gets a certificate and T-shirt.

All of the money donated stays locally, organization authorities say. In Georgia, it is sent to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, 11Alive learned.

Killian's mom said, "What we're doing is financing cutting-edge drugs that are being developed right now and it's giving children local access to these new treatments."

At Webb Bridge Middle School in Alpharetta, teacher Kathleen McCaffery heard the idea and started a sister program called Teachers Curing Kids Cancer.

"To me, this gave the students a voice and allowed them to be actively involved," McCaffery said.

Parents and students like Kylie Woodall, whose brother died of cancer, are now helping to spread the word.

"Every year, a student usually gives a teacher a gift thinking maybe it will help their grade, but I think it's special if there's actually thought in the gift," Woodall told 11Alive's Kids and Schools Reporter Donna Lowry.

PTA Liaison Vicki Cherry said, "As the mother of a cancer survivor, there's not much more in the world that would you want to see than childhood cancer cured."

Nationally, the non-profit groups are working with the National Cancer Institute so that whatever money is raised will go to help children in those local areas.

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Killian Owen



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