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## Mother who lost son to cancer raising money for pediatric research

Monday, November 1, 2004 9:45 AM EST  
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By David Burch

Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

fter watching her own son succumb to leukemia, Grainne Owen was inspired to help other children and parents avoid the pain and feelings of helplessness she and her family had to endure.



"I just can't stand the thought of other parents having to hear those words, 'There's nothing else we can do,' especially after everything these kids go through," said Ms. Owen, of east Cobb.

In August, Ms. Owen established Coaching for the Cure, an organization dedicated to raising money for pediatric cancer research. The organization works by soliciting donations from youth athletic teams and asking parents and players to donate money to the charity they otherwise would spend on end-of-season gifts for coaches.

Ms. Owen's 9-year-old son, Killian, lost his three-and-a-half year battle with leukemia in August 2003. During his illness, treatments he received included a bone marrow transplant and an experimental form of drug therapy.

Ms. Owen said she had to fight to convince doctors to allow Killian to participate in the FDA trials for the new cancer drug. And while the treatment came too late to save him, she said she believes many other young cancer patients could benefit from new drugs and other innovations if only they were available.

"As a result of Killian trying this drug, they agreed to allow the drug to be tested on other children," Ms. Owen said.

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That's where Coaching for the Cure comes in.

Most of organization's fund-raising efforts have been conducted over the Internet using the Web site [www.coachingforthecure.org](http://www.coachingforthecure.org).

Youth sports programs in Cobb that already have offered their support for Coaching for the Cure include Mount Paran North Baseball and Softball, Eastside Baseball, Sandy Plains Baseball, Mount Bethel Soccer, East Marietta National Little League, East Cobb YMCA and Northeast Cobb YMCA.

During its first two months, the program proved to be so successful that Ms. Owen is now in the process of taking the Web site and its fund-raising efforts nationwide. While not sure of the exact amount raised so far, she said the site collected \$6,000 during its first month in operation and recently received a \$10,000 donation from the BellSouth Foundation.

And fund-raising has started to pick up significantly during the past couple of weeks, Ms. Owen said, as local youth football and soccer leagues wrap up their fall seasons.

In January, she said, Coaching for the Cure plans to launch nationally through a partnership with CureSearch, the fund-raising arm of the National Childhood Cancer Foundation and the Children's Oncology Group. CureSearch works with more than 200 childhood cancer treatment facilities in the United States, including Children's Healthcare of Atlanta where Killian received treatment.

"Some of our biggest supporters are the families of children with cancer," Ms. Owen said. "The outpouring of support has really been inspiring."

Killian's story received some attention earlier this year when a climbing wall was dedicated in his honor at Tritt Elementary in east Cobb. Two of his three brothers, including twin brother Garrett, still attend the school.

NASCAR driver Robbie Gordon attended the dedication of the climbing wall in February. Ms. Owen said she hopes to recruit Gordon and other sports celebrities - she keeps a scrapbook of photos showing Killian with his favorite professional athletes including Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz, Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick and Chicago Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa - to attend the national launch of Coaching for the Cure scheduled in January.

Ms. Owen said she is also working to establish a sister fund-raising organization for Coaching for the Cure - Teaching for the Cure - which would take a similar approach to collecting money for pediatric cancer research but would focus on the gifts students give to their teachers during the holidays or at the end of the school year.

"We hope that will be up and running in time so we can do it for Christmas," Ms. Owen said. "Basically, it's families helping families and children helping children and at the same time paying tribute to somebody that inspired them like a coach or a teacher."

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