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## HELPING HAND

# Youth sports teams pitch in to fight kids' cancer

## Donations in coaches' names help a group inspired by a boy's death.

From Sentinel Wire Services

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When Brent Surman, coach of the Shetland Padres Pony League team of Murrieta, Calif., received his end-of-season gift from his team, he was touched.

Instead of a gift certificate or a plaque, the team made a donation in Surman's name to Coaches Curing Kids' Cancer to help fund pediatric-cancer research.

"I was so moved by their gesture," says Surman. "The players demonstrated exactly the type of values I try to teach. I can't think of a better gift to receive from my team."

In return for the donation, the coach received a T-shirt and a certificate from Coaches Curing Kids' Cancer.

The organization was inspired by the life of Atlanta boy Killian Owen, 9, who battled leukemia for three and a half years. During that time, Killian participated in baseball, swimming and basketball.

It was Killian's positive attitude that inspired a local coach to donate his end-of-season gift to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta -- where the youngster received treatment -- in Killian's name. And the idea for Coaches Curing Kids' Cancer was born.

Despite years of chemotherapy, a bone-marrow transplant and experimental treatment at the National Institutes of Health, Killian wasn't able to beat the cancer and passed away in July 2003. About a year later, his mother, Grainne Owen, decided to turn the coach's idea into a full-fledged charity.

"Killian received the best cancer treatment available, but it still couldn't cure him," says Owen. "We need to help find new, next-generation therapies that will replace regular chemotherapy and target just

the cancer cells."

Last year, Coaches Curing Kids' Cancer made a step in that direction, helping fund a clinical trial of a new targeted therapy at the Aflac Cancer Center of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

"Coaches Curing Kids' Cancer is helping us forge ahead with cutting-edge targeted therapies," says Dr. Howard Katzenstein, director of clinical research and experimental therapies at the Aflac Cancer Center. "Kids' sports teams can really make a difference in helping other children who must face the horrors of cancer."

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