

Kids Helping Kids . . .

6th Annual PJ Day to Support Connecticut Children's Cancer Patients

Since 2011, thousands of children in Connecticut have worn their PJs to school in support of pediatric patients at Connecticut Children's Medical Center fighting cancer and blood disorders.

In the process, the fundraiser known as "PJ Day for the Kids" has raised more than \$84,000 for the Hematology/Oncology Fund at Connecticut Children's.

"Each December, people across Connecticut stand together in support of the kids at Connecticut Children's Medical Center who wear PJs for days, weeks or longer while fighting cancer and other serious illnesses," said Tara Wesoloskie, RN, a clinical nurse in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit at Connecticut Children's. "It is our goal to see everyone across the state coming together on this day to help these patients."

This year's 6th Annual PJ Day for the Kids will take place on Friday, Dec. 9th, although school systems are welcome to select a day that works best for them.

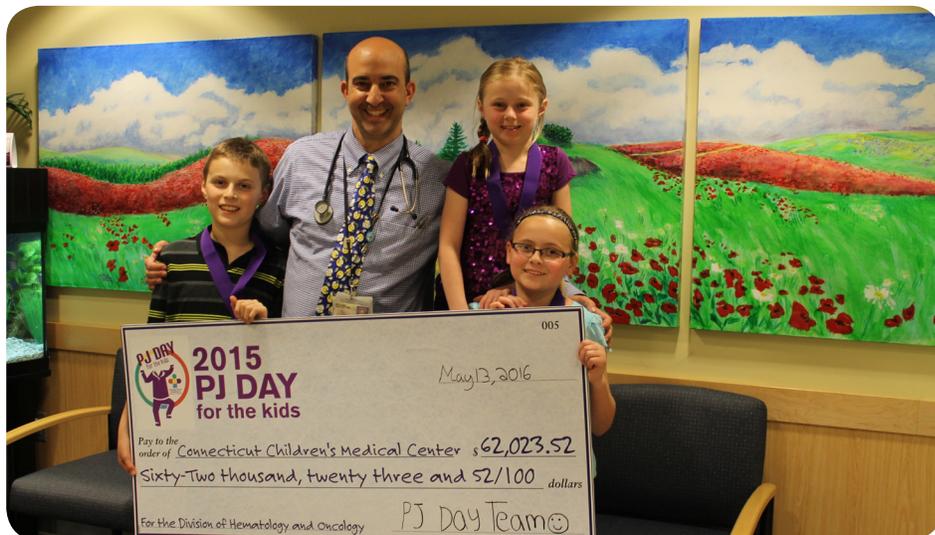
THE BIRTH OF "PJ DAY"

A cancer diagnosis in the Wesoloskie family was the impetus for the program, which has grown from one elementary school in Coventry hosting the event in its first year to more than 30 schools, 42 Dunkin' Donuts locations, five Highland Park Markets and many other local businesses – as well as Connecticut Children's staff – showing their support in 2015.

"As a second grader, my son, Nick at age 8, started 'PJ Day for the Kids' to help brave kids like his sister, Charlotte," Tara said. "When she was just 3 weeks old, Charlotte was diagnosed with cancer. She fought courageously for her entire first year of life."

Charlotte was diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, an aggressive tumor of her chest wall at 21 days of age in 2007. After one year of chemotherapy and multiple surgeries, she is a healthy, vibrant 9-year-old girl, her mother said. She has been cancer free for eight years.

"Grateful for the amazing care from doctors and nurses who helped her get healthy, our entire family and



The 5th Annual PJ Day for the Kids held in 2015 raised more than \$63,500 for Connecticut Children's Division of Hematology and Oncology. Accepting a check on behalf of the Division is Michael Isakoff, MD, pictured here with the Wesoloskie children – Nick, 12, Charlotte, 9, and Caroline, 10 (seated).

community aimed to help other kids and families as they endured similar experiences," Tara explained.

RAISING AWARENESS \$1 AT A TIME

Once a year, kids wear their PJs to school in honor of and in solidarity with the kids at Connecticut Children's. They are asked to bring a donation of \$1 or more, with all proceeds benefitting the Division of Hematology and Oncology at Connecticut Children's.

"In 2011, PJ Day for the Kids started at Coventry Grammar School, raising \$500," Tara said. "The event was a tremendous success, lifting spirits, raising awareness and helping our family and others begin to heal."

In 2015, the event raised more than \$63,500.

"Schools with kids of all ages have participated," she added. "Elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and preschools have hosted events. Even the Second Congregational Church of Coventry held an event, with all parishioners wearing their PJs to church and making donations.

"Our goal is to continue to fundraise and spread awareness of the miracles taking place at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and of the brave children who continue to fight cancer and other serious illness," Tara said. "Our goal is to see this event spread across the state to every community."

To register for PJ Day for the Kids, please visit pjday.kintera.org, where schools, organizations and individuals can find toolkits and registration information; or call the Foundation at 860.837.5737.

How Can Kids (and Grown-Ups) Help?

- Get permission from your school to host a PJ Day with a suggested donation of \$1 or more;
- Send notices home and advertise at your school;
- Designate a staff member to collect donations;
- Add other elements to your PJ Day, such as a movie night or game night;
- Register online at pjday.kintera.org or call 860.837.5737;
- Send checks to Connecticut Children's Medical Center Foundation.

Thank you for supporting "PJ Day for the Kids"!