

# Ryan's Newsletter



The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation  
198 Route 22, The Atrium Building, Pawling, NY 12564  
845-855-0211 [www.ryansfoundation.org](http://www.ryansfoundation.org)

*Children's Cancer Foundation*

## OUR FEATURE STORY RYAN MACKIN

July 4, 2012, started like many other Independence Day holidays for our family – planning a bar-b-que in the afternoon followed by some family fun outside in the yard. This year's celebration ended differently however, after our oldest son Ryan was hit by a car while riding his bike to his friend's house.

Ryan was initially taken to our local trauma center where he was assessed. He had a fractured skull and a blood clot at the base of skull; it was determined that he needed a level one trauma center. Ryan was transferred to Westchester Medical Center and upon arrival, the neurosurgeon deemed that Ryan needed surgery to remove the blood clot and relieve the growing pressure on his brain. Two neurosurgeries, approximately six hours apart, cleared three blood clots. Attempting to minimize any brain damage, Neurosurgeon Dr. Tobias, removed three sections of his skull to give room for his brain to swell and monitor the intracranial pressure. Dr. Tobias told us that removing so much of the skull was considered very aggressive surgery and this was only the second time he had ever done such a surgery. In Ryan's case, he felt it was necessary because his head trauma was so severe. Ryan spent eleven days in a coma and was on a respirator for eight days. The first four days were touch and go. We breathed in and out with each beep of his monitor. He had a hypothermic blanket on him for five days to lower his body temperature to 86F to keep the brain from swelling and to slow down his organs. He had to be paralyzed to keep him from shivering.

In addition, the general surgeon had some concern about the condition of Ryan's major organs. The CAT scan showed something suspicious by his pancreas. We agreed to allow her to do a third surgery to explore his abdomen. By the grace of God, his organs were all intact and functioning well.

As the surgeons were saving Ryan's life, Tom and I waited together alone in the hospital waiting room for updates on his condition. It was torture to wait alone in that windowless waiting room for 24 hours, feeling so isolated from everything but our fear. Finally Ryan

was brought to Trauma ICU where we would wait to see what would be next for him. Dr. Tobias told us that he did everything he could do for our son; the rest was now up to Ryan.

We were an hour and a half from home, exhausted, scared, wondering how we could ever survive this wait. The social worker came to see us and suggested that the Ronald McDonald House would be a good place for us to stay so we could try to get some rest. She told us that we could only be strong for Ryan if we took care of ourselves. Ironically, the month before Ryan's accident, we hosted an annual Sporting Clays fundraiser for The Ryan McElroy Foundation at our business TMT Hunting Preserve. One of our guests that day was the president of the Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley, who came to participate and to see what we do as he was considering a sporting clays fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House. I called Art Hart, a Board Member of Ryan's Foundation, to tell him we needed his help to get accepted at the Ronald McDonald House. Art called me back 10 minutes later to say that our room was waiting for us. Art did not hesitate to reach out on our behalf and help us get a room where we could recharge while Ryan was treated in the TICU at Westchester Medical Center.



As we stayed by Ryan's side, my brother drove the 140 mile round trip from home every day, bringing cards, food, clothes and inevitably our mail, including our bills. Neither Tom nor I had worked for three weeks, yet there were the monthly bills waiting to be paid. We had not even given a thought to anything other than caring for Ryan at WMC and making sure our younger son Kyle was occupied and staying busy at home.

Like an angel who appears in your darkest moment, we had a visit from Carl Merritt, a Board member at Ryan's Foundation and the main energy behind the Sporting Clays fundraiser at TMT. I was so relieved to see Carl and we cried together over Ryan's accident. Little did I know that Carl came representing the Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation to give us two very generous checks, one in July and one in August, that paid our bills in the summer of 2012. The Foundation knows that your singular focus is your child; but, that as you settle into your new routine of hospital activity, the reality of coping with bills and daily finances can be overwhelming. Ryan's Foundation is giving hope to many families like ours.

The following three weeks in the TICU, Ryan made miraculous progress. We needed to be with our son to give him hope; we were able to do that because of the generosity and support of so many, including our family at Ryan's Foundation. The Foundation lifted the burden of our monthly financial commitments by gifting us money to pay our bills. Their generosity gave us the ability to singularly focus on our son as he began his journey forward. After three weeks, Ryan left the TICU at Westchester Medical Center for three weeks of acute, inpatient rehabilitation at Helen Hayes Hospital. After being discharged from Helen Hayes, he continued to recover at home and now after six months, he has returned to school, is driving, enjoying his friends and planning to attend his junior prom.

Our family of friends at Ryan's Foundation has touched our lives in a very deep and meaningful way. In addition to Chip, Carl, and Art, Sheriff Butch Anderson reached out to us to offer his assistance for anything we needed. Tom and I are sure that the love and support we received from those at Ryan's Foundation gave us the strength and ability to help Ryan survive. Out of a tragedy, we have witnessed so many blessings, the Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation among them. With all of this support, Ryan has made a full recovery and returned to HIS life.

(by Carol Mackin)

# CANCER: THRU A CHILD'S EYES

"For my child to have blood work, I needed to sit on his pillow, wrap my arms and legs around him and hold him there to get the sample. For chemo, we would have anywhere from three to five nurses hold him down to administer the chemo. He was very tense and afraid and would scream and fight making the needles hurt all the more. It reminded me of physical and emotional abuse. I have never caused so much pain in my child." (from a mother and primary care giver of a young cancer patient).

Children with cancer are as stunned as their parents by their illness and all the tests and procedures needed to get a diagnosis. If they need to stay in the hospital, it's a new experience and can be very scary and overwhelming. It's very frightening to be told your body isn't working right and that you have cancer. It's normal to be afraid of new and often painful experiences like being stuck with needles and having biopsies, bone marrow aspirations, lumbar punctures, scans, or other tests. Some fear they will not be able to handle the treatments. It's upsetting to deal with a strange place and many new people. It's scary to think about what the treatment will do to your body, how you will look and feel, and how your friends will react. It can be terrifying to think that you might die.

Anger and guilt are normal reactions. The child asks why this has happened to them. It's not fair! They are angry at all the things they have to do, be poked and prodded, swallow nasty tasting liquids, take big pills, talk to strangers, lie in scary noisy machines, have their privacy invaded, and be kept in a hospital. They worry that maybe they have cancer because they were bad in some way. Maybe something they did caused the cancer. Siblings might also be angry that this has happened to their brother or sister. They're angry that life is disrupted for them and that things are never going to be the same. They're angry that their parents may not seem to have time for them or don't seem to care how unhappy they are. They are angry because their brother or sister is getting all the attention. They feel angry with their sibling for being ill and causing so much worry and trouble for everyone in the family. They feel guilty about their anger when their sibling is going through so much and their parents are so stressed. They feel guilt about things they did or said to the child with cancer. Some feel guilty just because they are healthy and their brother or sister is sick. They also worry that something they thought or did might have caused the cancer. It's rare that a child can say these kinds of things to their parents, so some may act it out by rebelling or being the "bad child" – in contrast to the "good child" who has cancer.

The HOPE that things will get better and that tomorrow will be brighter lives in all human beings, no matter what kind of struggles they face. Emily Dickinson wrote:

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul.  
And sings the tune without the words  
And never stops at all.*

These words seem to capture how tightly we cling to HOPE. Children and their families begin feeling HOPEFUL about the future when they hear about treatments and progress being made against childhood cancers. HOPE, for some, is bolstered by faith that there is a reason for what has happened to their child and family, even if they don't understand what it is. In the end, they believe that they will find the strength they need to manage. Although it's a struggle that can feel very uncertain at times, most families are able to find a "new normal" after a child's cancer. (Information from American Cancer Society.)

## "RAISING HOPE"

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Susan Havelka

We believe that everyone is capable of making a difference, no matter the amount. Our giving plan allows you to continue your support in a manner that fits your comfort level. So how do you get involved? That's easy - donate monthly, quarterly, or yearly on a recurring basis. It's simple too - you can contribute by automatic payments from your credit card or you may send a check. Visit our Donate link on our website for more information.

## PEOPLE WHO GIVE BACK: TOM & CAROL MACKIN

We feel so fortunate to live in a small town where we are able to raise our sons in the home where Tom was raised by his parents. We live and work on 232 acres in the Town of Clinton where we run our business, the TMT Hunting Preserve and Sporting Clays. Our place is our paradise and we feel blessed to have such a place to call home.

We also enjoy being part of the community where we are active in local events. As the elected Town Clerk in the Town of Clinton, I get to help people find solutions to their problems every day. Likewise at the TMT, when given the opportunity, we are happy to have hosted fundraisers for several local organizations to help them reach their goals. Of all the charity clay shoots we host, we are most proud to be part of the Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation and to sponsor an annual Sporting Clays Shoot to raise money and hope for local families in need.

Our involvement with Ryan's Foundation began when we met Board Member Carl Merritt through another fundraiser we sponsored. We started talking about hosting a similar clay shoot for the Foundation. After hearing about by the way Ryan's Foundation helps so many families, we knew that it was a charity we wanted to be involved with. Tom and I felt that sponsoring the fundraiser for the Foundation was a good way to show our boys that the greatest gift you will ever receive in life is the simple pleasure of knowing that your effort helped someone in need.

We hosted the first Clay Shoot for the Foundation seven years ago. After the event, Carl told us that the Foundation was helping a local family whose son was diagnosed with cancer. To our surprise, the family being helped was good friends of our family. We had no idea that the Foundation was planning to help them. We felt it was a sign that this was where we belonged, to use our facility to raise money and hope to help other children and families in need.

We are so proud to be part of the annual effort of the Foundation to help so many people find hope in their difficult situations. Each year, Cable News Network sends their reporter to cover the event and she inevitably asks me why we are involved with the Foundation. I get a lump in my throat when I say, "There but for the Grace of God go I." We know how fortunate we are to live in paradise and raise our sons here. We want them to learn to share their good fortune to help others. Little did we know that one day, we would be one of those families in need. On July 4, 2012, our son Ryan was hit by a car while riding his bike to his friend's house. Several weeks into our ordeal, Carl Merritt stopped in to see us and brought with him a check for our family to help us pay our bills. We were overwhelmed by the thoughtfulness and generosity of the Foundation. The money given to us by the Foundation paid our bills during the summer of 2012 while we stayed by Ryan's bedside for 42 days and were singularly focused on supporting our son in the TICU at Westchester Medical Center. Neither Tom nor I worked for three weeks.

We are so fortunate to be involved with the most selfless group of people who, through honoring an amazing little boy named Ryan McElroy, are touching people's lives every day. The Foundation gives hope to people who otherwise feel hopeless. Tom and I know this because we have been on both sides of a tragedy. We are so proud to continue our work for the Foundation with the 2013 Annual Sporting Clays shoot scheduled for June. As our son has traveled from darkness into light and is fully recovered in six months time, we hope to offer the same inspiration to others who are in a similar situation. Hosting the Charity Shoot in Ryan McElroy's name is our small way of continuing to give back!



### ANNUAL CLAY SHOOT - JUNE 8

The cost is \$150 per shooter which includes breakfast, lunch, and the course for the day. Ammo NOT included. After the shoot there is a raffle and live auction. We are looking for teams of 4-6 shooters.

Sponsorships are available \$100 for Station Sponsors, \$500 for Breakfast Sponsors, \$1,500 for Lunch Sponsors, and \$250 for Promotional Sponsors.

Check in starts at 8:30 am and clay shooting starts at 10 am. Contact Carl Merritt @ 845-489-8725 for more info.

TMT Shooting Preserve is located on Schoolhouse Road in Clinton, New York





## ABOUT US



**NANCY KERZNER**  
SECRETARY & BOARD MEMBER

Nancy Kerzner is a Dutchess County native who graduated from Arlington High School. She graduated from Syracuse University with a dual Bachelor's of Science degree in Marketing and TDM (Transportation and Distribution Management). Nancy began her career in New York City working in advertising and later in catalog purchasing. For twelve years, as a Program Coordinator for the Dutchess County Early Intervention Program, Nancy helped develop and provide children with disabilities under the age of 3 the services they needed. For the past two years, she has been involved with the development, opening, and running of a new tapas restaurant, **52 Main**, in Millerton, NY.

Nancy has been involved with Ryan's Foundation since 2008 and was elected to the Board of Directors in 2010. Nancy states, "After attending the Gala in 2007, I went to a meeting to see how I could get involved and have been volunteering ever since. I feel very lucky to be able to have this opportunity to help families fighting these difficult battles."

Nancy lives in Poughquag with her daughter, Regan, and husband, Matt, who also enjoy volunteering for the Foundation.



## 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY ANNUAL GALA OF HOPE APRIL 27

The Annual Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation Gala of Hope will be celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary! We will be holding our Gala on April 27 at the beautiful Villa Borghese in Wappingers Falls, New York where we held our very first Gala.

This year's Honorees are Tom & Carol Mackin and John Olimpio. John is being honored for his dedicated volunteer work with the Foundation and so many other charitable events in the community, including benefit events for fallen officers' families. The Mackin's are being honored for their support of the Foundation through the use of their preserve these last six years. We have raised over \$85,000 because of their generosity. They also help organize sponsors and shooters for our annual event.

As you know, the Annual Gala is our biggest fundraising event of the year. We rely heavily on the Gala for a significant portion of the funds used to help families in the Hudson Valley. 100% of the proceeds raised from this event goes directly to local families.

The Gala features a cocktail hour, formal dinner, with a live auction hosted by our Executive Director, Sheriff Butch Anderson, followed by dancing with John "DJ Johnny O" Olimpio.

It's not too late to get tickets. Visit our website, [www.ryansfoundation.org](http://www.ryansfoundation.org), or call 845-855-0211 for more information and other ways you can help the foundation Raise Hope.

### Benefiting

Children with life threatening diseases

Cocktail Hour	6:00 pm
Formal Dinner	7:00 pm
Live Auction	8:00 pm
Dancing	9:00 pm
Doors Close	11:00 pm

**TICKETS:**  
**\$195 PER PERSON**



## 2013 CALENDAR

April 27	10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Gala of Hope Villa Borghese - Wappingers
June 2	Springtime on the Hudson N. Dutchess Symphony Orchestra - Rhinebeck
June 8	Sporting Clay Shoot TMT Hunting Preserve
June	Ryan's Run/Kids Triathlon (Details TBA)
June 24	Annual Golf Outing Powelton Club - Newburgh
September 28	Angels of Gold Event (Details TBA)
October 10	Annual Fall Tasting The Grandview - Poughkeepsie
October	Millbrook Duathlon (Details TBA)

(More info can be found on our webpage)

## You have the power...

When you help the "Be The Match Registry" your efforts can help save the life of any patient in need of a bone marrow transplant. Registry members you recruit will become part of every patient's search for a matching marrow donor. You can make the difference! All medical costs for the donation procedure are covered by the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP), which operates the "Be The Match Registry," or by the patient's medical insurance, as are travel expenses and other non-medical costs.

[www.marrow.org](http://www.marrow.org) to find out how you can help save lives.



FROM THE EDITOR  
Ryan's Newsletter is published by The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization, dedicated to helping children who battle childhood illnesses and cancer by providing support that improve the quality of life for them and their families.

If you would like to receive your newsletter by email & help us cut costs on printing and postage, please let us know.

If you have a story you want us to know about, please contact our newsletter editor:

[sghavelka@gmail.com](mailto:sghavelka@gmail.com)



## \*\*GOOD NEWS CORNER\*\*

- \* Topical Biomedics donated 5% of their quarterly sales.
- \* New Fairfield Physical Medicine donates monthly through our recurring EFT
- \* North East Physical Medicine donates monthly through our recurring EFT
- \* Danbury Physical Medicine donates monthly through our recurring EFT
- \* Ryan's Foundation would like to give a special THANK YOU to Nick Coppola and the entire Coppola Family for hosting their very generous Annual Christmas Brunch for sick children and their families.
- \* Ryan's House of Hope is taking shape! Roof is on, windows in. Thank you to all who have made this happen! Go to Ryan's Foundation Facebook page for photos of the progress.
- \* Thank you to a truly amazing person - Christine Ault. Christine, who at the age of 24 was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer. After 6 years of chemo, 5 surgeries, and ongoing relapses, she celebrated her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday! And what did this amazing person do? In lieu of gifts, she asked her family and friends to donate to Ryan's Foundation. Together, they donated \$355 in checks and donated even more on-line to help others!
- \* Thank you to the Riverbank Banjo Band from Stanfordsville, NY who donated \$500! They are a local nonprofit organization who distributes it's profits to charities in areas in which they live. This year they chose us!
- \* The H.W. Wilson Foundation, who helps support nonprofit charities, voted to grant The Ryan Foundation a \$7,000 grant.
- \* Our Lady of Lourdes Girls Varsity Basketball Team held their annual Bastian Tournament. Again this year, they played for Ryan's Foundation and made a very generous donation from the sale of baked goods, etc.
- \* Precor Corporation (premium fitness equipment) made a very generous donation to the foundation this month.
- \* Joe & Susan Havelka donated proceeds from the beverage tent at the Celtic Day in the Park event at Mills Mansion totaling \$2800.

Thanks!

# I want to help donation form

Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ST \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone-day: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone-evening: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My check is enclosed. (Make checks payable to: The Ryan Foundation

\_\_\_\_\_ Charge my donation to: \_\_\_\_\_ Master Card \_\_\_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_\_\_ Discover

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL COMPLETED FORM WITH YOUR CHECK TO:  
The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation,  
198 Route 22 Atrium Building, Pawling, NY 12564

**ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

A \$100 contribution will cover transportation to a hospital. A \$250 contribution will pay for food or utilities.  
A \$500 contribution will pay for lodging or rent. A \$1,000 contribution will pay for a mortgage or medicines.

Please help and embrace the tiny things in life. Thank you.

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO MADE A DONATION AFTER READING THIS NEWSLETTER.  
YOUR GENEROSITY IS WHAT MAKES ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE!