

Ryan's Newsletter

April 2016



OUR FEATURED HERO: DENNIS PATRICK GILLESPIE

Dennis Patrick Gillespie was born four weeks early on July 12, 2004. Upon his arrival all seemed well. We were told he was healthy as they cleaned him, weighed him and whisked him away for his first bath. Not long after that he was moved to the pediatric ICU and the doctor explained that something was not right. After his bath he had turned blue and his color was not returning. A few hours later we met Dr. Michael Snyder, a pediatric cardiologist who informed that our son was born with a complex congenital heart defect called Tetralogy of Fallot which causes oxygen-poor blood to flow out of the heart and into the rest of the body. Our newborn would need immediate open heart surgery. By the time Dennis was 7 months old, he had endured three open heart surgeries and numerous procedures.

Previous to Dennis' arrival, I was working as an elementary teacher in NYC. Hindsight really is 20/20 because when I first started and filled out the paperwork for my health insurance, I remember there being an emergency rider that I didn't think was necessary as I was young and healthy at the time. Big mistake! Fast forward to the medical bills piling up, harassing phone calls from bill collectors, and my anxiety increasing daily. Edward, husband and father extraordinaire, had always been the calming influence in my life and now was no different. "They can't get blood from a stone," he told me. "All that matters is his continued good health, if we have to pay them \$25.00 a month for the rest of our lives then so be it." He was right. We sat down and began to look at where we could cut back in our budget in the hopes of arranging a monthly payment that both we and the hospital and could live with.

I had joined a gym recently with the best of intentions. I would work off all my baby weight and be back to my old self in no time! Of course this was before our world had been turned upside down. I also knew that breaking a gym contract would not be easy. I walked in holding numerous folders stuffed with bills and letters under one arm and my beautiful 9 month old son in the other. The woman behind the counter did not break into the forgiving smile I imagined she would after I babbled at length about why I could no longer pay my gym membership. Instead she simply asked me to wait there. She returned with a rather large gentleman. I was confused. He introduced himself and his coworker as Chip and Judy McElroy. "We run a foundation" he told me, "in memory of our son, Ryan." I didn't understand. Who were these people? Why was I crying? After listening to Chip share Ryan's story he said, "We will take care of everything." And they did. It's as simple as that. It's hard for me, even now almost 12 years later, to put into words how these amazing people changed not only our lives but our perspective. The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer foundation will ALWAYS be a gift from God to our family; and we are now, as we were then, forever grateful.

The Gillespie Family

Upcoming Events

We are excited to announce that our *Annual Gala* will once again be held April 9, 2016 at the Grandview in Poughkeepsie. It's not too late to get tickets. 6PM-11PM

Our *Annual Clay Shoot* is scheduled for June 4, 2016 at the TMT Preserve.

Information on our events will be available on our webpage.

Past Events

Thank you to all who support our efforts at all of our events.

Exciting News

Ryan's Foundation is excited to announce that our NEWSLETTER is going DIGITAL.

Please go to our webpage for all of our upcoming news!

www.ryansfoundation.org

PEOPLE WHO GIVE BACK: by MATILDA ROONEY

When I was 11 years old, I tried out for the Saugerties Mustangs, and this is where I met my best friend, Seamus Murphy. Seamus was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma at the young age of 9. Hudson Valley Coaches Against Cancer was started in order to raise money to give to the Children's Cancer Fund (HVCAC). My second year playing with Seamus, our coach Jim Consiglio, who started HVCAC, invited me to help out at the "Score For A Cure" tournament hosted that March.

My first year, I helped HVCAC to raise money by selling wristbands in order to bring awareness to the organization and help all of those in need. I received an award recognizing my high level of dedication. From these efforts, I was named Student Volunteer Coordinator my second year. I continued to devote a lot of time to our organization, showing up to meetings, helping coordinate the schedule, and the fall after my second year, I became part of the executive board, while raising just shy of \$3000. Being a board member was never part of my goals, as I simply meant to help, not to be noticed.

Volunteering at HVCAC made me realize that actions speak louder than words. I no longer work solely in March; instead, HVCAC has become an organization in which I volunteer year round. My goal for this year, my fourth year, is to raise \$7000. Meeting children and hearing stories from those who have been helped by HVCAC and Ryan's Foundation has inspired me to expand the organization to help more kids. On the path to expanding HVCAC to touch more families, we are in the midst of creating a webpage to increase visibility and raising more money than ever before. Hudson Valley Coaches Against Cancer is proud to have paired with Ryan's Foundation to help more families while their loved ones deal with this disease and in the fight against cancer.

Matilda Rooney is a Junior at The Canterbury School located in New Milford, Connecticut and serves as a Board Member on the HVCAC Foundation.

HVCAC is an organization that was created to raise funds for research, treatment and assistance to local families in the fight against childhood cancers. Hudson Valley Coaches Against Cancer will be having their annual Score For A Cure hockey tournament on March 26th at Kiwanis Ice Arena in Saugerties, NY. This is a friendly and fun tournament involving ten local adult teams. Come out and support Ryan's Foundation while enjoying a fun and exciting event. HVCAC and Ryan's Foundation are looking for volunteers to help serve food throughout the day. If interested in helping, please Contact Corrin Sternberg at csternberg@ryansfoundation.org or 845-724-4440.



CATCH US ON THE GO - WHEREVER YOU GO!

Do you find it difficult keeping up with everything you need to do? If so, you're not alone! Our rapidly changing world is evolving. While printed newspapers and newsletters are still considered important, print is gradually falling out of favor. Changing reader habits and the growth of mobile are influencing our need to move to a web-based newsletter. Starting now, our newsletter will no longer be mailed to you. Instead, it will be available on our newly redesigned webpage. We have been working hard to create a new, more engaging webpage and we're finally ready to share it with all of you!

Check out www.Ryansfoundation.org and feel free to let us know what you think!

Follow us on Twitter @ryansfoundation and stay up to date on all things happening at the Foundation.

Like us on our Facebook page RYAN McELROY CHILDREN'S CANCER FOUNDATION. Every day there are new posts of what's going on. Never miss an event again!

Follow us on Instagram RyansFoundation and catch all the news and see our photos!

All of our social media contains up to the minute information about our mission to help children and families who are in the struggle of their lives. Meet our Board Members, volunteers, and supporters. All on your mobile or laptop!

RYAN'S FOUNDATION WOULD LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. AS THIS IS OUR LAST PRINTED NEWSLETTER BEING MAILED, WE HOPE YOU HAVE ENJOYED READING ABOUT THE FAMILIES YOU HAVE HELPED US REACH OUT TO. IT'S ALWAYS ABOUT OUR SUPPORTERS — WITHOUT WHOM WE COULD NOT DO WHAT WE DO. PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT US BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE WWW.RYANSFOUNDATION.ORG. THANKS AGAIN!

Join



Become a monthly donor and help us Never Say No to a child in need right here in the Mid-Hudson Valley



\$10

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

Pay for a family to stay at the local Ronald McDonald house for one night so they can be close to their child during treatment

\$20

GAS

Provide a gas card to help a family drive to a hospital for treatment



\$100

MEDICAL BILLS

Help pay a child's medical bills, including copays and prescription costs

Any

RAISE HOPE

Help Ease a families financial burden so they can focus on their child's treatment

THE RYAN MCELROY CHILDREN'S CANCER FOUNDATION

Raising Hope, Ryan's Way

www.ryansfoundation.org

Ryan's Angels

Heaven gained another Angel as we said goodbye to "the Smiling Warrior" who fought a brave 2 year battle with leukemia in his short 2-1/2 years of life. We ask that you keep his grieving family in your prayers.

RYAN'S TEAM: I WANT TO JOIN! I am pleased to make a monthly contribution to support the efforts of Ryan's Foundation. You can also go to our donate page on our website to set up your monthly contributions.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

CREDIT CARD# _____ EXP DATE ____/____

CVV # _____ ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

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450 Gardner Hollow Road, Poughquag, NY 12570

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