

Learn About The Hyde Park Lions and their Chemo Duck Program

The Lions are men and women who VOLUNTEER their time to humanitarian causes in their local communities. By conducting service projects and fund raisers, Lions strive to help those in need, wherever need exists. The Lions motto in "We Serve."

Our primary focus has been and still is on sight and hearing programs developed to help the hearing impaired. We provide eye exams and glasses to needy students and parents, conduct lazy eye clinics for preschool children, glaucoma screening for adults, hearing screening and aids for the deaf and assistive devices for the hearing and vision impaired. We collect and recycle eyeglasses, hearing aids and cell phones.

We conduct fundraisers to support these activities, such as our annual White Cane and journey for Sight Campaigns, raffles, flea market, auctions, we publish the journal for the 4th of July by getting ads, and we sell chocolate Easter bunnies and Christmas Wreaths.

We have taken on another role. This one is to help our children with cancer. The Hyde Park Lions has teamed up with Gabe's My Heart Foundation to provide therapeutic Chemo Ducks to provide our children with a training tool and a "Huggable Hope Buddy" to accompany them through their journey. I learned about this in January of 2011 while watching the Rachael Ray Show. I would like to begin by giving you a little history of Chemo Duck, show you a video and present Chemo duck to you. At the end I will answer any questions you may have in regards to the Hyde Park Lions and the Chemo Duck Program.

A Chemo Duck is a 12" stuffed therapeutic duck that came to life shortly after Gabe Sipos' first birthday. Gabe was born on New Years Day in 2002 in Nashville, Tn. Before his first birthday, Gabe was taken to his pediatrician's office on three different occasions to try to find the cause of his enlarged lymph nodes and his newly acquired lazy right eye. On the evening of Christmas Gabe was taken to the emergency room of the Monroe Carrel Children's Hospital where a CT scan revealed a large mass in his right sinus cavity. It was resting on his brain and crushing the optic nerve, which turned out to be a malignant tumor. A week after his first birthday Gabe returned to the Children's Hospital for treatment.

As parents Lu and Rob Sipos could no longer just give their son a hug and kiss and tell him he would be better and everything would go away. Instead they had to find ways to keep Gabe calm during all the procedures and ensure the medical team he would take all his medications. A friend bought Gabe a stuffed duck. Lu immediately noticed how her son took to the duck and responded to him. Lu sent Rob out to purchase every stuffed duck he could find. Lu took the ducks home and began to transform them into Chemo Ducks. Little did Lu and Rob know that this stay would become a quilt of tales sewn with the threads of hope of 15 other families with special children that had cancer. Lu had no idea that this duck would become Gabe's best friend.

Lu put her sewing skills to work and transformed each duck to a huggable buddy complete with hospital pajamas, bandana, a simulated chemotherapy central line, a belly button for a feeding tube placement, an IV, an arm immobilizer on his right arm, and a port or Hickman line. Chemo Duck is a play therapy tool used to relieve anxiety in children undergoing cancer treatment. He is also used as a means of comfort for children during an extremely stressful time and is "Huggable Hope." Chemo Duck comes with supplemental material, a bilingual companion overview book, activity book and an educational DVD that includes a cartoon about the program and is distributed to families by trained hospital staff close to the time of diagnosis.

Chemo Duck and Gabe learned about living with cancer and what cancer treatment to a small boy. His loving friend Gabe treated him for cancer of the beak and administered a series of beak brushing aggressive rounds of Play Dough therapy. Both Chemo Duck and Gabe finished their treatments in November 2003. Gabe went on to earn his Doctorate of Duckology (which stands for the study of Duck cancer) from the Three Bald Buddies University in December 2003. Gabe's two bald buddies were Jack Farrell and Connor Hunley. These two buddies helped Gabe navigate his way through cancer treatment and to still be regular kid. Connor passed away November 1, 2004 but Gabe and his family are forever grateful that the boys became a part of Gabe's life and they had a chance to share in Connor's sunshine. This became the basis for "I'm Still Me" a fun activity book.

"I'm Still Me" book is for children with cancer. Gabe's My Heart Foundation worked child life specialists, social workers and psychologists to create this book. This book is designed to deal with each topic in several different ways and appeals to children of all ages. Children undergoing cancer treatment appear to mature rapidly in learning adult medical terms and vocabulary. They get

accustomed to the world of hair loss, nausea and needles. Children tend to rely on their parents for answers and need to work at their own pace in a manner in which they can comprehend. This activity book is used in an age appropriate manner. It tells them they didn't do anything wrong and all kinds of kids get cancer. Cancer can't be caught from another person and they are just a regular kid with some cells in their body that shouldn't be there. It asks them what type of cancer they have and that they are COOL. This gives them the opportunity to take control, tell others of their illness, how they feel and what they want people to know about them. It teaches them about nutrition, germs, and changes in their bodies inside and out and how to deal with their feelings. Gabe's My Heart is working hard to ensure children with cancer maintain a self worth and that they feel good about themselves, who they are and that their parents are well equipped with information in treating cancer. They hope this opens up a discussion with their child, siblings and medical staff in answering questions they have regarding their treatment and what to expect.

INTRODUCE CHEMO DUCK and SHOW DVD

On the average 46 children (Monday through Friday) and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer in the United States. This amount to about 2 classrooms or over 1200 children a year with approximately 350 losing their battle a year. Usually treatment for childhood cancer lasts about 2 years. Unfortunately childhood cancer cannot be prevented and most causes of childhood cancer are unknown. A study in 2010 found that survivors of childhood cancers are 4 times more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder. These children have been exposed to an event that made them feel very frightened, helpless and horrified. Gabe is currently cancer free and a healthy 10-year-old boy. Gabe recently appeared in the movies Country Strong alongside Tim McGraw and Gwyneth Paltrow, playing a Make-A-Wish child named Travis. Gabe continues to visit the hospital and distribute Chemo Ducks to children.

On April 12, 2011, Hyde Park Lions President Ray Davis and myself met with the Pediatric Clinical Hematology/ Oncology Coordinator and the Child Life Nurse at Vassar Brothers Medical Center and introduced them to Chemo Duck. They were very excited to learn more of the program and to get started. Dr. Sandoval treats children at Vassar Brothers Medical Center from Westchester Medical Center and the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. On November 29, 2011 The Hyde Park Lions, Harry Heupler father of Thomas J. Heupler on behalf of the Hyde Park Fire Department's Thomas J. Heupler Memorial Golf Tournament and myself did a formal presentation of 36 Chemo Ducks to Vassar Brothers Hospital. Medical Staff, Cablevision News and the Poughkeepsie journal were present. We

proudly presented a Chemo Duck to Zack Campbell and his family. Dr. Aronizon and Dr. Sandoval (from Westchester Medical Center) were present. An article appeared in the Poughkeepsie Journal and I had a live interview on Thursday December 1 on 98.9 with Van Ritchie and spoke of our project. (They all want to be present for future projects regarding our Chemo Duck program. This could not have been possible if were not for donations and support from the community. We are looking forward to working with the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital and supplying them with Chemo Ducks so all our children in our local area are able to take part in this project.

The Hyde Park Lions committed to purchasing the first case of 24 ducks to the hospital (which I am happy to say turned out to be 72-(a 2 year supply)- with the support we received from the community.). A case of 24 Ducks and all the training material currently costs \$650. A single duck can be purchased for \$25. Ducks can only be orders twice a year so we are looking for sponsors to donate funds to have the money available to pay for the ducks once the hospital places and order. It generally takes 3 months for them to come it, but that depends on the time they were ordered by the hospital and the time Gabe's My Heart Foundation places an order. We would like to have every local child diagnosed with cancer receive a duck and that they and their families can benefit from this program.

We are planning to have a "Huggable Hope Day" this year. Bandanas can be purchased and fabric painted to be presented to cancer patients or kept to help raise funds. We are also planning to have a bake sale and sell refreshments.

Donations can be sent to myself:

Barbara Gavin, 159 South Quaker Lane, Hyde Park, NY 12538

Note Chemo Duck in the memo. Make checks payable to the Hyde Park Lions. Donations can also be sent to the Hyde Park Lions, P.O. Box 58, Hyde Park, NY 12538.

For more information or if you would like me to come and speak you can reach me by email: GvnBbsb@aol.com, or if you would like to learn more about the chemo duck program you can search Gabe's My Heart Foundation or Chemo Duck.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today and share this information about Chemo Duck and the role it plays in helping children and adolescents with childhood cancer.