



2013 Newsletter

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2nd Annual 4th of July Pray~Hope~Believe 5K Walk/Run

More than 1300 participants and \$38,000 raised



On July 4, 2013, the Colerain Township Municipal Complex was overflowing with the more than 1300 participants and those cheering them on. The morning began with a blessing from Bishop Joseph Binzer and a flag-raising ceremony by members of the 1-174th Army National Guard Unit. Awards were given for competitive runners and walkers. Others took a more leisurely approach to start their Independence Day. The youngest children in attendance enjoyed the quick Superhero Sprint – complete with Pray~Hope~Believe Superhero capes. Refreshments, children's games, basket raffle, and music added to the fun of the day. The event ended with a balloon release honoring

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More than \$45,000 donated to CCHMC for pediatric brain cancer research

PHBF founders Rick and Lynne Merk joined other PHBF supporters on November 1, 2013 in presenting a check for \$45,604.88 to Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center's (CCHMC) Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute. The money will be used to fund valuable research being conducted by Dr. Rachid Drissi and his lab into finding effective treatments for pediatric brain cancer while minimizing the side effects of treatment. PHBF is proud to support research at CCHMC which was recently ranked by U.S. News and World Report as having the #1 program for childhood cancer care. PHBF is especially pleased with CCHMC's focus upon close collaboration between researchers and clinicians – thus bringing new, innovative treatments to children sooner. ♦



PHBF founders, Rick and Lynne Merk, present check to CCHMC

those who are battling pediatric brain cancer – and those who have passed away from this disease. We hope everyone left with increased awareness and desire to do what is necessary to find more effective treatments for pediatric brain cancer while also supporting those who are currently battling. PHBF is grateful for the support of the 5K presenting sponsor, Rumpke, Colerain Township, OH and the other sponsors and donors who help make this event possible. In the final tally, the 5K raised \$38,000 for pediatric brain cancer research! We look forward to another successful event next July 4th! If interested in becoming a sponsor or donating items for our basket raffle, please email lynne@prayhopebelieve.org. ◇



A young Pray~Hope~Believe Superhero participates in the Superhero Sprint fully equipped with his cape

PHBF joins DIPG Collaborative

Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG) is a type of pediatric brain cancer for which there is currently no known cure. PHBF joined with other foundations to form the DIPG Collaborative pooling their resources in support of furthering treatment for DIPG and, ultimately, all forms of cancer. PHBF is honored to be part of this group fostering close collaboration with the most respected pediatric brain cancer researchers in the world. ◇



Tony Merk Pigskin Preview 2013

Partnering with Tackle Childhood Cancer

August 18-19, 2013 marked the 3rd annual Tony Merk Pigskin Preview at LaSalle High School in Cincinnati, OH. More than 30 football teams in grades K-8 participated in this event. PHBF joined with Cancer Free Kids in this Tackle Childhood Cancer initiative to raise funds for childhood cancer research. This year, the Tony Merk Pigskin Preview was also a site for the NFL Punt, Pass, and Kick competition. We were especially honored by a visit from the Cincinnati Bengals' placekicker, Mike Nugent.



Rick and Lynne Merk pose with Bengals' placekicker, Mike Nugent, and the Our Lady of Grace Eagles' football team – holding Tony Merk's #88 jersey

The Tony Merk Pigskin Preview was established in 2011 following the death of 6-year-old Tony Merk after an almost 3-year battle with brain cancer. Tony was invited to be an honorary captain of the LaSalle Lancer's football team during the 2010 season. Tony also had the privilege of participating in a special play during a football game in October 2010 with the Our Lady of Grace (Goesbeck, Ohio) Eagles football team during which Tony ran for a touchdown against the Our Lady of Visitation Vikings. Football provided much joy for Tony while he was alive. Funds from the Tony Merk Pigskin Preview also support a scholarship at LaSalle High School in Tony's memory. ◇

PHBF Benefit Concert

May 14, 2013 with Adam Ezra Group

Thomas More College (TMC) Saints' football kicker, Tim Gormley, and the Saints' football team organized a Benefit Concert on May 14, 2013 at Molly Malone's in Covington, KY. The Adam Ezra Group (AEG) out of Boston, MA provided the concert free of charge in support of PHBF and pediatric brain cancer research. The concert was held in memory of Tony Merk who was adopted by the TMC Saint's football team in October 2010 as their captain while he battled brain cancer. Tony remains the Saints' "Captain in the skies." Many thanks to AEG and the TMC Saints! ◇

2014 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

H.O.P.E (HELPING OUR PARENTS ENERGIZE) NIGHT FOR PARENTS OF PEDIATRIC BRAIN TUMOR PATIENTS

FEBRUARY 1, 2014

MCAULEY HIGH SCHOOL, COLLEGE HILL

A special night out for parents of pediatric brain tumor patients. Parents will be served a gourmet meal and enjoy a movie on the state-of-the art big screen in McAuley High School's theater. Child-care will be provided on-site. This event is being planned in collaboration with members of the psycho-social support team at Cincinnati Children's Hospital's Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute.

4TH OF JULY PRAY~HOPE~BELIEVE 5K WALK/RUN

JULY 4, 2014, 8:30AM

COLERAIN TOWNSHIP, OH

A 5K walk or run at the Colerain Township Municipal Complex (4200 Springdale Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45251). Awards are given for runners and competitive walkers. Family-friendly event with refreshments, music, flag-raising ceremony, children's games, basket raffle, and Superhero Sprint for the little ones.

6TH ANNUAL TONY MERK/PRAY~HOPE~BELIEVE BLOOD DRIVE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2014; 9AM-3:30PM

ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH (GROESBECK; 2900 W. GALBRAITH RD., CINCINNATI, OH 45239)

An opportunity for blood donors to save lives during the holiday season. Go to www.hoxworth.org for more information about blood donation. Held in loving memory of Tony Merk in honor of Tony's birthday.

Tony Merk/PHB Blood Drive

In 2009, the first Tony Merk/PHB Blood Drive took place at St. Ann Church in Groesbeck, OH in celebration of Tony Merk's 5th birthday. It was a way for Tony and the Merk family to give back to the community that supported Tony during his treatment for brain cancer. Despite Tony's death in July 2011, the Merk family continues to honor Tony's memory around his birthday by collaborating with Hoxworth Blood Center to save lives with invaluable blood donations. 2013 marked the 5th year for this blood drive. In all, 155 donors registered with a total of 139 blood products collected. That's A LOT of lives saved!

PHBF Ice Cream Day at Dairy Dream

PHBF Ice Cream Day was celebrated at Dairy Dream in Monfort Heights, OH (5452 North Bend Rd., 45247) on Saturday, September 14, 2013. Rockin' Ron from Cincinnati's WGRR radio station played some tunes while patrons enjoyed delicious ice cream treats. Raffle tickets were sold for prizes including LCD TV, Samsung Galaxy Note, Angel Pendant, free ice cream for a year, massage, and a party at Parkland Theater! Split-the-Pot tickets were also sold. PHBF is thankful to Dairy Dream's owner, Pam Miller, for her continued support of PHBF's mission to bring HOPE to children facing brain cancer.

Pray~Hope~Believe Family Camp Day

A day of HOPE for families facing pediatric brain cancer

PHBF is excited to share that we have partnered with the psycho-social support team within Cincinnati Children's Hospital's Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute to offer supportive services for families with a child who has a brain tumor. Our first big venture took place in October when we sponsored a Pray~Hope~Believe Family Day at Camp Joy in Clarksville, OH for these families. Fortunately, the weather matched the spirit of the day – BEAUTIFUL! The day began with a delicious breakfast prepared by PHBF volunteers. Families participated in various arts, crafts, and outdoor *adventures*. We took family pictures and also offered support groups for parents and children of varied ages. The feedback received from families was very good. PHBF plans to make this an annual event and is planning some future activities as these families all expressed an interest in having more regular opportunities to connect with other families who *understand what they are experiencing*.

WAYS TO SUPPORT PHBF

Donate online at www.PrayHopeBelieve.org

Mail donations to: P.O. Box 53236
Cincinnati, OH 45253

Find out about volunteer opportunities at volunteer@prayhopebelieve.org or call 513-304-2388.

PHBF is an IRS 501 (c)(3) approved nonprofit organization (45-3913286).

PHBF Founders, Rick and Lynne Merk, honored by CCHMC

Rick and Lynne Merk, founders of the Pray~Hope~Believe Foundation, were honored at the Dinner with Champions event at Cincinnati Children's Hospital on December 3, 2013. The Merks were presented with an award by CCHMC's CEO, Michael Fischer, for the ongoing support PHBF has given to CCHMC. PHBF looks forward to continued collaboration with CCHMC's Cancer and Blood Diseases Institute to find more effective treatments for pediatric brain cancer while minimizing the serious, long-term side effects of treatment. ◇



Rick and Lynne Merk presented with Champions Award by Michael Fischer and some special CCHMC patients

PHBF wants to send a special thanks to the families of Erin, Connor, Jerry, Kelly, Dan, and Ann who during their time of grieving asked friends and family to support PHBF in memory of their loved ones. We are humbled by the trust given to us by these families as they grieve. We promise to do our best to continue good stewardship of these funds.

We are also thankful to the many young people collecting donations for PHBF in lieu of birthday presents on their birthdays, selling lemonade, or holding other fundraising events in support of PHBF. Your efforts are truly appreciated. You are making a difference in the lives of children affected by cancer! If you have a fundraising idea for PHBF, please let us know. PHBF will assist in any way possible. Email us at fundraising@prayhopebelieve.org.

Thanks to all who helped PHBF in 2013. We look forward to your continued support in 2014!



The Pray~Hope~Believe Foundation (PHBF) was founded to honor the memory of Tony Merk – a 6-year-old boy who died on July 4, 2011 after battling brain cancer for almost 3 years. The PHBF is a non-profit organization whose primary focus is upon funding innovative pediatric brain tumor research which emphasizes not only ridding the body of cancer, but also minimizing the long-term, serious side effects of treatment. PHBF funds primarily support research at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center. PHBF offers financial support and a prayer ministry for children/teens with a life-threatening condition. "Pray~Hope~Believe" became the theme for Tony's journey on earth and is now his family's theme for living and healing. The ultimate goal of PHBF is to prevent other families from facing the difficult unwanted journey of loss, so many families have faced.

Bringing HOPE to children with brain cancer.