



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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ConKerr Cancer Launches its First Idaho Chapter

Not-for-profit organization recruits volunteers to sew custom pillowcases for children in hospitals

BOISE – Patients at St. Luke's Children's Hospital received some bright and cheerful pillowcases Tuesday to make their hospital stay a little more comfortable.

The local Idaho Chapter of ConKerr Cancer held a special event at the Children's Hospital to announce the launch of the first Idaho Chapter, and to donate more than 650 pillowcases to the children.

The pillowcases were sewn by volunteers throughout the Treasure Valley. The event also marked the beginning of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Each year more than 12,500 children are diagnosed with cancer. It's estimated that about 3,000 children die each year from cancer making it the No. 1 disease that leads to the death of children.

ConKerr cancer is a national organization founded by Cindy Kerr in 2002 when her son Ryan was diagnosed with a rare childhood cancer.

To help him feel more at home during his hospital stay, Kerr began, with Ryan's help, making pillowcases to brighten up his hospital room. Ryan liked them so much that Kerr began making pillowcases for other children being treated for cancer at the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia.

In 2008, Ryan Kerr lost his battle with cancer, but his mother kept the pillowcase project alive. In just the last two years, Kerr has recruited thousands of volunteers who have sewn more than 100,000 pillowcases and distributed them to sick children all across the United States and even overseas to South Africa.

Kerr traveled to Boise to speak at today's event, which also included comments from Idaho Lt. Gov. Brad Little who proclaimed Sept. 1 as ConKerr Cancer Day in Idaho. The event also marked the beginning of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Hilary Lorbeck, an operating room nurse at St. Luke's with a background in pediatric nursing, found out about the organization earlier this year and quickly signed up to be the coordinator for Idaho's first chapter.

"I love kids and I was looking for a way to give something back to my community and this was an opportunity to help bring smiles to children who are often facing a difficult time," Lorbeck said.

She soon enlisted colleague Kym Porter – also an operating room nurse at St. Luke's – to serve as co-coordinator of the ConKerr Cancer Idaho Chapter.

In just six short months, Lorbeck said the response from others in the community to the organization has been overwhelming.

"It's been very well received," She said. "I'm excited about how we can continue to grow this in the community."

The challenge going forward will be to recruit enough volunteers to keep a steady supply of pillowcases available to children. Lorbeck said the ultimate goal is to be able to donate pillowcases to children in other Idaho hospitals as well.

The organization is looking for additional volunteers interested in sewing pillowcases, and volunteers to wash and package the pillow cases. Donations of fabric or funds to purchase fabric and supplies are also needed. Fabric needs to be patterns that would be appropriate for younger and older children.

Volunteers who sew pillowcases can drop them off at any JoAnn Fabrics Store in the Treasure Valley. For questions or to learn more about volunteer opportunities contact Lorbeck at Connkerrcancerboise@yahoo.com or at 863-7328.

To find out more about ConKerr Cancer visit www.ConKerrCancer.org

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