

LYM Ambassadors Make Lasting Friendship with a Child Battling Cancer Treatment

HARRISONBURG, VA. April, 2016. Josh scored two goals and one assist in his last soccer game of the year. A week later he was down with an abnormally high fever and had bruises all over his legs. The bruises did not appear to be anything out of the ordinary to Josh's mother Teresa, but she became worried when the fever escalated and caused an inability to eat. Josh's skin was pale and he was expressing weakness. The goals he scored in his last soccer game, were the last ones he would score for many seasons to come. Josh was seven and in the first grade when he received his diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia for the first time.

At that time, he loved Spiderman, Superman and playing soccer with his older brother and sister on a daily basis. On May 8, 2013,

Josh's parents took him to see a specialist and everyone's lives stopped when his blood work was consistent with patterns of leukemia. Chemotherapy is a very harsh and intense process for children to undergo. Doctors give chemotherapy in cycles, with each period of treatment followed by some time for rest to allow the body to bounce back. Josh's life transitioned from going to school, playing with friends, laughing and enjoying a life that is typical for 7-year-old boys to being in a hospital bed for almost two years.

Theresa and her other two children had to watch as Josh lost all of his golden blond hair and underwent not only a physical but also an emotional struggle. While his peers were enjoying lunch at the playground, he was unable to eat because of his treatment. When he

did eat, he would experience extreme nausea and vomiting. He could no longer run around and play on the soccer field, as he so loved to do. While his friends continued to play the game, Josh's life had taken a timeout. Instead, he was bound to lay in the hospital bed feeling exhausted and helpless. Theresa observed, "I was amazed at my son's strength that I did not know he even possessed. He would look at me and tell me that 'I'm a fighter Mommy, I will beat this.' I knew at that moment that we all needed to be strong for him and believe that everything would be OK."

Josh's siblings tried to come to the hospital as much as possible, but because of school and sports practices, Josh was alone for long periods of the day, with only nurses and doctors to interact with.

His social life went from movie nights with the family, soccer games and birthday parties at arcades to spending his evenings in a hospital bed facing a variety of symptoms from his chemotherapy.

Love Your Melon, a nonprofit organization that donates beanies to children struggling with cancer, decided to give Josh a visit. Susie Cumpston, president of the Love Your Melon branch in Harrisonburg, and two other Love Your Melon ambassadors dressed up in superhero costumes to ‘Save the Day.’ Wonder Woman, Superman, and Spiderman came dashing in the room with a warm comfy beanie for Josh. They spent a few hours spending time with him, entertaining him with excitement and fun.

The family was touched by the organization as well; Josh’s mom said, “Josh couldn’t stop talking about his visit from Love Your Melon. It was the most fun he has had in so long. He misses out on so much because of his treatment and it breaks my heart.” Josh’s sister, Becky expressed, “He has not gotten to play with his friends as much as he used to, so I think seeing the Love Your Melon ambassadors all dressed up just trying to have a good time and laughing with him was like Christmas.” May 26, 2015, Josh and his family nervously awaited his results for

his tests to see if the chemotherapy worked. Josh’s mother, Teresa, said she would never forget the moment she found out his cancer was gone. “It was as if our whole lives had previously been put on pause and things were able to play again. It put in perspective the things that really matter. Knowing Josh would be OK and his life would be able to come back to normal was all I could ever want in the world. The little small troubles of life stopped mattering in a time like this.” Teresa explained.



This spring, Josh will be making his return to the soccer field, cancer free. Susie Cumpston and the other Love Your Melon ambassadors cannot wait to come to one of his games to cheer Josh on in their superhero costumes yet again.

Warm Your Melon



How does buying and donating hats help children with cancer? Chemotherapy not only works to fight against cancer cells, it also destroys

hair cells. The treatment results in partial or complete hair loss. It is a very emotional and devastating experience for an individual of any age to watch the physical destruction of his or her own bodies. These bare melons get very cold, so Love Your Melon wants to promote body positivity and warm the heads of every child struggling through cancer treatment. The rest of the money that Love Your Melon makes goes to hundreds of nonprofit organizations that work in the field of pediatric oncology, fund cancer research and provide immediate support for families of children battling cancer.

National Superhero Day



Capes uplifted by the air as the ambassadors are running through the halls, masks on to become their superhero identity and fists clenched forward to fight off all of the evil. This is the scene of the Love Your Melon Campus Crew as they fight the battle of childhood cancer.

Love Your Melon is putting their capes on and joining the fight against childhood cancer on April 28th for National Superhero Day. Nationwide, every Love Your Melon Campus Crew will personally donate a hat to over 12,500 children undergoing cancer treatment in hospitals, Ronald McDonald Houses, and patients' households. Susie Cumpston, the President of the James Madison University Campus Crew, will be organizing a trip to visit three different children in the local hospital in Harrisonburg.

The Vice President of the branch, Jamie Hafner, stated that, "It is great to see people come together from all over the country doing the exact same thing. It unites our whole organization and our efforts." Participating in a nationwide event, such as National Superhero Day, will not only prove just how much work the organization as a whole does, but will also bring out their playful side.

Love Your Melon wants to bring the optimism, faith and the idea of miracles into the children's lives like the way superheroes do. Cumpston exclaimed, "Myself, and the other ambassadors have been waiting for this day all year. We have been working so hard and it pays off when we get to see the looks on children and their families' faces. It makes all the work we do worth it when we come in with our capes and make their days a little brighter."

All three of the children the crew will be visiting in Harrisonburg have been going through chemotherapy for at least six months now. The children are not able to attend their schools, and they are out of their normal routines. There is no better way for them to feel empowered than to be superheroes for the day. A child faced with these types of struggles deserves a fun day with some happy

ambassadors reminded him that positivity is a choice--you must actively work at it and be strong. Jamie Hafner voiced, "it is good to see that we are actually making a difference, and seeing them enjoy their new, cozy hats."

The Campus Crews connect with these children through online submissions and phone calls to Love Your Melon. If you would like to put a smile on a child's face who is going through cancer treatment, pass on their contact information to link the family to the nearest Crew through our Facebook Page. Be a part of the mission to put a hat on every child struggling through cancer whether you are referring a child, buying a hat, donating or coming out to one of the many events that Love Your Melon participates in. By joining Love Your Melon's mission, you can be a superhero too.



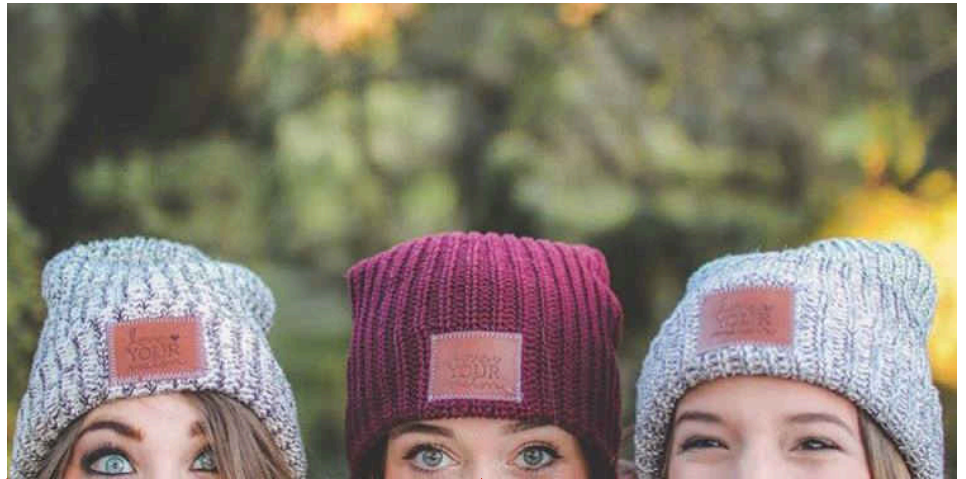
Warm a Victim's Head Suffering from Childhood Cancer for just \$2

HARRISONBURG, VA – February 20, 2016. Love Your Melon is holding a \$2 beanie raffle; all funds collected will be donated to the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals. The raffle takes place during MadiTHON, from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., in UREC.

Love Your Melon at MadiTHON will be having other activities that anyone can participate in such as a card sending station where people can send a message of happiness and wisdom to a child struggling through cancer treatment.



The Love Your Melon table is also offering an oversized picture frame for those who want a photo-op to share their charitable experience to friends and family. Along with the Instagram opportunity, the president of this



LYM branch, Susie Cumpston, will unveil a hashtag. The purpose of this hashtag will be to spread awareness of what you, and Love Your Melon, is doing to serve the community.

Love Your Melon beanie releases are highly anticipated events campus wide and merchandise sells out quickly. "Within 10 minutes of a new release, they are already sold out," says Cumpston. Since it has been stationed in Harrisonburg over a year ago, 350 beanies have been sold, which means 350 beanies will be donated to children with cancer.

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For more information, like the James Madison University Love Your Melon Campus Crew Facebook Page. Use the links on the Facebook page to register for the MadiTHON event.





Buy One ~ Give One
Gifts for Children Battling Cancer



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