

Kaitlyn Classic Charity Golf Drives Funds for NICU

As first-time parents in 2002, Sue and Kevin Hannan eagerly anticipated the arrival of their daughter. With a third trimester ahead, they picked out a car seat, ordered a crib, and researched childbirth classes. But before they had a chance to do anything else, Kaitlyn arrived three months premature, weighing a tender two pounds and 12 ounces.

"The nurses told us she was 'big' for 27 weeks, but my husband's wedding ring fit over her wrist. Kaitlyn wore it as a bracelet on her first night in the NICU [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit]," says Sue.

During Kaitlyn's two-month stay in Duke Children's NICU, the couple was overwhelmed by "the hugs, the advice, the supportive looks, the medical expertise, and the love that the staff felt" for their child. And in the midst of bilights, incubators, pulse oximeters, and cardiopulmonary monitors, Kevin was struck by the need to express his gratitude through more than words.




With the NICU stay behind her, Kaitlyn Hannan, 3, is healthy, happy, and the most adorable golf pro on record.

His ideas evolved into the Kaitlyn Classic, an annual charity golf outing with all proceeds donated directly to the NICU at Duke Children's.

"I can't imagine anyone being more helpless than a premature baby," says Kevin. "All they need is a chance; Duke provides that. Our goal is to help support them so they can continue their daily miracles."

Now in their fourth year of fundraising, the Hannans have raised more than \$35,000 for the Duke NICU with the help of generous golfers, corporate sponsors, and dedicated volunteers. Cheering them on every step of the way has been Kaitlyn, who is a thriving three-year-old devoted to preschool, gymnastics, and ballet. Her responsibilities have expanded to include that of big sister, as Sue and Kevin welcomed their second daughter, Jordan, last November.

The 2006 Kaitlyn Classic will include a silent auction, raffle prizes, and closest-to-pin, hole-in-one, and putting contests. For more information, contact Sue and Kevin Hannan at (919) 522-4202 or shannan16@nc.rr.com. 

Anna's Angels

Giving Wings to Down Syndrome Research

When Anna Merrills was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) at the age of 16 months, her family was told that having Down syndrome much improved Anna's prospects for recovery. While children with Down syndrome have a greater risk of developing AML, they also respond to treatment better than other children with AML, and their survival rates are as high as 85 percent, compared with 50 to 55 percent for other children. No one knows why.

Much is still unknown about Down syndrome, and Anna's mother, Michelle Pfeiffer, wants to help change that. "Some amazing organizations exist that deal with inclusion and support, or legal issues for people with Down syndrome," she says, "but there's not a lot of money on research." Michelle decided to start bridging the gap with an organization devoted to funding laboratory and clinical research on Down syndrome.

When she shared her idea with Anna's physician, Philip Rosoff, MD, who was chief of pediatric hematology-oncology at that time, he suggested she partner with Duke Children's Hospital to set it up.


Together with Duke, Michelle and her husband, Andrew Merrills, launched Anna's Angels: The Anna Michelle Merrills Foundation for Down

Syndrome Research. Michelle, a former senior manager at MCI, serves as the director, lining up corporate sponsors and organizing fundraising events such as an annual gala and auction; last year's gala raised \$42,000. All proceeds are applied directly to research funds.

A review board of four Duke physicians, including Dr. Rosoff, along with Michelle and Andrew consider applications and issue grants annually. The group awarded its first grants in January 2005, and projects that have been funded include:

- Expanded screening for prevalence of iron deficiency in children with Down syndrome
- Examining the role of specific genes in atrial septal defect, a heart defect commonly associated with Down syndrome
- Establishing a national medical database on Down syndrome and related conditions that can be analyzed and used by physicians

"The medical issues faced by people with Down syndrome, like leukemia, heart defects, and anemia, also affect the general population," Michelle observes. "This is research with the potential to help everyone."

Visit www.annas-angels.org for more information. 



Anna Merrills, now 4, "is doing amazing," her mother reports. She's an active, talkative preschooler, and her leukemia is in remission.