

# Ryan's Newsletter



The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation  
198 Route 22, The Atrium Building, Pawling, NY 12564  
845-855-0211 [www.ryansfoundation.org](http://www.ryansfoundation.org)

*Children's Cancer Foundation*

## Our Feature Story Giulianna Saliceti

Few things bring joy to a person more than their child. When they are born, your focus on everything changes to providing only the best for them, imagining all the wonderful moments in their life to come.

Never, in all your anticipation, do you think of them developing a life-threatening illness.

When our second child, Giulianna, was born everything seemed perfect. At six weeks old she was admitted to the hospital for what we thought was a simple urinary tract infection. During the testing, doctors noted a "simple cyst" on her kidney. To be on the safe side, her urologist began sending her for sonograms every month.

When the cyst began to show signs of changing at six months old, Giulianna was sent for an MRI which revealed a neuroblastoma, which is cancer that develops from nerve cells found in several areas of the body. It most commonly occurs in and around the adrenal glands, which have similar origins to nerve cells and sit on top of the kidneys. At that point we were referred to Memorial Sloan Kettering and met with the surgeon, Dr. Laquaglia.

At 8 months old she had surgery to remove the adrenal gland and the golf ball sized tumor that

had grown in the interim as well as bone marrow testing.

Even though we were lucky and the tumor was only Stage 1, Giulianna has undergone sonograms every 3 months at Sloan because the chances of recurrence are so high with neuroblastoma. The doctors also continue to watch a "suspicious area." Each and every time she is sedated via an IV with propofol.



In 2010 an MRI revealed a "liver lesion" which is uncommon in children with her history. We continue to watch this new lesion every few weeks by doing an MRI involving more sedation.

As a Stage 1 patient, Giulianna should be well into only having to be seen for yearly follow-ups. At this point, we have not been able to go more than 4 months in the past 5 years.

Despite the fact that this new lesion continues to grow, it is growing too slowly to risk even a biopsy because of its location on her liver. According to the surgeon he would have to remove

half of her liver just to test to see if it is in fact a recurrence or a secondary cancer or simply benign. Unwilling to risk that much damage to her, we are forced to wait and see until it changes so dramatically we are forced to take the chance.

Giulianna is now 5 years old. To date she has had 25 sonograms, 20 MRI's, several PET scans and CT scans (subjecting her to high doses of radiation) and a battery of other tests. She has never cried, whined, or complained. When someone asks about it she tells them she had a neuroblastoma but she "kicked it out of town!"

Giulianna and her brother, Dominick (6), have raised \$2,500 by running an "Alex's Lemonade Stand." They also hold a huge toy drive for both Sloan Kettering and the McElroy Foundation for "her friends like her" which they hope to surpass this year!



# PEOPLE WHO GIVE BACK:

## Melissa Stoffa



Since I was a young girl I always wanted to help people—especially children who were less fortunate than I. While attending Dobbs Ferry High School, I volunteered at The Children's Village and after graduation, I attended Westchester Community College and received my degree in Human Services. I transferred to SUNY Brockport and received my Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. I interned at a local residential treatment facility and continued to derive satisfaction from helping others. Following graduation, I worked at The Summit School in Nyack, NY where I was employed as a Child Care Worker, and met my husband, Larry, 33 years ago. Shortly after, I attended Fordham University and received my Master's Degree in Social Work. I was employed at the St. Agatha Home for Children in Nanuet, NY for a short time until I was hired at the County of Rockland Dept. of Mental Health for 22 years. I worked at the county-run program Margaret Morgan Lawrence Children's Center for 16 years as a Social Worker. The Center was a special education preschool program servicing children from ages 1-5. This experience really helped shape my career. I truly enjoyed working with the very young children and families who came to our facility for help. We were a multidisciplinary treatment team aiding both early intervention and preschool children. As the team social worker, I was tasked with reviewing evaluations with parents informing them that their child was delayed or in need of special education intervention. This was the hardest part of my job. I tried to be extremely sensitive, compassionate, and eager to partner with the families to support their child and ensure that all services were being provided. Due to governmental changes within the county, I was transferred to the Dept. of Mental Health Out Patient Clinic for another several years. I continued to work with young children seeking treatment for social and/or emotional difficulties. I was also a member of the sexual abuse treatment team helping young victims of incest and abuse.

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, I became a trauma counselor and helped many families and children who lost loved ones at the World Trade Center. This work continued three years post September 11. As a result of this tragic, powerful experience I developed an interest and expertise in treating trauma. This path has taken me down roads that have changed me forever. In 2007, I opened my own counseling practice in Cornwall, NY and I am an Early Intervention and Preschool Provider serving Orange County families. As a social worker, I provide support, counseling, and assistance to families who are struggling with seriously ill babies and/or emotionally challenged children. Many of the young families I work with are faced with unimaginable situations. As I continue to work with these amazingly strong families, I feel honored to be a part of their lives as we work together to make a difference in the life of their child.

On behalf of some of the families I work with, I have had the good fortune of learning about the Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation. The Foundation has made a huge difference in the lives of the families who are dually struggling with caring for their ill children and balancing work to pay bills. The Foundation has always found a way to offer assistance to families I have made them aware of. The Ryan Foundation has proven to me and families of Orange County that there truly are Angels on Earth! Both George Busolt and Chip McElroy have responded to every request in a prompt, sensitive, and generous manner. From the bottom of my heart and the families I support, thank you.

### Nick Coppola

Cappuccino's Restaurant, Poughkeepsie, New York

Nick Coppola hosted a Christmas Brunch again this year on December 17 for all of our children and families who are dealing with devastating illness. He generously prepared an incredible breakfast buffet that was beyond compare! He and his staff treated everyone like rock stars and no expense was spared. Nick arranged for the children to be entertained by Magician P.J. Walker and Animal Balloon entertainer Darryl Bielski. "Perfect Petzzz" were given to each child compliments of Suzanne Sobel. AND -- they were visited by none other than Santa Claus! It was a perfect day! All the children (and their parents and siblings) had smiles from ear to ear. Listening to them laugh and seeing them enjoy their special day was PRICELESS. Thank You again, Nick Coppola, for giving so generously from your heart!

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Susan Havelka

\* \* \* \* \*

### I WON'T LET GO

It's like a storm  
That cuts a path  
It breaks your will  
It feels like that  
You think you're lost  
But you're not  
lost on your own  
You're not alone.

It hurts my heart  
to see you cry  
I know it's dark  
this part of life  
Oh it finds us all  
and we're too small  
To stop the rain  
Oh but when it rains.

Don't be afraid to fall  
I'm right here to  
catch you  
I won't let you down  
It won't get you down  
You're gonna make it  
I know you can make it.

I will stand by you  
I will help you through  
When you've done  
all you can do  
And you can't cope  
I will dry your eyes  
I will fight your fight  
I will hold you tight  
And I won't let go.

(Music & Lyrics by  
Rascal Flatts)

## ABOUT US



Pam Chiera  
Board Member

I became involved with the Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation while serving as President of the Mizzentop Day School's Parent Association in 2003. As part of the school's commitment to community service, a Walk-A-Thon fundraiser was organized on behalf of Tralee McElroy, who was a student at Mizzentop at the time. Word about the event was sent out throughout the Pawling community. On the day of the event we were overwhelmed by the number of children and families that showed up in support of the foundation. More than \$12,000 was raised that morning and presented to Chip, Judy & Tralee. Needless to say, I was hooked -- and am still actively involved.

In 2008 I was elected to the Board of Directors. I was sincerely honored and proud to accept the position as a board member that I still maintain. I continue my fundraising efforts for the foundation by putting together the Annual Gala Event Journal. The event journal is distributed at the Gala, as well as other annual events throughout the year. It is a great opportunity for businesses and individuals to advertise and be recognized for their contributions to the foundation. It is a tremendous, worthwhile undertaking that is successful in raising funds to support the foundation's mission of helping children and families in our community.

I am a lifelong resident of Dutchess County and presently reside in Beacon, New York. In 1982, I graduated from Our Lady of Lourdes High School, in Poughkeepsie and went on to receive my Associates Degree in 1984 from Berkeley College (Westchester) in Business Merchandising & Management. Presently, I am employed by Ski Haus in Brewster, New York where I am a Sales Associate and Soft Goods Buyer.

The Foundation's mission to never say "NO" to a child in need is what keeps me focused in my fund raising efforts.

Remember to celebrate and embrace each day as a gift.



## 9th Annual Gala Of Hope APRIL 7, 2012

It is not too late to get your tickets to our 9th Annual Gala of Hope at The Grandview in Poughkeepsie, NY on April 7. The Gala features a cocktail hour, formal dinner, and live auction conducted by Sheriff Butch Anderson.

We rely heavily on the Gala for a significant portion of the funds we use to help families. 100% of the proceeds from the Gala goes to children and families who are faced with devastating illnesses and the hardships that these illnesses put on families.

The honorees this year are the Schmitt Brothers - James, Francis, Robert, and Mike of Schmitt Brothers Excavating & Site Development, who developed the property for The House of Hope, and Rich and Dana Rennia, who did the engineering for the House of Hope and it's property, all PRO BONO!

Tickets for the Gala are \$175 per person and a portion is tax-deductible.

Call 845-855-0211 or visit [www.ryansfoundation.org](http://www.ryansfoundation.org) for more information and other ways to help the foundation.

The Gala is the Foundation's major event of the year and it's biggest fundraiser. We hope you will be able to join us this year!

### Benefiting Children with life threatening diseases

Cocktail Hour	6:00 pm
Formal Dinner	7:00 pm
Live Auction	8:00 pm
Dancing	9:00 pm
Doors Close	11:00 pm

\$175 per person



# CONSIDER THIS:

Non profit charities have big funding needs that are not easily satisfied with a single product sale or donation campaign. We find that our biggest annual fundraisers are fundraising events. All we need is for you to get involved. We can ask for donations, but what we really need is your participation. Help us get our mission out there. While having fun, you are helping us help seriously ill children and their families get through another day, another year.

A world of options awaits as you plan your fundraising event. Your event is limited only by your imagination. We've provided some popular ideas for fundraising events, but feel free to add your own creative twist for something new!

- Fundraiser dinners – an affordable dinner is an old stand-by that works wonders. Large meals that serve many for pennies on the dollar are great, and remember that the menu choice is yours – Italian, BBQ, Holiday dinner, gourmet foods....also consider that a brunch, breakfast, or tea might work well.
- Entertainment – plays, movie nights, concerts, comedy night...all are great fundraising event ideas. Couple these with dinner and you've suddenly created a night-out package with great appeal.
- Family fun – parents and children are always looking for affordable entertainment and activities. Any type of family fun event is a great moneymaker for events.

- Change - Whether you collect loose change on your desk at work or develop a competition in your office or family, collecting small change is an easy way to make a huge difference. Simply find a container and tell everyone about your coin collection campaign. Families can aim to compete while teaching children about saving. Whether you have one container or many, your efforts are helping us in a big way.

- Consider using Goodsearch.com or Goodshop.com for your fundraiser. Their new format allows you to see and track your charitable donations so you can compete with family/friends/coworkers or other organizations. Set a \$\$\$ amount as your goal and see who reaches that goal first just by searching or shopping online!

- Other ideas might include:

Bingo Night, Bake Sales, Bowling, Car Washes, Dances, Cookbook Sale, Karaoke Night, Wine Tastings, Bottle Deposits....the list is endless.

Charitable donations are way down due to the state of the economy. We get that. But, you can truly make a difference beyond your wildest imagination by hosting your own fundraiser at little or no cost to you.

Won't you help us help them?

“raising hope”

## June Events - Save The Dates!

### **SPORTING CLAY SHOOT @ TMT Hunting Preserve, 302 Schoolhouse Rd. Staatsburg, NY - 8am - 5pm**

Please join us June 9 at TMT Hunting Preserve which offers a uniquely designed 15-station, 100-round course, that takes advantage of the best features of the land and presents challenging targets closely resembling the flights of various game birds, waterfowl, and rabbits. Check-in for this event is at 8am, the course starts at 10am and breakfast and lunch is included. Prizes will be awarded. If you haven't already participated, you will want to join in the fun this year. The cost per shooter is \$150.00. This is a fun day for all while helping to raise money for children. Call Carl Merritt at 845-489-8725 or Art Hart at 845-546-7928 for more information. Sponsors Needed. Please check out our website for more information.

### **5K WALK/RUN - 8 MILE RUN - CHILDREN'S 1/2 MILE RUN @ Lakeside Park, 2 Lakeside Drive, Pawling, NY - 7:30am Registration**

Please join us June 9 for our Annual 5K Walk/Run. This is a family event for runners and non-runners alike. Starts 8:30 am at Lakeside Park and continues through the Village of Pawling past the special bronze memorial statue of Ryan then back to the start. Face painting, pony rides, prizes, and awards. Entry fees are: 5K - \$22 (\$27 on Race Day); 8 Mile \$25 (\$30 on race day); 1/2 Mile Kids - FREE if pre-registered (\$10 on race day). Register by June 9 at: [www.mhrrc.org](http://www.mhrrc.org) (click shopping cart then race registration) or by mail at: "Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation" P.O. Box 452, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569. Entries must be postmarked by 06/01/12. Form a Team in honor or memory of a child or family member. Sponsors Needed. Please check out our website for forms and more information or contact Lori Decker at lorirun4@hotmail.com

### **ANNUAL GOLF OUTING @ The Powelton Club, 29 Balmville Rd. Newburgh, NY - Registration & Lunch @11am**

The Annual Golf Outing will be held again on June 25 at The Powelton Club in Newburgh and includes the entire family, not just golfers! The Club has opened it's doors to us which includes golf, swimming, and tennis. We hope you will join us this year for a great family day while helping us to raise money. Contact George Busolt at 845-797-8308 for more information.

**\*\*Watch for more events in upcoming newsletters or check out our website for more information\*\***

# 2012 CALENDAR

- April 7            9th Annual Gala of Hope  
                      @ The Grandview  
                      Poughkeepsie, NY
- June 9            Sporting Clay Shoot  
                      @TMT Preserve  
                      Clinton, NY
- June 9            5K Walk/Run  
                      @ Lakeside Park  
                      Pawling, NY
- June 25           Golf Outing  
                      @ Powelton Golf Course  
                      Newburgh, NY
- July 14            Family Day & Classic Car Show  
                      @ Lakeside Park  
                      Pawling, NY  
                      Rain Date: July 15
- October 25       Wine & Food Event  
                      @ The Grandview  
                      Poughkeepsie, NY

Watch for more events in upcoming newsletters.

RYAN'S FOUNDATION REMINDS YOU ABOUT OUR EFT FEATURE ON OUR NEW WEBPAGE. PLEASE CONSIDER SIGNING UP FOR RECURRING EFT DONATIONS SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE OUR MISSION OF NEVER HAVING TO SAY NO TO A CHILD IN NEED. WWW.RYANSFOUNDATION.ORG



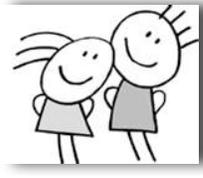
FROM THE EDITOR  
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If you would like to receive your newsletter by email & help us cut costs on printing and postage, please let us know.  
If you have a story you want us to know about, please contact our newsletter editor:  
[sghavelka@gmail.com](mailto:sghavelka@gmail.com)



## GOOD NEWS CORNER

- On February 7th, the girl's basketball teams from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic High School and Arlington High School were tied for first place in their league. But, winning the game was not the only thing on the girls' minds. They chose that night to help kids with their battle with cancer. The team, led by Assistant Coach George Decker, his wife Lori Decker, point guard daughter Paige Decker, and her team were highlighting this game to raise money for The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation. Decker said it's a long standing tradition at Lourdes for members of the varsity athletic teams to engage in community service projects. The school stresses the importance of giving back to your community and the girls really embraced that. The weekend before the game they combined another basketball tournament to raise funds for Ryan's Foundation. The girls sold homemade baked goods, had a 50/50 raffle and accepted donations, including \$1,000 from Decker's employer, Wells Fargo Advisors, and raised \$2,400. Combined with the basketball championship game the teams raised \$4,500 to help local children. 15 year old Paige Decker said they all felt so blessed that they could help children.  
IN THE END, EVERYONE WAS A WINNER.
- On February 19th, the Poughkeepsie River District Business Association and Dutchess Beer Distributors hosted the 15th Annual Tony Cappillino Memorial Golf Tournament. For 14 years, thousands have enjoyed this winter golf tournament in the City of Poughkeepsie. The money raised from this event goes directly to an area person who's family has been affected by cancer or other hardships. This year, it was decided that the proceeds would go to The Ryan McElroy Foundation for distribution. Approximately \$17,000 was raised of which the Ryan Foundation will be receiving \$12,000 to help families of the Hudson Valley. \$5000 is being used for a memorial for fallen City of Poughkeepsie Police Detective John Falcone.
- To date, 4 acres of property has been cleared for "The House of Hope." The footings are in for the barn's foundation and, if all goes as planned, nails will be dropped next month. To date, approximately \$170,000 worth of work has been done pro bono. Thanks to all those who are working so hard to make this happen.

- Precor Fitness Equipment donated \$700 this month
- Topical Biomedics gave 5% of their sales this quarter
- New Fairfield Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation donates through EFT every month
- North East Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation donates through EFT every month
- Danbury Physical & Rehabilitation, PC donates through EFT every month



# I want to help donation form

Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone-day: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone-evening: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed. (Make checks payable to: The Ryan Foundation.)

Charge my donation to:  Master Card  VISA  Discover

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL COMPLETED FORM WITH YOUR CHECK TO:  
The Ryan McElroy Children's Cancer Foundation,  
198 Route 22 Atrium Building, Pawling, NY 12564

ALL DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

A \$100 contribution will cover transportation to a hospital. A \$250 contribution will pay for food or utilities.  
A \$500 contribution will pay for lodging or rent. A \$1,000 contribution will pay for a mortgage or medicines.

**PLEASE HELP AND EMBRACE THE TINY THINGS IN LIFE. THANK YOU.**

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO MADE A DONATION AFTER READING THIS  
NEWSLETTER. YOUR GENEROSITY IS WHAT MAKES ALL OF THIS POSSIBLE!  
GOD BLESS YOU ALL!