

# SuperSibs aids cancer survivors of another kind

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When Stacy Black's son was diagnosed with cancer in 2001, the ordeal was just as traumatic for his five siblings.

"We talked to our kids about how it was all of our cancer, and they were all contributing to helping him get well," the Naperville mom said.

But it's easy to forget that cancer's impact goes beyond the affected one, said Melanie Goldish.

That's why the Hoffman Estates woman, who is the mom of a cancer survivor, founded SuperSibs!, a nonprofit organization that honors and supports the brothers and sisters of children with cancer.

The group will receive \$3 from each ticket sold at best-selling author Jodi Picoult's Tuesday visit in Naperville.

"These kids are truly the shadow survivors, often not recognized as going through this emotional journey as well," Goldish said.

SuperSibs!, based out of Rolling Meadows, reaches out to 4,300 children in the United States and Canada, with 21 children in Naperville — including Black's — and another 25 in surrounding towns.

Each day, 46 children are diagnosed with cancer, Goldish said, affecting more than 10,000 siblings a year.

When Goldish's son, Travis, had cancer, his younger brother, Spencer, suffered anxiety, depression and other social issues, she said.

Siblings also may have feelings of anger, fear and abandonment, she said. Many others are forced to take on adult responsibilities such as a second job or car pooling.

The siblings, who are referred by parents or hospital and social workers, receive gifts in the mail about 10 times a year, of custom-designed journals, newsletters, books, T-shirts, pillow cases, relaxing CDs and courage trophies. The free program also runs a teen chat room and a scholarship program.

Black said her children had to deal with being away from home — they stayed with neighbors when she was at the hospital — helping be caretakers and making sacrifices, like not playing sports.

"SuperSibs! helped each of those kids feel like they were doing something important by sacrificing," Black said. "It provides us the opportunity to say, 'What a great thing you did by helping your brother.'"

Her son is now nearing the five-year mark of being cancer-free.

"We're helping kids redefine the cancer experience, so rather than it being a black hole, they can find inner strength and courage and ability to manage through the difficult times in life," Goldish said.

For information, visit [www.supersibs.org](http://www.supersibs.org).