

SuperSibs! Executive Director Comments on *My Sister's Keeper*

My Sister's Keeper is a powerful and eye-opening best-selling book by Jodi Picoult. *SuperSibs!* was proud and honored when Jodi chose our organization as the beneficiary of proceeds generated from a major promotion event for the book in Chicago in 2006. And recently, *SuperSibs!* teamed up with Warner Brothers on advance screenings of the film adaptation of *My Sister's Keeper*. *SuperSibs!* guests attended screenings in 13 cities nationwide, prior to the national release on June 26th.

We've received many inquiries from across the country to hear our staff's reactions to the film. My thoughts are these:

Indeed, this is a gut-wrenching movie because the faces, images and events are played out larger than life on the big screen. The film is unquestionably a wake-up call about the lasting and sometimes devastating ways siblings are affected when their brother or sister has cancer. The movie brings to life not only fierce family love (between parent and ill child, and among and between siblings), but also the darker side of cancer's psychosocial impact – for example, parents snapping at siblings if they're perceived as somehow not doing all they can to help their brother or sister survive their cancer battle, or of parents completely missing cues related to their other children's needs, due to the overwhelming focus required to help the ill child survive.

The hospital and home scenes, while certainly highly dramatic on film, are no less dramatic in real life. Except they're real. As our team viewed the film, we were keenly aware of the sibling message: Brothers and sisters are powerfully impacted in by pediatric cancer. Watching the puking, sores and sickness... facing loss and death.... the waiting and waiting... the fear and eternal hope. These scenes depict the strangely "normal" experience that siblings and families live each day.

Yet siblings have school, sports, friends, special interests and a life outside of cancer. They have to figure out how they can "survive cancer" too. Siblings are powerfully impacted... in some deeply positive ways, and in other ways that create an emotional scar that may or may not ever fully heal.

It is surely emotionally difficult for *anyone* to sit unaffected or even dry-eyed through this movie. For those that have lived through pediatric cancer, this may not be appropriate to see. For others, though... we hope those moviegoers will ever forget the key messages that this book and movie tee up: That when a child is diagnosed with cancer, it is a war. And everyone in the family is affected, *including the siblings*. We hope viewers will join *SuperSibs!* in our work to help siblings and their families manage through the cancer roller coaster with strength, courage and hope. Families live elements of this story every day, in as real a way as on the screen... and that's why *SuperSibs!* is here to help these vulnerable families heal.

Melanie Goldish
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