

SibBuzzTeen

News and info for *SuperSibs!* Teens

Volume 2, Issue 1, May 2005


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Spotlight



Teens from Chicago youth group raise funds for sibs. See page 2.

New Column Debuts

You ask; *SuperSibs!* listens! Thanks to an idea brought to us by fellow *SuperSibs!* Teen and 2004 Scholarship Winner Michelle Pucci, we are introducing a new way for sibs to communicate with each other through this newsletter. Turn to page 3 to find “Sib2Sib”, a new column that takes your Qs and gives you answers. 

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Sib Week

For three days in April at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, siblings gathered to talk about feelings and other worries from the cancer experience. 


Ben & Jerry’s Scooped Up Sib Support

How cool is this? People all over the country are helping *SuperSibs!* so we can help you! Just last month, Ben & Jerry’s in Glenview, Ill., chose *SuperSibs!* to receive all donations from customers who came in for Free Cone Day! We even had sibs scooping ice cream (and laughing a lot) — and together we raised over \$1,100 to support sibs of kids with cancer. Who knows? There may be a Ben & Jerry’s or other great organization in your area that might do something like this sometime. Let us know! 

Conference Commits to Keeping Sibs “Out of the Shadows”

With support from the government, *SuperSibs!* hosted an awesome conference in Chicago, with professionals from 20 major pediatric oncology (cancer) organizations so they could learn more about how siblings need support and healing, too. One


guest wrote to us afterwards: “*We will not only ‘spread the word’ to our co-workers, but we will also be sure that programs for the support of siblings are an important part of all future planning.*” **Don’t you just love it when people “get it?”**

Well, these folks sure did. Hopefully, more and more, you will be seeing new programs from hospitals and groups in your area, as these and other organizations do even more to support siblings in the future. Score one for *SuperSibs!* and YOU! 

SuperSibs! Kids In the News: More Than 2 Million Viewers

News about kids like you and about *SuperSibs!* is spreading. Stories have been printed in newspapers and magazines, like the one about Frank (pictured at right), and broadcast on TV, like the one about Jennifer (pictured below).

We think it's so important to share the "sibling side of the cancer journey" in magazines, newspapers and on TV and radio because most people have no idea that when a child gets diagnosed with cancer, their brothers and sisters have a rough time and need support and understanding, too! From recent stories in Newsweek magazine, Fox 5 TV and CBS News, we've reached over 2 million people!

Thanks to amazing teens like you, we're helping people learn how to support siblings and about *SuperSibs!* 



SuperSibs! teen Frank, 17, (sitting upper left) poses with his family during a Newsweek photo shoot that ended up being published in an edition of the weekly magazine in April as part of a larger story on family health. The article includes info on *SuperSibs!* and the Sibling Support Project (www.thearc.org/siblingsupport/).

In the picture at left and below, Jennifer, 10, gets ready to be filmed for a TV news segment about *SuperSibs!* that was broadcast on CBS News across the country this past month.



Newsweek

Chicago Tribune

Mia Hamm Foundation Shows Support


In a show of understanding for what siblings of kids with cancer go through, the Mia Hamm Foundation has continued its support of *SuperSibs!* and even increased their donation in 2005.

"We are so delighted to be able to help these great brothers and sisters by supporting *SuperSibs!*" said Christy Orr of the Mia Hamm Foundation.

"We are so thankful for Mia and the Foundation team," said Melanie Goldish, *SuperSibs!* Executive Director. "Here's to the amazing siblings we serve." 

Spotlight



Members of the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) in Chicago raised over \$1,000 for *SuperSibs!* as the result of a cool social action project that also taught kids about sibling support. Sam (left) and Marc, both high school juniors, show off bags of NFTY wristbands the group created and sold to members and friends across the county in just two weekends. Thanks to NFTY CAR leaders Traci and Marina for championing this idea! 

SuperSibs! supports brothers and sisters, ages 4 to 18, of children with cancer. Now serving 2,300 siblings from 47 states and Canada. Visit www.supersibs.org for more information.

Sib2Sib: A New Column To Get Your Questions Answered by Sibs Like You

Editor's Note: In this issue, we introduce a new column created by you, just for you. Our 2004 SuperSibs! Scholarship Recipient Michelle Pucci came up with the idea to invite teens in our program to ask questions and get answers from fellow Teen SuperSibs! In this issue, we enlisted the expertise of Michelle and SuperSibs! Manne Family Foundation Scholarship Recipient Faith Juros to provide responses. To become a guest columnist for Sib2Sib or to send questions, please contact us by email at info@supersibs.org or send mail to SuperSibs! headquarters (see address on page 6).



Dear Sib2Sib:
It makes me crazy when people are always asking me how my brother is doing and never ask how I'm doing. How did you handle this?
Signed,

Crazy Over Questions
Dear Crazy Over Questions: Everytime someone asked me how my brother was, I just had to remind myself how lucky I was to be the "healthy one." Although it was hard not getting the attention my brother received, I realized that it certainly was not an attention I would ever want to be given. While I would initially wonder why no one asked how I was, it did not take me long to also feel the sympathy and sadness that they also felt for my brother.



Here's another answer:
This was tough, especially when I was younger. As time went by I realized those people cared about both of us, but if my brother wasn't with me, they were making sure he wasn't worse or back in the hospital. Sometimes adults don't want to upset us by asking too many questions. I sometimes would say "he's doing pretty good today, but I have a cold" (or need a break, had a dance). Then they would usually ask what I had been up to.



(SuperSibs! Note:
These are great thoughts! One of our sib teens said she wore a sticker on her forehead at camp that said "My name is K_____ NOT "How's H___!" Pretty clever, huh?)

Dear Sib2Sib:
Sometimes it's so hard to feel happy when my sister has cancer. What can I do to just feel even a little bit happier?
Signed,
Where's Happiness

Dear Where's Happiness: You're right, it's very hard to "feel" happy when you think about your sister's cancer and what she has to go through. Sometimes it helps to make your sister laugh by telling her silly jokes or stories. You both will feel better if you can play a board game or some other activity together that reminds you cancer is only one part of your life; we still have so many other things we can talk about or do together. Making each other laugh is the best medicine!



Dear Sib2Sib:
I feel so helpless while everyone else has a job to do to help my sister beat cancer. What can I do to help?
Signed,
Feeling Helpless

Dear Feeling Helpless: My mom always seemed to know what to do to help my brother, and I felt helpless too. I found that by playing with my brother I would take his mind off being in the hospital or Dr.'s office. Telling him funny things or playing a game together made him happy. When he was very sick I would just sit beside him and watch TV or rub his head or hand. He said he felt better just knowing I was there.



(SuperSibs! Note:
YOU sibs are the experts. Thank you for the great ideas!

In Your Words**Sibling Finds Help and Hope at Weekend Camp**

Teen sib Jessi flashes her *SuperSibs!* trophy. When she was 12, her sister was diagnosed with cancer. That began a long journey that led Jessi to find comfort and healing at Camp Sunshine in Atlanta. In her article at right, Jessi shares her experience. See www.mycampsunshine.com for more info and also check out more about summer sib camps on page 5.

The phone rang. Mom answered. I was 12 and sensed the tension in Mom's voice. On the phone was my sister Jenni's doctor. Mom simply nodded. I lost my manners and began shouting, "It's true, Jenni. You have cancer!" It was the first of a long list of mistakes I would make in connection with Jenni's illness.

Jenni was diagnosed with undifferentiated sarcoma. She was my best friend.

In the beginning, I asked Mom a lot of questions. "What was going to happen to me?" "Would Jenni live?" I desperately wanted to be included. My parents had to be with Jenni at the hospital, and I had to be at school. They aren't responsible for what I felt. No one is to blame. Feelings of isolation and jealousy got to me, and a wall grew between Jenni and me.

I don't think a day went by when someone didn't ask me about Jenni. It always hurt when people forgot to ask about me. I started feeling worthless and withdrawing from friends and family.

That year was so very hard. I found myself in deep depression and battling an eating disorder, caused by a loss of self-confidence. My mom began taking me with her, and I stayed with Jenni more, and things slowly became better. Once I felt included and less lonely, I started embracing life again.

Then I attended Camp Sunshine. I was nervous at first, but I met people who knew exactly what I had been through, and it was great to discuss aspects of cancer with people who really understood. The greatest part was being able to not think about cancer. At this camp, cancer has affected everyone, so you don't have to think about it or explain yourself. Thanks to Camp Sunshine I have been able to share my story with siblings just like me. Camp Sunshine provides a source of hope and joy. It is a shoulder to cry on, a constant pick-me-up, and the most fun I have ever known.

Jessi

Focusing on School — The Big Challenge

Algebra, French, Biology, Extra-Curricular Activities, American History, English Literature... Hmm... did we miss anything?

We know how hard it is to keep up with assignments and homework when life is just *normal*, let alone when someone in the family has cancer. We often hear from teens that it's a struggle to focus when they're so worried about their sibling. The most important thing is to know that you're not

alone in this feeling — and that there are ways to help with this challenge. Here are a few thoughts:

1. Try not to keep all your feelings bottled

up inside. Find a friend or a great teacher, school counselor or family member to talk with about your worries.

It's hard to keep my mind on studies when I'm in school and my brother and parents are at the hospital. But I do the best I can. — SuperSibs! Teen

Sometimes, this can be such a relief that kids find they can focus a little more on other things when they need to the most.

2. Remember, you don't have to be perfect. Some teens try to be superstars, juggling everything so they won't "make waves"

at home. Yes, it's great to try your hardest to be the best you can be. But just remember that no one expects you to be perfect. That's too much for anyone to bear!

3. Reward yourself for doing a great job. You've worked so hard to keep up your grades at school, and maybe even take on extra chores at home. It's OK to pat yourself on the back for your efforts.

Congratulations on all your hard work!



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And the Survey Says...

Editor's Note: Here are some excerpts from you — our SuperSibs! Teens — from our 2004 Sib Survey. Every one of your survey responses, letters and messages are valued and read with care. And just know that we're working hard to create more services that will better help support sib teens. We hope you always remember, you are not alone.

SuperSibs! is important because it helps me get through tough times and can make me feel happy for what I already have.

— Sib Female, age 12

If I could change one thing about SuperSibs! it would be to meet kids my age that have siblings with cancer.

— Sib Male, age 13

SuperSibs! is a group who is very understanding.

— Sib Female, age 17

I wish SuperSibs! would do more sibling days.

— Sib Female, age 15

When people give attention to your sibling, you feel left out, but SuperSibs! helps us feel special. Keep doing everything you're doing.

— Sib Female, age 15

SuperSibs! makes me feel like I'm really a part of it.

— Sib Male, age 12

We're scared and left out. We don't understand and think it's unfair why the sick kid doesn't have to do chores, gets out of school and stuff like that.

— Sib Male, age 13

Thanks for letting us know! 

Connect at Camp!

School's almost out and it's time to start thinking about what to do this summer.

Having a brother or sister with cancer can be a lonely experience. How great would it be to have a place to go that was filled with other kids who have cancer in their families! Being able to share stories and support with others in the same situation helps make your feelings seem more "normal" and your experiences more bearable.

One great place is Camp Okizu SIBS (Special and Important Brothers and Sisters) Camp in northern California (see their website at www.okizu.org).

Camp Okizu brings together 130 kids ages six to seventeen who have or had a brother or sister with cancer. They have a whole lot of fun swimming, boating, archery, sports and games, arts and crafts, hiking, camp fires, skits and songs. What makes this a special camp is the chance to meet and talk with others who have the same situation in their families.

Here's what sib campers are saying:

"I like meeting everybody else who has the same experiences as me and being able to talk about my brother."

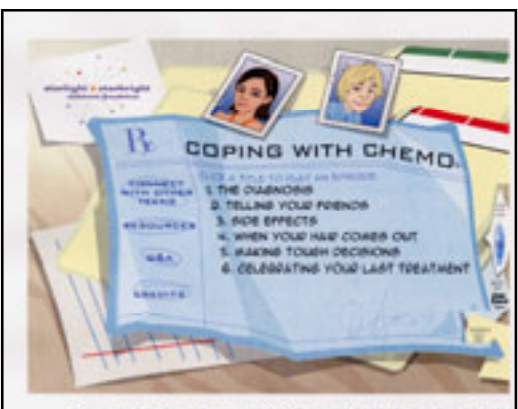
"Making friends with people that have gone through the same things eliminated a lot of stress."

"...it was the first time I could let go of my feelings around people. To be surrounded by dozens of people that share my trouble was so comforting."

There are other camps for siblings like you. For a listing, visit Children's Oncology Camping Association International (www.coca-intl.org).

Webisodes Provide Online Support for Teens to Understand Cancer

Do you have questions about cancer and chemo? Sibs tell us they want to understand this stuff, too. There's a great website from the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation with "Chemo Webisodes" you can watch online to help get



some answers! These webisodes are short animated, Web-based movies specifically for teens, and talk about issues from diagnosis to the side-effects of chemotherapy. To view the series, visit www.slsb.org/chemo and then tell us what you think!

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SuperSibs!

4300 Lincoln Ave.
Suite I
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008

Toll Free: 866-444-SIBS (7427)
Illinois: 847-705-SIBS(7427)
Fax: 847-766-7084



SuperSibs!



SuperSibs! Teen Andrew helped raise money for sibling support by auctioning hand painted umbrellas at his sister's elementary school. Tell us your ideas!

www.supersibs.org

To honor, support and recognize brothers and sisters of children with cancer.

Enter the World's Largest Volunteer Sporting Event

Don't think of this June 23 and 24 as just another day at the gym or practice. Sign up to be a part of the first ever Worldathlon! By doing so, you will be joining others from around the planet, racing with the purpose of celebrating life and helping kids — including those in *SuperSibs!*

The Worldathlon was an idea by a *SuperSibs!* family — the Rush-Miller's — to celebrate Garrett Rush-Miller's five years of cancer survival. The Worldathlon isn't just for professional athletes. It's also for people who consider walking to the ice-cream shop a form of exercise



too! (Hey, that works for us!) To participate, just choose to partake in a sport, or any other form of exercise, and dedicate that participation on June 23 or 24 to the Worldathlon.

Pass the word about this great "virtual-athlon" to your friends, too, because EVERYONE can participate. The more, the better! Though there are no fees to participate in the Worldathlon, you can formally sign up online — and people can make donations by visiting www.worldathlon.cc. All donations will be divided equally among several cancer-related organizations, including *SuperSibs!*

Chatting With Other Teens

Many of you have written to ask if we can help you talk with other *SuperSibs!* teens.

"Heads up" on a program in progress to help meet this request! We've been hard at work to create a special "Teen Sib-Only" *SuperSibs!* Chat Room. We're targeting launch (with full safety and security, since it's on the web) sometime in October. We'll keep you posted in the fall.

In the meantime, encourage your local hospital social workers or child life specialists to hold Sibling Day sessions, forums or dinners, so you can meet other teen sibs in your area and have a good *talk*.