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## Mother keeps up the fight for 'Super Jack'

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Vickie Czaplá likes to call her son "Super Jack" for his courageous battle against cancer. The Mundelein mom's world was turned upside down the day before Thanksgiving last year when her five-year-old son, Jack, was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia, a form of blood cancer.

"It's a parent's worst nightmare come true," she said, upon receiving the devastating news.

But, with the help of aggressive chemotherapy treatment at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Jack's cancer has gone into remission and his prospects for making a long-term recovery look good.

### Special luncheon

Over Mother's Day weekend, Vickie Czaplá is one of 100 mothers throughout the Chicago area who will be honored at a special luncheon and silent auction called "A Tribute to Our Quiet Heroes" held this Saturday at the Westin O'Hare hotel in Rosemont. The event is organized by SuperSibs!, a Rolling Meadows based non-profit organization that helps siblings of children with cancer.

Czaplá said her husband, John, works full time so she normally takes her son to chemotherapy treatments between one to four days a week, with treatments sometimes lasting for several hours. While she's honored to be recognized for her efforts, she doesn't consider her actions heroic.

"They're calling me a hero but he (Jack) is really the hero," she said. "I'm just doing what any mother would do."

Although the SuperSibs! luncheon will recognize the sacrifices mothers of children with cancer make, the organization's primary mission is to support brothers and sisters of children with cancer. According to SuperSibs!, more than 18,000 new siblings are affected each year as their brothers or sisters are diagnosed with cancer, and research shows that a large percentage of siblings exhibit symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Czaplá said she learned about SuperSibs! from the hospital when her son was first going through treatment as a resource to support her daughter, Mackenzie, Jack's twin sister. Czaplá said the organization has sent her daughter cards, bracelets and other items to make her feel better so she doesn't feel left out as her brother gets increased attention during his battle with cancer. Mackenzie even received a trophy in the mail for her efforts in helping out her brother.



**'SUPER JACK':** Vickie Czaplá, sitting with her children Jack and Mackenzie, is helping her son with his battle against cancer. Over Mother's Day weekend, Vickie Czaplá is one of 100 mothers throughout the Chicago area who will be honored at a special luncheon and silent auction called "A Tribute to Our Quiet Heroes" held May 8 at the Westin O'Hare hotel in Rosemont. (JOE CYGANOWSKI/FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA)

### 'Showed everyone'

"It's helped us a lot with Mackenzie. It's made her feel special. When she got the trophy, it was like she won a million dollars. She took it to her school and showed it to everyone. I was so proud of her," she said.

And little Jack is thankful for his mother's and sister's help during his cancer recovery.

"Mackenzie takes care of me. My mom takes care of me too, and I take care of my dog," he said.

Czaplá said Jack will still have to undergo regular chemotherapy treatments for the next three-and-a-half years to ensure his cancer does not return. She said that doctors at Children's Memorial Hospital have listed his chances at long-term recovery at about 75 to 80 percent and she is optimistic her son will beat the disease. She said Jack recently received a poster from an uncle-in-law of him dressed up in a cape with the nickname "Super Jack."

"It's always 'Super Jack' is going to beat it because he's our hero," she said. "He's the biggest fighter I know, and I'll never stop fighting for him."

