

People & Places

Teen raises \$3K for cancer foundation

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Christie Parsons' family knows all too well the fear and anxiety that comes with a possible cancer diagnosis.

Three years ago, the 17-year-old Davie resident was hospitalized for several weeks after her own close call with the disease. Even though a second diagnosis determined she did not have cancer, the experience made a lasting impact.

"I remember walking around the oncology floor, and I would see kids who had cancer, and it was devastating. I wanted to help out and give back," said Parsons, a senior at St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Fort Lauderdale.

Parsons recently did just that, donating \$3,000 to the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation to help the family of a girl fighting cancer. The donation took place at Broward General Medical Center in Fort Lauderdale, where Parsons was hospitalized in 2008. Doctors eventually determined she had a severe case of acute ITP (idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura), which is an abnormally low blood platelet count.

"It was serious, but it wasn't cancer, and I knew those other kids wouldn't be going home as fast as I was," Parsons said.

Through the Fort Lauderdale-based foundation, Parsons was matched with **Valentina Londono**, a 14-year-old diagnosed with rhabdomyosarcoma, a form of cancer that attacks mus-



Christie Parsons, right, raised and recently donated \$3,000 to the family of Valentina Londono, left.

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cles attached to bones.

"[The meeting] was so emotional," Parsons said. "I can't imagine what Valentina and her family are going through."

The money Parsons raised will help Londono's family with the basics, such as food and rent, while they care for her.

The foundation has a Share the Joy program, which lets individuals and businesses sponsor a child in need. Since creating the program last year, there have been at least 20 donations.

Parsons, who plays third base for her high school softball team, raised the money by creating a group called RBIs4CANCER. She asked friends, family and classmates to make a pledge for each run batted in (RBI) she had. She plans on continuing her fundraising this year to make another donation, and then

would like to turn the project over to a teammate.

"Sometimes when you have an experience that is very impactful, it really changes your life," said **Sandra Muvdi**, the foundation's president and founder.

Muvdi, of Fort Lauderdale, established the foundation after her daughter, **Jessica June Eiler Muvdi**, died of leukemia in 2003 at age 7.

The foundation provides emergency financial assistance for the families of children fighting cancer to help with medical, utility, rent, mortgage, car, gas and food costs. They also have an advocacy program for families that need help beyond the emergency assistance.

For more information on the foundation, visit www.jjccf.org.

For more information on RBIs4CANCER, visit www.rbis4cancer.com.