

Childhood Cancer Heroes: How You Can Help Fulfill Their Missions

A SURVIVOR HELPS SUFFERERS MAKE ENDS MEET

As Christie Parsons' best friend wheeled her through the Broward General Medical Center oncology floor, the then 13-year-old peeked into a few rooms and felt her heart sink. So many suffering children lay between barren walls -- no visitors, no gifts, no goodies to lift their spirits.

"They had no one," Christie told The Huffington Post of the kids whose families struggled financially. "My room was filled with flowers and balloons, family and friends. These kids had no one. It broke my heart."

Though doctors eventually ruled out leukemia as the cause of Christie's constant nosebleeds, the teen vowed to help cancer patients once she overcame thrombocytopenic purpura, a blood-clotting disorder. After Christie endured intensive steroid treatment, she finally regained her strength about a year and a half ago.

That's when Christie, now 17, decided to commit her time to lifting the spirits of young patients, like the despairing ones she had seen on the cancer floor.

Christie teamed up with the [Jessica June Foundation](#), a Florida nonprofit founded in memory of Jessica June, who died of acute myelogenous leukemia when she was just 7 years old. The organization provides emergency financial assistance and basic necessities to kids fighting cancer.

"Jessica's story was almost my exact story, only our outcome was different," Christie said. "It really connected me. I was like, 'Yes, this is the foundation I want to get involved with.'"

Soon after Christie posted a sign-up sheet and told her teachers about her mission, her fundraising efforts took off. A friend built a website for her and within six months, Christie raised \$3,000 -- enough to sponsor a needy family, with extra money left over to donate to the nonprofit.

In July, Christie handed a \$2,000 check to Valentina Londono, a 15-year-old suffering from a rare stage-4 muscle cancer.

Valentina's disease has hit her and her family particularly hard. The straight-A student has endured seven months of intensive chemotherapy. She's lost 28 pounds and constantly feels nauseated and weak. Valentina's family has faced financial woes, too. Valentina's mom was determined to stay by her daughter's side throughout the rigorous treatments and had to quit her four jobs to do so.

But, with Jessica June's support -- and Christie's personal contribution -- the Londonos have been able to pay their rent and phone bills and keep their spirits up.

"It helps to know that someone's been through it," Valentina told The Huffington Post. "Someone might tell you to be strong, but they don't know what you're going through."

Soon after meeting Christie, Valentina got a heartening medical report. Her blood marrow, previously 100 percent saturated with cancer cells, is now clean. Her tumor is completely gone. She has five months of treatment left to go.

"You have to know that this happened to you for a reason," Valentina said. "Maybe you're supposed to learn something from it. I've definitely learned to live life to the fullest. Focus on today. You don't know when you're going to leave the earth."

[Want to help? Donate to the Jessica June Foundation.](#)