

Ryans of Bayville Hold "A Celebration of Life"



(From left) Bailey Ryan with his parents Michael and Alice at the Ryans' "Celebration of Life" party/fund-raiser for Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop-University Hospital on July 4th in Bayville. (Photo by Criblez)

by David J. Criblez

Bayville is always a colorful setting on the fourth of July, however, this year a very special celebration took place at the Ryan household. Six year-old Bailey Ryan, the middle child of Michael Ryan and his wife, Alice Lovegrove, was celebrating the end of his treatments in his three-year battle with leukemia. "This party is proof of all the love and support that we have gotten from people," said Alice. "It brings tears to my eyes to think about it."

"A Celebration of Life" was the title the Ryans chose to call their July 4th bash which took place at their home off of Bayville Avenue overlooking Long Island Sound. Friends and family gathered on the lawn enjoying a barbecue buffet and

bought tickets to over 40 raffles for various donated goods (Mets tickets, DVD player, car stereo, Nautica clothing, etc.) with all proceeds going to the Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop-University Hospital.

Bailey's Background

At the young age of 2 years and 11 months, Bailey Ryan was diagnosed with leukemia. His parents discovered this after he took a little fall at a friend's house into a sunken living room, twisting his leg. "It was a nothing fall, but the next day he kept saying it hurt and he wouldn't walk on his leg at all. We took him to his pediatrician then to an orthopedist. He said if it didn't get better in a few weeks, they would have to do a series of tests," said

Alice, a Senior Environmental Engineer for Parsons Brinckerhoff engineering consulting firm. "I asked the doctor to do the tests right away because I felt something was not right. He did the tests and the doctor said that we'd get the results in 2-3 days. He called me at home that night, told me to sit down and said, 'I don't know 100%, but I think it's a strong possibility that Bailey has leukemia.'"

When Michael, Project Manager of Rygrove, Inc. Construction Company, came home from work that night, he found Alice crying on the front lawn. "When I heard that news, I literally sunk down onto the floor," she stated.

Making a Right

Bailey received his official

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"Celebration of Life" (continued from p.1)

diagnosis on April 1, 2000. He started treatments that day at North Shore University Hospital at Manhasset. The Ryans found this ironic because when Bailey was first born, he was treated in the intensive care unit of NSUH at Manhasset for other issues. "At that time when Bay was first born, Michael & I were upset," Alice recalled. "We walked down the hall at NSUH at Manhasset. The neonatal intensive care was on the left and the cancer center was on the right. We said to ourselves back then, 'It's not so bad, look at those poor people who are making a right.' Three years later, we looked at each other and said, 'Oh, my God, we're making a right.'"

Nervous but strong, the Ryans moved forward with Bailey's treatments and Bailey took it all in stride. "He was not unfamiliar with medical procedures because when he was first born he had to get surgery and had on-going eye issues (Bailey suffers from Glaucoma as well). For him, it was just another doctor," said Alice. "Bay is the most amazing kid. He gets the worst diagnosis and he handles it in the best way. It's just the way he is, nothing bothers him."

Bailey started with fairly intensive chemotherapy for the first two or three months. He was in the hospital for 5-6 days then home for 2-3 days and then he got very sick again and he ended up in the hospital for 30 days. "He had bad reactions to the medication," Alice explained. "Overall, he had a real rough time with it at the beginning."

The Ryans got a real scare when Bailey had a massive seizure and the doctor's thought the cancer may have gone to his brain. Dr. Mark Weinblatt, Director, and Dr. Philip Scimeca, Associate Director, of the Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop-University Hospital oversaw all of Bailey's treatments and luckily Bailey's cancer did not spread. However, Bailey spent both his three and four year-old birthdays in the hospital. Dr. Weinblatt declared to the Ryans: "I will not have this child spend another birthday in the hospital." He did everything he needed to do to get Bailey out and the doctor kept his promise.

The Strongest Man in the World

Throughout these years of treatments and hospital stays, Bailey continued with his education, going to school and taking work home when he couldn't be there. But, his parents, Alice and Michael, are in awe of his strength. "If you ask Bailey who the strongest man in the world is, he'll tell you, 'It's me,'" said Michael.

"We always saw a light at the end of the tunnel," stated Michael. "Alice and I have the kind of relationship where the worst thing in the world could happen to us and we don't say, 'Poor us.' We say, 'How do we get out of this?' The answer to us was the Cancer Center for Kids. Those people are just amazing," Alice added, "They teach you how to deal with it and how to think about long term survival."

Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop, staffed by physicians, pediatric oncology/hematology nurses and other specialists, provides the sophisticated care that both children and their parents need to fight cancer. With Bailey's "Celebration of Life" party, the Ryans wanted to give something back to the Center that did so much for them by raising money through raffles.

The Party Must Go On

On top of everything Bailey has gone through, this past spring, he broke his leg. The Ryans were hesitant about throwing the party, but they felt they had to do it even though Bailey is classified high risk for relapse. "Come what may, we are celebrating the fact that he made it through a terrible ordeal and he came out wonderfully," stated Alice. "It showed us how to live."

Bailey's older sister Katie, 7, and younger sister Lindsey, 4, are very sensitive and concerned about him. "The two of them have shown so much love to him," Alice claimed. "But, they still fight like brothers and sisters. I always say, Katie showed us love, Bailey showed us faith and Lindsey showed us happiness."

Looking back at the road they were on, the Ryans learned a lot about life along the way. "We didn't choose this path, it was the one given to us. I don't recommend it to anybody and I wish we didn't take it, but the roses we saw along that path were unbelievable," said Alice. "We led an extremely busy life," said Michael, "and I don't think we are going to let that happen to us again."

Bailey will go for check-ups once a month for the next six months now that his treatment is complete. In the meantime, he's spending his summer just like every other kid in Bayville, which is the way the Ryans like it.

If you would like to make a donation to the Cancer Center for Kids, send a check to: Cancer Center for Kids at Winthrop-University Hospital, 200 Old Country Road, Suite 440, Mineola, NY 11501, Attn: Maxine Andrade.