



# Newsletter

Winter 2014



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## THIRD-ANNUAL Pitcher Perfect

WITH JEREMY HELLICKSON

Saturday, January 24, 2015

Ages 8-11

9-10:30 a.m.

\$75

Ages 12-14

Noon-1:30 p.m.

\$75

Ages 15-18

2-3 p.m.

\$50

Grand Slam USA  
4137 120th St.  
Urbandale, IA 50323

Buy your tickets at  
[www.kidslivingbrave.org](http://www.kidslivingbrave.org).

# About Kids Living Brave

Kids Living Brave was created as an official 501(c)(3) for the State of Iowa in 2011 by co-founders Jack and Pam Cooper after their son Carson was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Carson's fight against cancer, his positive attitude and the way their family and friends rallied around them made them want to reach out and help other families.

Carson and his family recognized his diagnosis not only affected him but the entire family. Though they had amazing support from family, friends and their community, they learned early on that interacting and having support with other patients and families going through similar experiences was key in coping and moving forward with what doctors refer to as "new normal" way of life.

The name of the not for profit was created by Carson, who was the inspiration to begin the organization.



The idea was to help and give back to other families going through similar experiences. The group's mission is to assist and support families with a child fighting cancer in Iowa. Passing along lessons learned from past patients, families, doctors, nurses, and staff, at the same time helping give some answers and ideas to the patients'

friends and families to assist Brave Kids and their families.

It was important the support remain local where people could see and feel the results, starting with Blank Children's Hospital where the vast majority of the state goes to receive care for pediatric cancers.

Kids Living Brave's board of directors is 100-percent volunteer ran with local board members from the



**Carson Cooper, the inspiration for Kids Living Brave, stands with fellow Brave Kids, Lily and Joe.**

community, including Blank's lead pediatric oncologist Wendy Woods-Swofford, M.D., M.P.H.

The group provides practical care packages at diagnosis to help ease through the transition of treatment called "Brave Baskets" along with tips and lessons learned.

The annual Pitcher Perfect event with Jeremy Hellickson and Grand Slam is its biggest fundraising event to date.

The group also benefits from online donations, KLB apparel sales, Brave Basket school drives, and fundraisers from individuals. Visit [kidslivingbrave.org](http://kidslivingbrave.org) to learn more about how groups or individuals can create their own "fundraiser" for KLB, along with other fundraising events throughout the year.

Goals for the next two years are to bring more awareness and educational outreach to the community about kids going through cancer in Iowa. It wants to hold other unique fundraisers that allow the group to help more diagnosed families and bring more awareness to the excellent oncology care children receive at Blank Children's Hospital.



# Pitcher Perfect

## Jeremy Hellickson pitches in to help family friends through Pitcher Perfect

It is not a fluke that Jeremy Hellickson is involved with Kids Living Brave. He has been a friend of the Cooper family for more than 16 years. Seven days prior to Carson's diagnosis in 2011 the Cooper family had just traveled to Minneapolis, Minn., to see Jeremy pitch against the Minnesota Twins.

After finding out Carson was sick, Jeremy reached out right away while he was on the road checking in on Carson. The best surprise was a gigantic box he sent full of Tampa Bay Rays items including:

- a signed Johnny Damon jersey;
- a signed poster of David Price; and
- the batting gloves and stocking cap Jeremy wore in spring training.

*"It feels really good to support these kids and have some fun with them because they are so full of life and joy and to see them smile makes me smile."*

**Jeremy Hellickson**

Carson connected with Jim and his coach Garrett Hawkins (now both KLB board members) in a very unique way. The coaches never treated Carson different, going to lessons helped Carson regain some of his strength lost from treatment, kept his mind off his fight with cancer, and renewed his spirit and confidence again with baseball!

The group along with the Cooper's came up with the idea of doing a fundraiser for KLB. This fundraiser would be unique for the community and something that was near and dear to all of their hearts "baseball and kids" Thus the Pitcher Perfect event was born!



**Jeremy Hellickson, pitcher for the Tampa Bay Rays and Des Moines native, helps kids ages 8 through 18 sharpen their skills at a pitching clinic hosted, staffed and sponsored by Grand Slam USA.**

When Jeremy arrived home for the off season he connected the Coopers with Grand Slam USA's owner Jim Hallman (a cancer survivor himself) for baseball lessons for Carson. Grand Slam USA is one of the places Jeremy frequently works out at while he is home in Iowa.

Jeremy is excited to come home each year to take part in this event, helping give back to the community where he grew up, supporting his friend Carson, and helping KLB to grow and help more families. The annual Pitcher Perfect event with Jeremy Hellickson and Grand Slam is Kids Living Brave's biggest fundraising event to date.

Last year he attended one of Carson's chemo treatments, visited and signed baseballs to kids in the oncology clinic and helped Carson pass out Brave Baskets to other patients. Brave Baskets are practical care packages given to kids and their families at diagnosis to help ease through the transition of treatment.

**Story continued on page 4**

# Board of Directors

## Story continued from page 3

Before Carson was diagnosed he was able to attend Jeremy's second start in the MLB in Detroit, Mich. He and his family attend games when the Rays are close to Iowa like Kansas City and Minnesota or attend local watch parties with the Hellickson family and friends.

Carson had a scare this past summer when doctors had thought his leukemia had relapsed. The second diagnosis was that a secondary cancer was taking place called MDS. Carson was very ill in the ICU at Blank Children's Hospital. He and his family were preparing for a bone marrow transplant and a move to Minnesota. Jeremy reached out checking in on Carson sending his love and concern.



By the grace of God and talented pathologists at Minnesota's Amplatz Children's Hospital, both were ruled out. The chemotherapy he

was receiving had become extremely toxic. Treatment was stopped to recover from pneumocystis pneumonia and allow his body to heal.

Carson currently is back on his treatment protocol on a lower percentage of chemotherapy under a weekly watchful eye of his oncologists. He was able to travel to Kansas City to see Jeremy pitch after he got better and surprised Jeremy as he arrived at his hotel with big hugs and smiles from both sides!

Carson turned 11 in February. His treatment is 36 years long. He is currently in remission and will be done with treatment in September 2014.

Pitcher Perfect emcee Jackie Schmillen met Carson when she won celebrity of the year for the Leukemia Lymphoma Society's Man Woman of the Year campaign in 2011 when Carson was the boy patient of the year.

Kids Living Brave's Board of Directors is comprised of the following caring individuals, who are committed to helping the Brave Kids and their families who are battling cancer.

Jack Cooper, President & Co-founder

Pam Cooper, Vice President & Co-Founder

Britt Bremner, Secretary

Audrey Cooney, Treasurer

Annie Baldwin

Gina Cramer

Victoria Cresta

Jim Hallman

Garrett Hawkins

Chris Kinney

Sarah McNew

Natasha Winterbottom

Amy Thilges

Dr. Wendy Woods-Swofford

