



Contact:
We Cancerve Movement
PeopleWhoCare@wecancerve.org
202.491.3596

For Immediate Release:
April 9, 2014

Abingdon 3rd Grader organizes “Reality Tour” of pediatric unit for all-youth board

Bel Air, Md. -- Nine-year-old Grace E. G. Callwood started the “We Cancerve Movement” in 2011, shortly after being diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. Helping other children “not feel so sad” was something she could attain quickly, she said. Getting past cancer would take years.

So she started a movement that would rally children her age, their friends, family and community members who believed in her efforts to help sick, foster and homeless youth.

Today, she brought along two members of her board of advisors – Heaven Faust and Sarah Beall, all three third graders at William S. James Elementary –through the pediatric unit at University of Maryland Upper Chesapeake Medical Center in Bel Air, Md. This “reality tour” showed them, first-hand, what it’s like for sick children who are admitted as patients, and the many ways the hospital staff and volunteers help children recover and heal.

Callwood knows this all too well.

“When I first got cancer, I stayed in the hospital for 10 days. I was scared. I played a lot of games with my mom and grandma and I had visitors like my friend Kaleigh who lived across the street,” reflected Callwood, a third-grader at William S. James Elementary School.

For pediatric patients, playing games is just what the doctor ordered. According to the Child Life Council, the American Academy of Pediatrics affirms that child life is “an essential component of quality pediatric health care,” and as such, child life services have become a standard in most pediatric hospital settings. Trained professionals, often called Child Life Specialists, enhance the adjustment of children and families to health care experiences and other difficult life encounters using play and a variety of therapeutic techniques. These specialists are often trained to teach coping skills, including distraction techniques and relaxation exercises, to reduce the potential for negative reactions to health care experiences and other life distresses, according to the Child Life Council’s website.

Hospitals often get toys, games and craft projects through donations and other philanthropic efforts. Callwood wants her “We Cancerve Movement” to become one of Upper Chesapeake’s donors. But she’s no stranger to donating to its pediatric unit. In 2006, she donated a red Radio Flyer wagon and in 2007, she donated all the toys she received for her third birthday, except one, to the pediatric unit. She kept the Diego adventure set, her mother T’Jae Gibson remembers.

She completed chemotherapy in February and now is scheduled for checkups at the Alfred I. Copeland Pediatric Hematology and Oncology Outpatient Center at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore once a month. While she has been cancer-free since 2011, she won’t be declared cured until after she is no longer medically susceptible to relapsing.

###