

Airplanes for Hunter

Elementary students support young cancer patient

by ANDREA KIMBRIEL
Reporter

Hunter Winship wants to set a world record. The 5-year-old is hoping to make it into the Guinness World Records for receiving the most paper airplanes.

Hunter was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, Burkitt's lymphoma, in early January. He arrived at the hospital with a tennis ball-sized tumor on a Friday, and it had grown to the size of a cantaloupe by the next Monday, said Clarence Center resident Cathy Recktenwald.

Recktenwald heard about Hunter and his project from her husband Bill Recktenwald, who works with Hunter's father, Shawn Winship, in the aircraft division of Moog in East Aurora.

According to the last update she received, Hunter is now at home in Freedom, N.Y., after receiving treatment at Women & Children's Hospital of Buffalo, she said.

The airplane collection is giving him something to do during his illness.

"It really struck a chord with me because I feel so blessed that I have healthy children," said Recktenwald.

When she told her third-grade son's teacher, Gerry Hardick, about Hunter's goal, he and the rest of the school decided to get involved. Principal Neil Burns has also helped with the project, she said.

"He has generously offered to supply paper to the children if they want to make airplanes, and there is a collection box in my son's classroom where children from all grades can drop off their airplanes," she said.

Recktenwald picked up the airplanes the students made on Friday, Feb. 15. At last count, the number of planes was 5,559, said Hardick.

"Our class itself made over 200 airplanes," said Lauren Pawlowski, who is also a student in Hardick's class.

More than 500 airplanes have been dropped off at Recktenwald's house by parents of Clarence Center Elementary pupils and others in the community. Hardick said some parents got their workplaces involved.

The students have made airplanes in class and at home. They added personal messages for Hunter on some of the planes.

"You should help this boy be-

cause he has a really rare form of cancer. If you had it some of your friends would be really sad and that's why you should want to help him," said Lauren.

After making so many planes, Stephen said he can complete a basic one in about 30 seconds and a more difficult design in about 45 seconds. He showed several classmates how to make them.

"We're trying to help (Hunter) — the whole school — so he could reach his goal," Stephen said. "It would be cool to see something you helped with in the World Book of Records, so you're in the World Book of Records, sort of."

The day after Recktenwald learned about Hunter, school was canceled due to a power outage. She, Stephen and her seventh-grade son Billy made about 64 airplanes at home.

The project at Clarence Center Elementary School began in early February. Hardick said students can continue to drop off airplanes at his classroom, and he will pass them to Recktenwald for delivery.

"I've just been extremely impressed with how these kids have all had the heart to make airplanes for (Hunter) and help him reach his goal," she said.

Hardick wasn't surprised to see the students rally around the project.

"As soon as you hear of someone in need, this building responds really strongly," he said.

Recktenwald said Hunter has already gotten more than 100,000 airplanes. There is currently no record in the Guinness World Records for the number of air-

Lauren Pawlowski and Stephen Recktenwald have been busy creating paper airplanes for Hunter.



Third graders Tessa Beiter, Alex Fetter, Elliot Lewis and Bethany Berger, display some of the airplanes made by Clarence Elementary School students for Hunter's project.

planes received.

"His father works in the aircraft division at Moog, so I think airplanes have always been an interest of his," she said.

Various schools and communities have gotten involved with the project. Articles posted online reveal schools creating planes for Hunter as far away as Alaska.

Everyone interested in sending paper airplanes to Hunter is

asked to write the state or country where they reside on the wings of their planes and mail them to Hunter. The address is: Hunter Winship (The Airplane Cancer Goal), 11227 North Hill Road, Freedom, NY 14065.

"Planes and prayers for Hunter would be greatly appreciated. The more word we can get out there about Hunter's project, the more airplanes and prayers he can get," Recktenwald said.