

THE KORTNEY ROSE FOUNDATION HELPS DOCTORS HELP KIDS WITH BRAIN TUMORS

By Susan Murphy



The Kortney Rose Foundation Logo drawn by Kortney in March, 2006

Kortney Rose Gillette celebrated her ninth birthday with friends and family at Funtime America on November 27, 2005. This third grader enjoyed being a student at Wolf Hill Elementary School in Oceanport, enjoyed basketball, played soccer, loved animals, and thoroughly lived each day to the fullest. At her birthday celebration, Kortney made the most of her special day as she laughed and played games with her friends. She was the picture of health on that day. In December 2005, Kortney was diagnosed with a Brainstem Glioma, a rare form of brain cancer. On April 27, 2006, only four months after the diagnosis, Kortney Rose Gillette succumbed to the disease.

Kristen and Richard Gillette started The Kortney Rose Foundation as a way of honoring their daughter's life. It is a 501(c) (3) organization dedicated to raising funds to support research and education related to the treatment and cure of pediatric brain tumors. Support from family and friends helped Kristen, Richard, and their older daughter Kasey begin to pick up the pieces and look ahead. Five months after losing Kortney, Kristen went to work at St. John's Nursery School in Little Silver. "I had to stay busy and get out of the house. I wanted to be somewhere that kids would just hug me for no reason. Both my girls went here so I felt a connection." Kristen felt at the time that it was different being around younger children than being around Kortney's friends. As difficult as it was, the hugs from the preschoolers helped Kristen begin to heal.

An important and favorite event that was started by Kristen is Kortney's Challenge, which was first held on September 9, 2006 at Monmouth Park Racetrack. It was a two-mile fun run/walk that she knew Kortney's friends, who were in third grade at the time, could handle. "To me it was all about her friends being able to be involved. And I wanted this event to bring everyone together." Kortney's Challenge is a fundraiser usually held in August or September. Another event usually held in May, which is National Brain Tumor Awareness Month, is Kortney's Coins for a CURE. This fundraiser lets kids help kids by collecting change for two or three weeks or the entire month of May. Their donations go towards the research of pediatric brain cancer and help to increase awareness about the disease. Though geared towards schools, this program can be utilized by organizations as well. Information about any of these fundraisers can be reviewed at www.TheKortneyRoseFoundation.org.

"Kortney had a zest for life and was so strong," shared Kristen. Kortney continued to visit friends and have them visit her in the last few months of her life. Kristen said that her daughter loved to draw and in March 2006, learned how to make a rose from her friend Collette. That drawing is now the logo for The Kortney Rose Foundation. She endured a rigorous schedule of arriving at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for treatment early in the morning five days a week, then going to school.



Nine-year-old Kortney Rose Gillette of Oceanport lived each day of her life to the fullest. She succumbed to a brain tumor on April 27, 2006. The Kortney Rose Foundation was started to raise awareness of pediatric brain tumors and to raise funds for the research related to the treatment and cure of this number one killer of children under 20.



Jockeys wearing pink helmets in honor of Brain Tumor Awareness and The Kortney Rose Foundation begin their race at Monmouth Park Racetrack during a fundraiser in August 2009.

She had a contagious smile and a fantastic disposition. Her playful spirit is remembered in Kortney's Playground at her school. Those who have volunteered and donated to The Kortney Rose Foundation include postal workers, schoolchildren, scout troops, soccer teams, siblings of Kortney's close friends, and local businesses. So many were touched by her and now Kortney's legacy continues to help children with brain tumors through the promise of research.

The Kortney Rose Foundation has made a three-year donation total of \$260,000 to The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), to be used in its Large-Scale Genomics Project that will hunt genes behind common childhood diseases. The money will be used specifically by the pediatric neuro-oncology researchers to hunt down the genes behind brain tumors, with the goals of using the gene knowledge to guide therapy and devise new tests and treatments. They will also be contributing to The Children's Brain Tumor Biorepository at CHOP, whose goal is to collect biospecimens reflecting the molecular diversity of all pediatric brain tumors. More information can be found on the website at www.TheKortneyRoseFoundation.org.

Kristen and Richard Gillette are grateful to the doctors at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia for their compassion, understanding, and professionalism in caring for their daughter Kortney, as well as the support given to them during the remaining days of Kortney's life.

GARDEN STATE SKATING CLUB TO HOLD 3RD ANNUAL SHORE FIGURE SKATING COMPETITION

The Garden State Skating Club, whose members hail from throughout Monmouth and Ocean Counties (including girls from Colts Neck, Holmdel, Marlboro, Rumson, and surrounding towns), will be holding its 3rd Annual Shore Figure Skating Competition on March 6 at the Gold Coast Arena, 1215 Wyckoff Road in Farmingdale.

Most of the club's members will be competing, and the competition is open to all United State Figure Skating Association members. Many of them travel from all parts of New Jersey, as well as Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New York. This will be the first competition for the 2010-2011 season.

All those interested should visit the club's website at www.gardenstatesc.org for updated information and registration, which may be done online by February 1.



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