

LEUKEMIA RESEARCH FOUNDATION OF DELAWARE

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A New Foundation | Denni Ferrara

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What Denni Ferrara saw in the hallways and patient rooms of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, were stories of hope and need.

Ferrara visited St. Jude in April to make an initial presentation of \$150,000, the first of what will eventually total \$1 million on behalf of The Leukemia Research Foundation of Delaware, an organization she began in 2007. The money she raised will go right to research rooms, therapy centers and bedsides.

It was never meant to end up like this. The diminutive mother of four was not supposed to begin her own foundation and raise more than \$400,000 in its first two years, but then again, she wasn't expecting that her daughter Natalia, now 15, would be stricken with leukemia 11 years ago.

"When Natalia was going through treatment at the A.I. Children's Hospital, I was busy caring for her," Ferrara says. "When she became healthy again, I knew I wanted to give back."

Soon after, Ferrara became a volunteer with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society of Delaware, chairing the group's annual fundraising gala for several years while serving on the board of directors. With her new foundation now in its second year, she and a small group of volunteers coordinate fundraising balls, golf tournaments, and special engagements throughout the year to increase awareness of leukemia.

Now 15, Natalie is a student at the College School at the University of Delaware. She plays lacrosse and is about to earn a black belt in karate.

"I feel so strongly with doing something because my daughter was lucky enough to walk out of A.I. healthy and happy," Ferrara says. "When you've been faced with the illness of your own child, it changes you. The focus is on us making the difference and helping get funds to continue the work, and we can be a tiny part of it."

The money raised is already at work. During a recent gala, a doctor told Ferrara the foundation's contributions went directly to enabling a 27-year-old man to receive a bone marrow transplant.

