

Small Acts Make Big Impact

You can brighten someone's day

By Shannan Miller

This is what Suzanne and Peter Letherman of Granger realized when they received a simple token of compassion and thoughtfulness during their stay at Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis with their infant daughter, Grace Elizabeth, in 2002. Grace was born with spinal muscular atrophy, a degenerative genetic condition that limited her life but spurred a lifetime of giving.

"We're just two people, but we realized we could do something," said Suzanne. They created the Sweet Pea Foundation in Grace's honor to help bring smiles to sick children and their families.

During their time at Riley Children's Hospital, Peter and Suzanne discovered that family members spend a lot of time waiting—waiting to hear from doctors, waiting for next steps. While they waited, volunteers handed out care packages filled with small items to provide comfort and distraction. It touched the Lethermans and inspired the Sweet Pea Foundation's "Hugs from Grace" and "Seeds of Grace."

"Hugs from Grace" are sling bags filled with toys, crafts, games, and books for children admitted to the hospital. Every holiday, from Valentine's Day to Fourth of July to Halloween, the Sweet Pea Foundation prepares and delivers dozens of holiday themed bags to area hospitals for children who are missing out on normal festivities. Now, Peter and Suzanne's whole family, including their parents and their three children, Andrew, Cecilia and Patrick, help pack and deliver the bags.

"Seeds of Grace" are stand-alone projects underwritten by the Sweet Pea Foundation such as a mural at Saint Joseph Regional Medical Center, magic shows, and a steel drum performance for children.

The foundation also makes an annual gift to the Ronald McDonald House in Indianapolis to pay for overnight stays for family members in need. Most importantly, the foundation provides the Lethermans with a connection to Grace and has given their children the opportunity to celebrate the life of their sister that they were never able to meet. ●

Sweet Pea Foundation Annual Golf Outing

You can help support the Sweet Pea Foundation at their annual golf outing on Sept 13. One hundred percent of proceeds are donated to help cheer sick kids and their families.

What: 16th annual Kickoff Classic Golf Outing

When: Friday, Sept. 13 at 9am with a shotgun start and scramble format; the day before Notre Dame football's home opener against New Mexico

Where: Juday Creek Golf Course, Granger

Cost: \$85/golfer includes breakfast, a round of golf, golf cart, beverages and lunch at Wings Etc. on Grape Road in Mishawaka. Plus, chances to win prizes.

Register by Sept. 6 at sweetpeafoundation.org.

Door prizes and sponsorships for food, event and hole welcome! Contact Suzanne by emailing sweetpeafoundation@comcast.net

