

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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PALLIATIVE CANCER PATIENT HEADS TO MEXICO TO HELP FAMILIES

Calgary, AB — **Fifteen-year-old Davis Weisner**, a cancer patient undergoing treatment for stage four neuroblastoma that has recurred several times, is not letting his disease or treatment stop him. He and 14 other teenagers, all cancer survivors or siblings, will head to **Ensenada, Mexico** next month to take part in a home building project with the **Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta**, the **Rotary Club of West Calgary** and **Youth with a Mission**.

“Living with cancer has taught me that you really do need to make the most of every day,” said Davis Weisner. “Going to Mexico to build houses for these families is the ultimate opportunity to help someone in need. I may not have the strength to construct walls or do any heavy lifting, but I can hammer nails, bring water to the crew or play with the kids. I will do all I can to contribute to the team.”

Behind Davis is a team of health care professionals, friends and family determined to help him realize his dream of traveling to Mexico to help his peers build homes for families in need.

“Davis is one of the most selfless people I know,” said Tracey Stahn of the Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta. “When I found out he wanted to go on the trip to Mexico, I knew we had to make it work. If Davis has the will to do this in his current state of health, then we can definitely find a way to make it happen.”

Stahn talked to Davis’s mother Janine Weisner and his oncologist, Dr. Doug Strother at the Alberta Children’s Hospital. Both supported the idea immediately. Strother and his team at the hospital immediately started preparing for Davis’s trip, drawing up emergency protocols for every medical eventuality and arranging for Janessa DeCoste, the Kids Cancer Care’s oncology nurse, to travel with Davis along with painkillers and medical supplies.

“Davis is a relentless and optimistic fighter in his battle against neuroblastoma,” said Dr. Doug Strother, director of the Pediatric Hematology, Oncology, Bone Marrow Transplant Program at the Alberta Children’s Hospital. “He’s been supported along the way by family and friends, Kids Cancer Care and the entire staff at Alberta Children’s. We support him 100 per cent in his desire to give to the community in Mexico. He’s an inspiration to all of us.”

The teens are responsible for key projects throughout the year, from helping out at Kids Cancer Care programs to helping out at soup kitchens or retirement homes. The program culminates in a trip to Mexico each year, where the teens help build homes for families in need. This year, they will build three homes in two days.

Part of the learning experience involves fundraising, so each teen is responsible for raising at least \$1,000 to cover their airfare, meals and accommodation. Rotary Club member Dan Doherty will make up any remaining costs with a donation.

Davis and his peers publically announced their plans to go to Mexico on Thursday, February 24 at Bankers Hall, when the Kids Cancer Care Foundation unveiled its new logo:



“Davis and all the teens from our Teen Leadership Program are shining examples that **kids can** do anything, when you get behind them,” said Christine McIver, founder and chief executive officer of the Kids Cancer Care Foundation. “Erasing cancer and empowering kids like Davis is what we strive to do every day at Kids Cancer Care. We needed a logo that could say this immediately, one that would shift the focus from the current reality of childhood cancer to our vision of a day when there is no cancer. Our new logo suggests this beautifully. We’re so grateful to Karo Group for donating their time and talents to make this logo possible.”

The teens passed around collection cans labeled “kids cans” at Bankers Hall to raise awareness of childhood cancer and funds for the Mexico initiative, demonstrating that, with a little help, kids can. They invite Calgarians to support the Mexico home building project by donating online at homesinmexico.webs.com.

The Kids Cancer Care Foundation’s rebranding was made possible by a generous creative services grant from Karo Group, a Calgary- and Vancouver-based branding and communications firm. Karo’s community service initiative, Karo Kaus, annually donates a total of \$100,000 in design and creative services to two not-for-profit groups, one in Calgary and one in Vancouver.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Gail Corbett, Communication Manager
Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta
W 403 984 1221 / C 403 607 5565
E corbett@kidscancercare.ab.ca

Christine McIver, Founder & CEO
Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta
W 403 984 6210 / C 403 850 1209
E mciver@kidscancercare.ab.ca

MEDIA AVAILABILITY

Davis Weisner, cancer patient
H 403 590 7818 / C
E jweisner@shaw.ca

Samantha Andres, cancer survivor
H 403 238 2877
E samanthaandres@shaw.ca

Dr. Doug Strother, oncologist and director of the
Pediatric Hematology, Oncology, Bone Marrow Transplant Program
Alberta Children's Hospital
W 403 955 7203 / C 403 617 3590
E Doug.Strother@albertahealthservices.ca

Tracey Stahn, program coordinator
Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta
W 403 984 6211 / C 403 993 7045
E stahn@kidscancercare.ab.ca

Janessa DeCoste, oncology nurse
Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta
Alberta Children's Hospital
W 403 984 6214 / C 403 771 0335
E DeCoste@kidscancercare.ab.ca

BACKGROUNDER

Davis Weisner

Davis was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma in 2006 when he was only 10 years old. He underwent surgery to remove the tumour and one adrenal gland. He also had two bone marrow transplants and several rounds of chemotherapy and radiation. After going into remission for 17 months, Davis relapsed in October 2008. He received seven more months of high dose chemotherapy and continued with oral chemotherapy, but in April 2010, Davis relapsed again. Scans showed that the oral chemotherapy had stopped working. He went back on high doses chemotherapy every three weeks for several months. Davis is now 15 and started high school last September.

Samantha Andres

Samantha Andres is a grade 12 student at Bishop Grandin High School. Her interests include scrapbooking and being an athletic trainer for her high school football team. She enjoys helping out with the Kid's Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta whenever she can. Her hopes and dreams are to continue her education at university and become a pediatric oncology nurse. She wants to give kids going through cancer the same hope and faith she received from the nurses when going through treatment herself.

Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta

The Kids Cancer Care Foundation of Alberta is passionately dedicated to helping young people with cancer and their families survive and thrive in body, mind and spirit. Kids Cancer Care programs are designed to meet the needs of the whole family at each stage in the cancer journey, from diagnosis through treatment and beyond. The Foundation is committed to changing the course of children's cancer by providing programs and funding in four key areas: camp, research, hospital and scholarship programs.

Teen Leadership Program

Kids Cancer Care's Teen Leadership Program offers teenagers a chance to give back to their community by helping those in need. Teens are responsible for designing and overseeing key projects throughout the year, including helping out at Kids Cancer Care programs, cooking in soup kitchens or visiting seniors in retirement homes. The leadership program culminates in a trip to Mexico each year, where teens help local families build a home. Responsible for raising their own money for airfare, meals and accommodation, participants develop important leadership skills, while expanding their sense of social responsibility and developing a philanthropic spirit.

Rotary Club of Calgary West

The Calgary West Rotary Club is a service organization committed to changing the world, one project at a time. The club has been highly involved in the community since being chartered in 1967. Of special interest are local or international initiatives that support youth leadership, youth education and at-risk youth programs.

Rotary Club members have been traveling to Ensenada, Mexico since 2007 to build homes for impoverished communities. Young people from local organizations such as the Kids Cancer Care Foundation are invited to participate. Seeing first-hand the difference that smile and a few hours of volunteer time can make in the lives of an entire family helps Calgary youth to see their own challenges in a new light.

Youth with a Mission

Youth with a Mission (YWAM) is an international volunteer movement of Christians from many backgrounds, cultures and Christian traditions. Beginning in 1960, YWAM's main focus was giving young people opportunities to demonstrate their faith to the whole world. Today, they still focus on youth, but as an established foundation they have adapted long term endeavours that impact many lives and nations. YWAM San Diego/Baja is a growing organization that facilitates many projects; the most renowned of these programs is the Homes of Hope Project.

Homes of Hope Project

Youth with a Mission (YWAM) San Diego/Baja was founded by Sean & Janet Lambert in October 1991. The organization grew in response to the needs they recognized in the Northern Baja region of Mexico. From a small beginning in 1988, when thirty young people participated in a single house building trip, YWAM San Diego/Baja is now hosting thousands of volunteers who participate annually.

Karo Group

Karo Group is Western Canada's only interdisciplinary branding agency, ranked one of the best places to work in Canada. Karo understands how design helps clients strengthen their brand, resulting in better customer experiences. Through Karo Kaus, Karo shares its brand experience to help non-profit community groups better achieve their goals. Every year, Karo donates \$100,000 of creative services split between two not-for-profit groups, one in Calgary and one in Vancouver. \$50,000 of creative time from Karo talented people goes to each group.