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Newsletter

SPRING 2010

www.friendsofkaren.org



What a smile!

Emily plays with toys she received through our Adopt-A-Family Holiday Gift Program

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FENOV'S STORY

Being Eight...Interrupted by Cancer

Fenov is a typical boy, inquisitive, friendly, and a lover of video games. What's not typical about him is that he has cancer. Diagnosed with Stage 3 High Risk Neuroblastoma in June 2009, Fenov has since undergone surgery to remove the tumor in his abdomen, chemotherapy treatment and a stem cell transplant. He is scheduled to receive additional chemotherapy and remain in treatment for the next year and a half.

Fenov lives with his mother and 11-year-old sister in New Jersey. Before he became ill, his mother worked full time as a home health aide, but had to reduce her work schedule when Fenov was diagnosed. After he received his stem cell transplant, his mother stopped working completely and took a leave without pay.



Fenov and his sister, Sciaska

Fenov's extended family lives nearby and provides emotional and financial support to Fenov, his mother and sister whenever they can, but not quite enough to cover their basic living expenses. As a result, **Friends of Karen** stepped in to assist this family with rent and utilities. Funding is provided through a partnership with the **Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Foundation** (www.tcfund.org), whose grants enable Friends of Karen to better help families like Fenov's emotionally and financially.

Not allowed to go out in public since his stem cell transplant in November, Fenov is being tutored at home. He spends most of his time playing with his games and toys and doing his schoolwork. He and his sister have both received school supplies through Friends of Karen's Back-To-School Program and gifts through our Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program. He has just turned nine years old. Happy Birthday, Fenov!

Why I Run for Friends of Karen

"Words cannot begin to express the feeling I get knowing a little help goes so far for these special families." Andrea

For many who will participate in the Friends of Karen Walk/Run Team at the Long Island Marathon, their journey will be a celebration of life and hope. This marks the fourth year a Friends of Karen team will participate in the marathon to be held at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow, NY on Saturday, May 1 and Sunday, May 2. Saturday consists of a 5K walk/run for adults and children age 11 and older. Sunday is for adults and older teens (age 16 and older), with a 10K, a half and a full marathon.

Unlike the New York and Boston marathons, this race is not just intended for world class runners. Moms, dads, grandparents, kids, aunts and uncles are encouraged to participate. What distinguishes this marathon is the reason people participate.

Evelyn Anderson, a Friends of Karen mom, was inspired to run in honor of her son Luke, who was diagnosed with leukemia shortly after his first birthday. For the past four years, Evelyn has been the Friends of Karen team leader and has created and sustained the

(continued on page 2)

You guys are all angels sent from above to protect families... From the bottom of my heart and my family's, we thank you so much. Friends of Karen will always be a part of our hearts as long as we live."

~ BRENNIN FAMILY





FOUNDER

Sheila Petersen (1938-1990)

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Friends of Karen is a not-for-profit organization.
All contributions are tax-deductible to the
full extent of the law.



From Our Executive Director



"How's Friends of Karen doing in this tough economy?"
That's what many people have asked me this past year. "We're holding our own," is my reply.

In fact, Friends of Karen assisted 1344 children in 2009 – 524 critically ill children, 820 siblings and their families. That's 5% more than the year before. Our skilled social workers provided caring emotional support, expert guidance, and strong advocacy. We covered at least \$85,000 per month in direct financial assistance to families for basic living and illness-related expenses, in addition to providing thousands of dollars in supermarket and clothing gift cards so that parents never have to choose between mounting medical expenses and feeding, clothing, and caring for their children.

Staying true to our mission, Friends of Karen provided this support to keep children and their families strong, together, in their homes, and able to cope even facing dire circumstances. Our impact is tangible and immediate.

How do we do it all in these lean times? To quote The Beatles – We get by with a little help from our friends. In this newsletter, you'll read about how friends of all ages pitch in to help, whether it's fulfilling a child's holiday wish list, providing a Thanksgiving meal for a family, or writing letters to professional colleagues soliciting their support for Friends of Karen.

Thanks to you, Friends of Karen weathered 2009, but 2010 promises to be just as hard, if not harder. That's why I'm asking you to help us by bringing a friend to Friends of Karen. Introduce us to someone you know. Share this newsletter with them. Invite them to visit our website at www.friendsofkaren.org. Come to meet us in our Purdys or Port Jefferson offices – or we'll come see you. Volunteer. Make a contribution. Ask a friend to join you in supporting Friends of Karen. Think of the impact. If every friend brought a friend, we'd double our capacity to assist every child who needs our support.

Remember...

one friend, Sheila Petersen, helping one child, Karen MacInnes, started it all!

Thanks for your help,

Judith Factor

Why I Run for Friends of Karen (from page 1)

growing involvement of Friends of Karen in this event. Luke, now a healthy eight-year-old, joins his family and friends cheering on Evelyn and our team as they cross the finish line.

Carolyn Rochel ran in last year's marathon to mark the end of her daughter Kaitlyn's two-and-a-half year treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia. "I'm really not a runner, but I wanted to do something special to mark this," said Carolyn. "I also wanted to give back to an organization that really helped us get through this."

Every year more walkers and runners join Evelyn, Carolyn and the Friends of Karen team. In 2009 there were 109 participants; this year we are expecting even more. Since 2006, participants in the Walk/Run have raised over \$142,000 for Friends of Karen children.

If you are interested in joining the Friends of Karen team, in volunteering at this year's event, or want to sponsor someone on the team, go to www.friendsofkaren.org and click on the Events section for the application, waiver form and donation information. If you would like more information, contact Patricia Conway at 631-473-1768 ext. 303 or patriciaconway@friendsofkaren.org.

Join us and be inspired!

Why I run...



"What a great feeling to be able to help others by doing something fun for me too."

~ Bernard

"Knowing that every dollar raised helps very sick children."

~ Mark

Baby Nayelis

As a parent, the last thing in the world you would expect to hear is that your beautiful baby has cancer. Sadly, that's what happened to the parents of Nayelis, an adorable little girl diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukemia at just nine months of age. Intensive treatment was called for, and Nayelis was hospitalized and kept mostly in isolation to avoid complications and infections due to her compromised immune system.

Nayelis' family consists of her parents and three-year-old brother. Although the original treatment took place at a hospital close to home, Nayelis' need for a transplant meant moving her to a hospital in New York City. Thanks to the support received through their extended family, her mom was able to stay with Nayelis in the hospital while family and friends cared for her brother at home.



Before Nayelis' diagnosis, her mother worked full time but has since taken an unpaid leave of absence so that she could care for her daughter. Nayelis' father continues to work but expenses related to her illness continued to mount and eventually became overwhelming. That's when Friends of Karen stepped in.



Friends of Karen has helped Nayelis' family with household expenses, travel costs, meals, and prescription and other medical expenses. Friends of Karen social worker Beth Ferrari has provided emotional help to this loving family every step of the way.

Nayelis was discharged from the hospital shortly before Christmas, and was able to stay at the Ronald McDonald House with her mom for post-transplant care. At the beginning of March, Nayelis returned home but still travels every week to the hospital for check-ups. While she remains at risk from her transplant and treatment, Nayelis is currently in remission and hopefully will continue to take baby steps toward recovery.



"Because of that assistance (from Friends of Karen), I had the privilege of enjoying and spending more time with my daughter. A million thanks for this because those memories are like gold..." ~ Mom of Esbeidy Michaca

A Special Friend...Arlene Harris

Arlene Harris has been practicing law for over 40 years and is a highly regarded trust and estates lawyer with an impressive array of credentials including co-chair of the Kaye Scholer LLP New York office's Trusts and Estates Department, author of several New York Bar Association papers, and on the list of the "Top 50 Women" in the New York Metro Super Lawyers for the past three years.

Proudly, Arlene is also a special friend and supporter of Friends of Karen. By reaching out and sharing the Friends of Karen story with her colleagues throughout New York, Ms. Harris has been instrumental in raising over \$100,000 for our children and families, as well as creating greater awareness and introducing us to many new friends.

"I have reached out to my fellow trusts and estates and elder law practitioners to introduce them to the unique services provided by Friends of Karen to families in need at their most difficult time and to solicit their help," said Ms. Harris. "It has been a most gratifying experience as the response has been and continues to be very positive and indeed beyond my expectations."

If you have a special friend idea like Arlene Harris, let us know. Please contact Friends of Karen's Executive Director, Judith Factor, at judithfactor@friendsofkaren.org. Thank you, as always!



Community Support

■ **Friends of Karen's Young Professionals** held a fundraiser at trendy Slate restaurant in New York City and raised almost \$900 to purchase holiday gifts for the Adopt-A-Family program.

■ The **"Around the Kitchen Table,"** sponsored by **Bilotta Kitchens** raised \$43,000. This "stay at home" event kept costs to a minimum, ensuring that all donations directly benefited our children and their families.

■ **Shop Till You Drop** – The Westchester and Long Island Charity Shopping days at participating department stores raised \$1,900 in ticket sales and purchases.

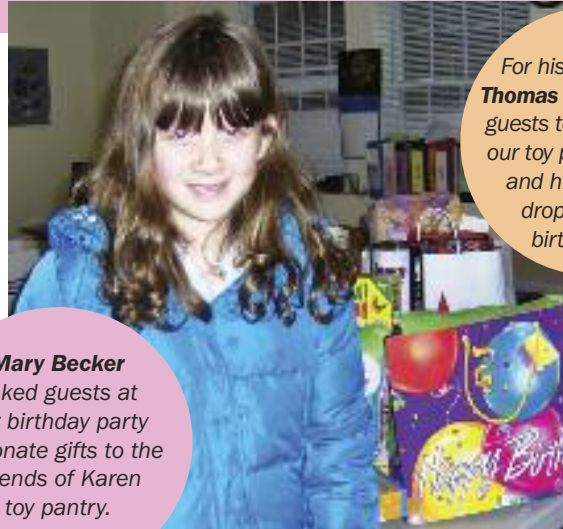


■ Nathalie Stephens (pictured left), a Friends of Karen mom and Family Advisory Committee Member, participated in the **The Carmel Rotary Shootout** and raised \$304 for Friends of Karen.



■ **Shop and Smooze** – Long Island Advisory Board member, Nancy Disman, (center) with Michelle Zakarin and Elizabeth Oppenheim, opened her home for a "shop and smooze." Ten vendors participated in selling clothing, jewelry and other items.

Children



For his 8th birthday, **Thomas Gaza** asked his guests to bring gifts for our toy pantry. Thomas and his two sisters dropping off his birthday gifts.

Mary Becker asked guests at her birthday party to donate gifts to the Friends of Karen toy pantry.



Thank you all for your generosity, our kids really appreciate it!

Friends of Karen Appreciation



A Night For Jason

"A Night For Jason" the 23rd Annual Talent Show at Comsewogue High School in Port Jefferson, NY was held on March 5th. Student talents ranged from pop songs, to rock-n-roll and selections from accomplished jazz bands. This student-run variety show honors Jason, a child in the school district who died of leukemia in 1987.

Dana Urbanati, a teacher and coordinator of the event commented, "Along with the talent and energy the students bring onstage, they realize that they are helping an important organization that helps many families in our communities." The event has raised over \$33,000 for Friends of Karen.



OdysseyRe Foundation Grant

Andrew Chu presented Friends of Karen with a \$50,000 grant from the **OdysseyRe Foundation**. Chu, who works for OdysseyRe, is quite familiar with Friends of Karen. His niece, Jasmine, who passed away in 2003 from cancer, and her family, were greatly helped by Friends of Karen.

"Having met them in person and seeing their work in real life," said Andrew, "I know they will use this money wisely to aid families stuck in the most trying of circumstances."

Helping Children



Students at Pequenakonck Elementary School in North Salem are working towards a goal that will culminate in a \$1,000 gift to Friends of Karen.

Brownie Troop #2527 of North Salem donated Thanksgiving baskets for our families.



“The stuff you have done for us is simply amazing. You made my Christmas so much better and brighter as with every holiday you help us. You make this struggle of ours so much easier.” ~ KEISHA

tes...



MBIA Donations

For the fourth year, **MBIA employees** assembled and packed 27 Thanksgiving dinners for Friends of Karen families.



ADOPT-A-FAMILY... and all year long

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE – we couldn't have done it without you!



We don't have the room to list all the kindhearted children and youth groups who donated their time and effort so that our children could enjoy beautiful gifts for their holiday.

For a complete list of acknowledgements, visit our website, www.friendsofkaren.org and click on Get Involved.



from top:
Girl Scout Troop #2245 of Carmel assembled 90 gift bags of holiday candy

Ridgefield Academy students dropping off toys from their toy drive.

Sara Stein collected hats and gloves for Children's Hope Chest to give out to their partners at the holidays. Every year, we get 100 sets.

George Washington School in White Plains organized a toy drive and created a beautiful poster.

In Memory



Honoring the lives of the following children who have died since our Fall 2009 Newsletter

Leslie Aguilar
Jasmina Anema
Michael Becerra
Delano Brown
Lemuel Charles
Langston Davis
Brandon Diazdetuesta
Netfa Douglas
Alexandra Falabella
Sean Gallant
Alejandra Herrera
Gavin Hubbs
Anneliese Kiendl
Maftuna Komilova
Yang Li
Nicole Link
Brianna McKoy
Hillary Muentes
Mukraj Nandanandchand
Trinity Okoro
Alicia Purvis
Jocelyn Salmeron
Omar Santos
Antonella Sornoza
Andrew Thomas
Terrence Waiters

Meet Denise Tredwell

Volunteer Coordinator Extraordinaire

One of the first things that strikes you about Denise Tredwell is her boundless energy and passion. “My volunteers are the best!” Denise always says. Her enthusiasm touches every project she works on and every person she meets. You see it in the expressions on her face when she talks about the wonderful support that Friends of Karen provides for children and families...and she should know, since she was once a Friends of Karen mom. As a testament to her commitment, Denise and her husband Bruce created the Joshua Tredwell Fund in their son’s memory. The



“Whenever I speak about our mission and the work we do with families, I tell people that Friends of Karen was the glue that held my family together.” ~ DENISE TREDWELL

sole purpose of the fund is to give critically ill children a fun experience that they could not otherwise afford – for example, guitar

lessons, or tickets to a show at Radio City Music Hall or to the senior prom. So touched by her personal experience with Friends of Karen, Denise volunteered for several years before joining the staff in 1998 as Volunteer Coordinator.

Our Adopt-A-Family and Back-To-School programs would not be possible without Denise’s expertise in coordinating these massive efforts. Her caring way ensures that every child receives just what he or she requested. Last year, Friends of Karen sent 589 children back to school with brand new school supplies and clothing, and filled the holiday wishes of 773 critically ill children and their siblings.

Among Denise’s special talents is working with children and youth groups so their volunteer experience is meaningful. Hosting a bake sale, collecting items needed by our families, or organizing a toy drive or tag sale are some of the ways Denise encourages giving. When children arrive at the office to drop off toys, food or money they raised, she gives them a tour, patiently answers their questions and explains what Friends of Karen is all about in a way that children can understand.

Some of our volunteers have been with Friends of Karen for years. These men and women have formed strong bonds and have become close friends. “They just love being together. They are energetic and giving and they have become my family,” said Denise. And just like family, Denise makes sure that her volunteers have something to eat and drink and know how much even the most mundane tasks are appreciated. Denise always makes every person who supports our work feel special.

We Appreciate Our Wonderful Volunteers!

“The Brightest Stars Are Those Who Shine For the Benefit of Others,” an appropriate theme for the Long Island volunteer celebration held in December. Sbarro hosted the event attended by 65 of our dedicated volunteers, members of our Long Island Advisory Board and of the Long Island chapter of the **Tri-Delta Sorority**.



Tri-Delta Sorority members (l-r) Erica Passarella, Florence Schiff, Kim Haggerty, and Diane Martin

The ladies of this caring sorority strongly supported Friends of Karen for more than ten years and are regular volunteers at our special events. In addition, they hold their own creative fundraisers for Friends of Karen that range from selling Christmas wreaths, to organizing coat checks and gift-wrapping events at Long Island malls during the holidays. We salute Tri-Delta for all they do for our children and their families!



Diane Carlson and Deirdre O'Donnell of Children's Hope Chest dropping off gifts for 100 children for the Friends of Karen Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program.

“...thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything that you did and are doing for us. Thank you for all your gifts and all the help that you are providing us at this difficult time. I feel truly blessed to have people (like yourself) around my family and me”

~ KHRYSTYNA CHORNUY

FRIENDS OF KAREN EVENTS CALENDAR

Thursday, April 22

Journey of the Heart Bike Tour Pedal-Off Dinner

Join us for the Journey of the Heart Pedal-Off Dinner at Waccabuc Country Club. Meet the other riders and get details about the September event.

Saturday & Sunday, May 1 & 2

Walk/Run for Friends of Karen at the LI Marathon

For a fun and exciting way to get some exercise while raising funds for Friends of Karen, join the Walk/Run at Eisenhower Park in East Meadow, New York.



Scenes from last year's Journey of the Heart, Evening at Tribeca Rooftop and Walk/Run for FOK at the LI Marathon

Tuesday, May 11

Golf Outing At Meadow Brook

Join us for a beautiful day at the prestigious Meadow Brook Golf Course in Jericho, NY for the 8th annual Golf Outing, sponsored by Capital One and honoring Susan Kiesel, Group Sales Executive at Capital One.



Saturday, May 22

An Asian Occasion

*Hammond Museum and Japanese Stroll Garden,
North Salem, NY*

Enjoy a beautiful spring evening in the Japanese gardens at An Asian Occasion, which will include Asian cuisine, sake tasting and chef demonstrations.

Monday, July 19

17th Annual Children's Corporate Challenge Golf Classic

This year's event will be held at the renowned Westchester Country Club's West Course in Rye, NY. Please join us in honoring Arnie and Roberta Ursaner of CJS Securities, Inc.

Tuesday, August 3

An Evening at Tribeca Rooftop

Enjoy a summer evening of fine food, music and beautiful skyline views while supporting children with life-threatening illnesses.

Friday-Sunday, Sept. 24-26

Sixth Annual Journey of the Heart Bike Tour

Spend an autumn weekend cycling the picturesque back roads of Litchfield and Berkshire counties and relaxing at the Apple Tree Inn in Lenox, Mass.

For event details including registration, ticket purchase and sponsorship opportunities, contact the Friends of Karen, Special Events Coordinators:

- Gwen Salmo: gwensalmo@friendsofkaren.org; 914-617-4051
- Patricia Conway: patriciaconway@friendsofkaren.org; 631-473-1768 ext. 303

Community Events

Below are examples of some community events, with proceeds to benefit Friends of Karen. Please go to our website for a complete listing.



Sunday, April 11 - Energy Fitness

Friday, April 23 - Sayville Fitness

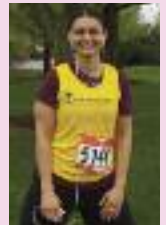
Spinning Wheels for a Cause

Wheels will be spinning at these two Long Island "Spin-offs" for the upcoming Walk/Run for Friends of Karen on May 1 and 2.

Saturday, April 24

Margo's Half Marathon

Margo Bombardier will run in the Country Music Marathon in Nashville in memory of a dear friend.



**Saturday, May 15 & Sunday, May 16
Ultra Marathon for Friends of Karen**

For the third year, this 120 mile trek will be run by Ira Zaroff and other supporters.



Monday, July 26

**Fourth Annual Erin O'Connor
Memorial Golf Event**

In memory of their daughter, Erin, the O'Connor family, along with Coldwell Banker of Yorktown, is sponsoring their annual golf tournament at Salem Golf Club to benefit Friends of Karen.

For more information on these events please visit www.friendsofkaren.org



Thank You Friends of Karen!

Bruno, currently in remission, is pictured here with his younger sister, Marla Krellenstein is his Friends of Karen Social Worker.

BACK TO SCHOOL...already!

The goal of the Back-To-School program is to send the Friends of Karen children and their siblings back to school in September with some new clothing and a backpack filled with new school supplies. Taking care of a critically ill child and their family is overwhelming and leaves our parents with little time, emotional energy or money to shop for even the basic school supplies...and so we help out and do it for them.

Below are some of the items we need. If you don't have time to shop, cash donations are always welcome!

- Backpacks and tote bags for pre-K through high school
- Marble notebooks, index cards, college and wide ruled loose leaf paper
- 3 ring binders, 3 and 5 subject notebooks
- Pens, pencils and hi-lighters, washable markers, pencil sharpeners and erasers
- Post-it notes, two-pocket folders
- \$25 gift cards to Macy's, Old Navy, Target and Staples

Go to www.friendsofkaren.org and click the Get Involved tab for a complete list of school supplies for the Back-To-School program.



More than 80 percent of Friends of Karen's income goes directly to family support services.