

The Cure Starts Now With a Simple Lemonade Stand

By Lori Chandler Pruitt

Lemonade stands are a favorite summer staple. And this summer, for families who love to have them in their neighborhoods, there's a chance to raise money for a great cause.

An Ohio-based foundation called The Cure Starts Now has started a summer lemonade stand campaign "Make a Stand" across Alabama to increase awareness of pediatric brain cancer, especially DIPG (brainstem glioma), the most deadly form. The campaign runs through July.

The non-profit foundation to fund education, aid and research for a cure was started by a couple who lost their five-year-old daughter Elena to DIPG, says Elizabeth Adams of Montgomery, whose three-year-old daughter also Madeline died of DIPG in 2007. The families met at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

DIPG is inoperable, and very little can be done to treat it, Adams says. "There is no good chemotherapy for DIPG, and because of where the tumor is in the brain and the brain-blood barrier, it is difficult to treat," she says.

In the first 12 months after diagnosis, 90 percent of children with DIPG die, and of the 10 percent who do survive, the tumor usually returns within the first year, she says. Many children struck with DIPG are preschool aged.

"It is a very aggressive cancer," she says. "Usually all that can be done is to treat the symptoms and pain - but otherwise there is nothing. It is devastating and you feel as if your child has already been taken from you."

The foundation also was started because there isn't a lot of money directed toward pediatric brain tumor research nationwide. In its first year, the



foundation raised \$250,000, so there is a lot of interest in a cure, Adams says. Her husband Pat is a parent member of the foundation board. "We have been told that if a cure could be found for DIPG, then there is a good chance that a cure can be found for other types of pediatric brain cancer," she says.

Those who want to help with the summer lemonade stand campaign can visit the foundation's website, www.thecurestartsnow.org, and sign up to host one or more stands, Adams says. Those who participate get a lemonade stand kit that includes a poster that can be colored and informational brochures to hand out to those who buy lemonade. The group is hoping to find a sponsor to provide vouchers for lemonade.

For the stand that raises the most money over the summer, Dreyer's Ice Cream will provide an ice cream party, she says.

"A lot can be done now that could not be done before in childhood leukemia," Adams says. "We're hoping the same will happen for pediatric brain cancer."

Lori Chandler Pruitt is associate editor of Birmingham Parent.