SPRING 2018

St. Baldrick's FOUNDATION
Conquer Childhood Cancers

HOW YOUR COMPANY MAKES AN

impact

Johnny Crisstopher Sarantakos is a leukemia warrior. Inspired by Johnny's courage and sweet nature, his father—legendary magician Criss Angel—now devotes his star power to raising funds for childhood cancer research.

Send Me an Angel

The toddler's diagnosis at just 18 months devastated Criss and Johnny's mom, Shaunyl Benson. Cancer treatments wracked Johnny's body, but the little boy who loves Superman and Spiderman fought harder than any superhero. With 4-year-old Johnny soon finishing his treatment, Criss is passionate about raising funds for the St. Baldrick's Foundation. "Innocent children and their families are dealing with life and death every moment of every day," says the international celebrity, who currently stars in Mindfreak Live at the Luxor in Las Vegas. After Johnny became ill, Criss was shocked to learn that just 4% of federal cancer research funding is devoted to pediatric cancer. "This needs to change, and I'm committed to doing whatever it takes to get it done," adds Criss, who lost his father to cancer in 1998.

So far, the St. Baldrick's Foundation has awarded two major grants funded through The Johnny Crisstopher Children's Foundation established by Criss. One recipient, Michael Pulsipher, M.D., of the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplant Consortium at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, is working to predict which kids with leukemia will relapse.

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Photo: APWI

$1 million in 1 evening!

BE A STAR FOR KIDS

Criss Angel is determined to make pediatric cancer disappear forever. Since childhood cancer research is so underfunded, he organized a group of talented superstars for a benefit called H.E.L.P. (Heal Every Life Possible), raising over $1 million in one evening. Now, he's asking you to join him with a gift to the St. Baldrick's Foundation, providing hope for his son, Johnny, and thousands of other kids with cancer. Criss says, "We can all play a part together to one day make this dreadful disease disappear."

Q&A Mission: Block Cancer

Treatments for most pediatric brain tumors haven't advanced much over the past 20 years. Eric Raabe, M.D., Ph.D., wants to change that. His goal: to identify new cancer-fighting drugs that kill cancer cells. Two planned clinical trials will test his findings, providing new hope for kids with brain tumors.

What type of cancers do you treat?
I primarily focus on low grade glioma and medulloblastoma, the two most common types of brain tumors in children. The standard therapies for both haven't changed much; for medulloblastoma, it's been the same for 15 years, and for low grade glioma, it's been 26 years.

"When you see the way things are now with pediatric cancer, donors are making fantastic investments and maximizing their view as optimists."

Still, there's been a lot of progress. We've learned a lot about what makes these cancers grow. If we can get smarter about pediatric cancer, we can decrease the toxicity of treatments and increase survival. When I first began in biomedical research in 1995 as a Ph.D. student, we were starting to see the beginning of things like immunology and molecularly-targeted therapies that we're just now able to exploit. There's a tremendous need for more and better therapies for pediatric brain tumors.

Tell us about your research.
Pediatric brain cancer cells rely on proteins that turn on pathways helping the tumor to grow. We want to find ways to turn off those pathways, which we hope will kill the cancer. The two grants I received from St. Baldrick's had similar goals: to take normal cells and turn them into cancer cells, and then to identify drugs that can block those pathways and kill cancer. In the lab, we recreate in a dish what happens in a child's head. To create cancer cells, we make genetic mutations found in pediatric cancer and add them in a stepwise fashion. It usually takes four separate alterations to lead normal cells to become cancer cells, which is similar to what happens in patients, where multiple events are needed for cancer to develop. Using our system, we can figure out how genetic changes interact and determine if we can find new targets based on those interactions.

Hannah Meeson, who inspires Dr. Raabe's work.

How could this lead to new treatments?
We've partnered with researchers at Boston Children's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and the University of California San Diego. They take our findings, and using bioinformatics, they have been able to create a cellular fingerprint of the cancer cells that can then be matched against other cancer cells with known sensitivity to new and established drugs. This screen gave us several clues to follow. As a result, we've tested one type of drug, called CDK inhibitors, and have shown that they killed medulloblastoma cells and extended the life of mice bearing human medulloblastoma tumors in the lab.

It must feel great to see so much progress.
It all started with a hypothesis, and we teamed up with partners in bioinformatics to make it happen. There's even more exciting news: based on this work, and that of some other researchers, two clinical trials are in the planning phases. We are also following up several other leads from this screen that we hope will advance research even more. It's really nice to see some of our research potentially impact patient care. The reason we all work so hard is because we're not happy with the way things are. Not enough patients are cured, and those who are cured suffer from side effects caused by treatment.

You've shaved for St. Baldrick's many times. Why?
I'm a clinician who treats patients, as well as a researcher. I've always admired the strength of my patients who undergo these intense treatments. The least I can do is shave in solidarity with them. There's a head shaving event in Baltimore I attend every year, and it's always great to see some of my patients there who have grown up and now support St. Baldrick's.

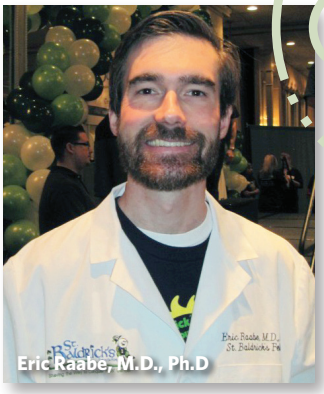
I also follow Heroes for Hannah, a St. Baldrick's Hero Group in honor of a little girl from the Cayman Islands who survived medulloblastoma, one of the cancers I treat. We've never met, but I have a Christmas card from her family and a thank-you note painted by Hannah in my office.

St. Baldrick's FOUNDATION
Conquer Childhood Cancers

ONEHOUR: ONECHILD

Exclusive events for our most passionate champions

At these free, one-hour events, you will learn how kids battling cancer depend on clinical trials to improve their chance of survival and how you can be part of their cancer-free futures. **Gifts made during these events are being generously matched up to $300,000 annually.**


Eric Raabe, M.D., Ph.D

What else keeps you motivated?

There's a special bookshelf in my office where I keep mementos from patients and other children, including Hannah. There are some mementos from patients who are not alive. That motivates me every day to do more. As researchers and clinicians, the reason we all do this is because we're not happy with the way things are. Not enough patients are cured, and some who are cured suffer from devastating side effects of treatment.

Any message for St. Baldrick's donors?

First, I'd like to thank them for supporting the work of pediatric cancer researchers. Finding new therapies takes many years. The investment St. Baldrick's donors first made in my research seven years ago is just starting to yield clinical trials. We need to improve cure rates and reduce the toxicity of therapy.

When you see the way things are now with pediatric cancer, donors are making fantastic investments and maximizing their view as optimists. They see the world not as it is, but as it could be. When it comes to pediatric brain cancer, the way things are now is not the way things have to be.

Eric Raabe, M.D., Ph.D., is assistant professor of oncology in the Division of Pediatric Oncology at Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center. He holds a medical degree and a doctorate from the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine, and has been a St. Baldrick's Foundation Scholar and a St. Baldrick's Foundation Fellow.

Send Me an Angel (continued)

Photo: APWI

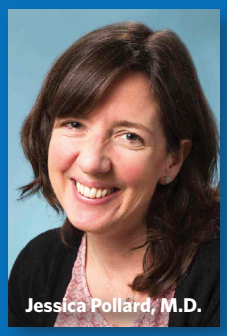
Johnny Crisstopher watching his father perform.

That can lead to earlier, more targeted treatments with the potential to reduce side effects and improve survival. Right now, 90% of kids with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), the type of cancer Johnny is fighting, survive. For kids with acute myeloid leukemia (AML), that drops to between 50 and 60%.

Dr. Pulsipher is particularly excited about his team's research into the potential to use CAR-T cell immunotherapy—approved by the FDA last year to fight relapsed ALL—to target AML. "We hope the great advances made in ALL research will spill over into AML," he says. "It's very promising. We're working really hard to find different approaches to save the most desperate of patients."

With treatment almost behind him, Johnny has big plans for the future. For his birthday, he asked for a straitjacket, just like the one Criss wears onstage. Someday, the little boy would like to perform with his dad. Criss says, "Right now, we're taking it a day at a time and just going with the flow of the journey we're on as a family. We can't wait for the day when Johnny rings the bell and is all clear of cancer."

Pursuing Her Passion


Jessica Pollard, M.D.

Jessica Pollard, M.D., received one of the very first Scholar Grants awarded by the St. Baldrick's Foundation in 2008. A decade later, she credits her eight years of funding with providing protected time to research how we can improve outcomes for children with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and FLT3/ITD mutations—a very high risk form of the disease.

An associate professor at Tufts University and pediatric oncologist at Maine Medical Center, Dr. Pollard participated in a recently completed clinical trial that examined how an existing medication called Sorafenib could block the FLT3 signaling pathway in hopes of improving outcomes for this high-risk group of patients. This study closed to accrual in the summer of 2017, but results of the approximately 100 children treated remain under investigation. However, given the demonstrable feasibility of this approach, a second study is in development that will utilize a second generation FLT3 inhibitor and broaden the number of patients with FLT3 abnormalities who are studied.

With her St. Baldrick's funding completed, Dr. Pollard still carves out time from her clinical practice to spend off-hours analyzing data and pursuing her passion. The hard work is well worth it, she says. "I can't stress how valuable St. Baldrick's has been in my career to move the data forward. Without research, some kids today—who are going to prom or graduating high school—wouldn't be long-term survivors."

May 2018: Chicago

June 2018: Orange County, CA

June 2018: New York City

We need you to help make each event a success.

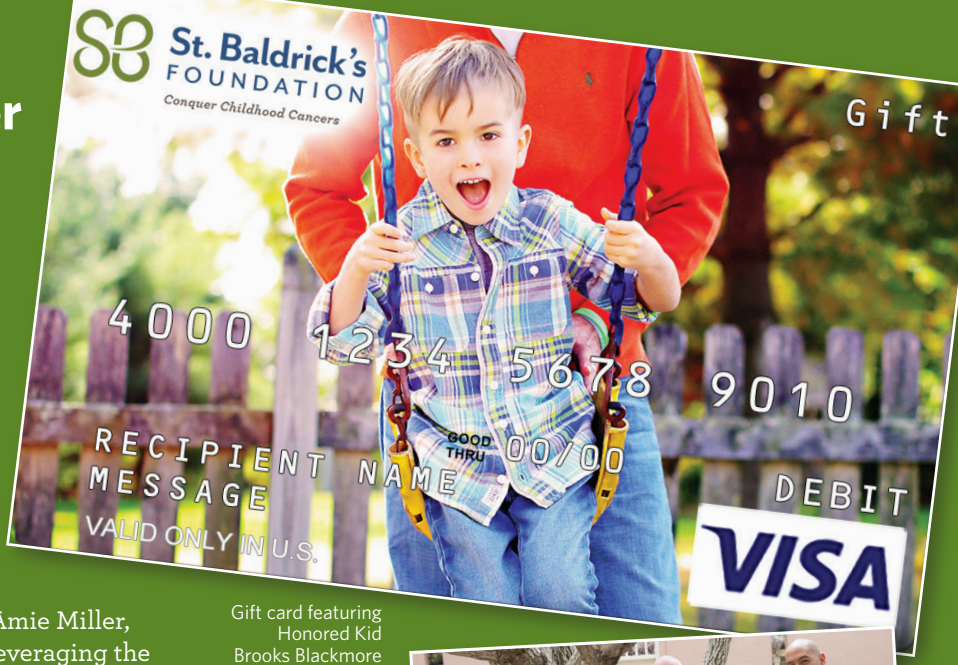
To learn more, please contact Serena Bernolak at Serena.Bernolak@StBaldricks.org or 626.792.8247, ext. 253.

www.StBaldricks.org/onehour-onechild

Fighting Childhood Cancer with Gift Cards

Blackhawk Network is using an unusual weapon to fight pediatric cancer: gift cards. The California-based gift card company recently pledged to donate 50 cents for every consumer gift card sold on GiftCards.com between March 1 and March 15—up to $25,000—to the St. Baldrick's Foundation. But that's not the only reason the company is a St. Baldrick's Champion for Change. For the past eight years, Blackhawk Network has incorporated supporting St. Baldrick's into its corporate culture. The result: over $527,000 raised for kids with cancer.

"It's all about creating a fun environment," says Amie Miller, group vice president of operations. In addition to leveraging the company's core business to raise funds, employees host creative events like team head shavings, Thirsty Thursday Karaoke Nights, a gala, auctions, bake sales and Bald Day Fridays, when everyone wears a purchased St. Baldrick's t-shirt. Beneath the jovial atmosphere, however, there's a serious undercurrent. "The childhood cancer survivors we meet are inspiring," Amie says. "And the doctors attending our events are working to cure cancer. It's incredible."



Gift card featuring Honored Kid Brooks Blackmore

Very proud members of the 2017 Blackhawk Shave Team

Thirsty Thursday Karaoke Nights event

Want to fight childhood cancer, too?

Maybe your employees don't want to shave their heads, but have great ideas to raise funds for childhood cancer research through cause-related marketing or other creative events. If you'd like to explore how you can partner with St. Baldrick's, contact Robyn Raphael, director of corporate relations, at Robyn.Raphael@StBaldricks.org, or 626.792.8247, ext. 248.

Let's Connect

www.linkedin.com/company/st--baldrick's-foundation/ @StBaldricks 626.792.8247, ext. 248 /StBaldricksFoundation

Thank you!

Thank you for supporting lifesaving childhood cancer research. Through your gifts, you are helping the St. Baldrick's Foundation fund the best childhood cancer research, no matter where it's being done. **With $27 million in grants funded last year, we are the largest private funder of pediatric cancer research grants. YOU made progress possible!**

Ways to Give

Kids with cancer need cures now, and it starts with you. Donate to help us fund the most promising childhood cancer research. Give once or monthly. Start today.
StBaldricks.org/impact

GuideStar Gold

The St. Baldrick's Foundation is a volunteer and donor powered charity committed to supporting the most promising research to find cures for childhood cancers and give survivors long and healthy lives.