

Golf tournament helps ensure brighter future for area families

Robert Cristo
The Record

ALBANY — Giving families of seriously ill children the financial and emotional support they need is what Albany County Correctional Facility for Children's Benefit Inc.'s (ACCFCB) second annual Teed Off for Tots golf tournament is all about.

Slated for July 7 at the Fairways of Halfmoon golf course, ACCFCB is hoping to raise enough funds to help current and future families of sick children offset the overwhelming expenses related to their child's illness.

Last year, the 108 golfers hit the links to raise a total of \$11,200 to assist families of children ranging in ages from newborn to 14 years old and with disorders ranging from Russell Silver Syndrome (heart and kidney disorder) to Infantile Malignant Osteopetrosis, which requires bone marrow transplants.

"We try to give the families a certain amount of comfort as well as financial assistance for things the family can't afford when struggling to deal with everyday life and having a sick child," said ACCFCB President John Smith, who also works for the corrections department.

Over the past few years the ACCFCB has assisted eight families through tough times, including the much publicized ups-and-downs that unfolded in 2003 in the life of double transplant recipient and survivor 4-year-old Cameron Stackman.

Stackman battled pneumonia and other health setbacks after undergoing the liver and kidney transplant at the tender age of 18 months.

"They (ACCFCB) read a tiny article about us in the paper and then they swarmed around us with emotional and financial support," said Cameron's father William Stackman, of Colonie. "They showed tremendous kindness to us and I just think they are great."

All in all, ACCFCB contributed about \$25,000 to assist Cameron and his family with costs associated with having to stay in New York City while their child was treated



Tom Killips — The Record
Bill Stackman directs his son Cameron, now 4 years old, outside the family's Colonie home Tuesday.

at Mt. Sinai Hospital.

These days Cameron is making huge strides toward a normal life that include going to school every day, walking, talking and playing like a regular little boy.

"There were many incidents along the way where thoughts creep into your head that he'd never make it through, but now he's doing great," said Stackman.

"When I watch him play or something, I'm just so proud of everything he's been able to overcome. ... He's almost a normal boy now," he added.

Smith says his organization is driven by the belief that "amazing things" can happen when people work together to come to the aid of

HOW YOU CAN HELP ...

Albany County Correctional Facility for Children's Benefit Inc.'s second annual Teed Off for Tots golf tournament is slated for **July 7** at the Fairways of Halfmoon golf course. This year's event will be dedicated to 11-year-old Alexandra Howlan, who suffers a rare disorder that prevents blood flow to the brain.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the event or ACCFCB can call 732-4911 or visit the non-for-profits website at www.ACCFCB.org.

those in need.

He created ACCFCB a few years after losing his 4-year-old grandchild, Dillon, in a tragic dog attack accident. Smith says Dillon clinged to life for about year while desperately waiting for a liver and intestine transplant that never materialized.

He says living through that heartbreaking experience opened his eyes to the pain and financial burden of others in similar predicaments.

"At first we were devastated because the loss of a child is one of the darkest moments in anybody's life," said Smith. "You start asking a lot questions about life and how it's not supposed to be like this."

"But after some years of dealing with the emotion, I decided to see if there were other families out there who had difficulty dealing with the pain and no clue about the huge financial burden they are about to take on" he added.

When Smith first sat down with the Stackman family, he was taken aback by the fact that Cameron's birthday of Nov. 1 fell on the exact day of his grandchild's.

"I couldn't believe it, because Cameron was the first child we got involved with," said Smith. "It really relayed a personal message to me."

This year's golfing event will be dedicated to 11-year-old Alexandra Howlan, who suffers a rare disorder that prevents blood flow to the brain called Moya-Moya syndrome.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the event or ACCFCB can call 732-4911 or visit the non-for-profits website at www.ACCFCB.org.