



Sydney Martin

Last year sixth-grader Sydney Martin went through six months of chemotherapy and steroid treatments to treat a rare blood disease. Sounds like a tough six months, right? Not the way Sydney sees it—she says it was a “really good experience.”

When Sydney was diagnosed with Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis, a disease that causes an excess of white blood cells that cluster together to attack one or more parts of the body, the family decided to do everything possible to make the treatment process a positive experience.

“We thought, ‘What can Sydney do to feel in control and as a family make this positive?’ That’s when Sydney had the idea to do the rocks,” says her mom Tracy.

4 QUESTIONS

What do you want to be when you grow up?
An oncologist.

What is your favorite food?
Barbecue chicken pizza

What is your weird talent?
I’m a good hula hooper.

Who inspires you and why?
The kids that have gone through it (Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis) and their stories.

The rocks she mentions are part of Syd Rocks for LCH, a business Sydney started making necklaces out of rocks from the shores of Lake Michigan to raise money for LCH research.

“I started making them when I was 8 years old. It started as a for-profit company, but when I was diagnosed I started making them to raise money for LCH,” says Sydney.

The idea snowballed with the family’s neighbors in Wilmette—many of Sydney and Tracy’s friends had the rock necklaces and decided to wear them all on a particular day each week to show support for Sydney.

As more people saw the necklaces, more people wanted to buy them. Even while going through chemo, Sydney got her friends together to help make necklaces to sell. So far, Syd Rocks for LCH has raised more than \$30,000, a huge amount for a disease that gets no government funding for research.

“That is the cost of one study,” says Tracy. “So her money may have funded a clinical trial. It’s amazing to think that something an 11-year-old has done could make that much of a difference.” Although Sydney currently

has no symptoms of LCH thanks to her treatment, she continues to be checked every three months. She hopes that someday her efforts will lead to better treatment options.

“I really want to raise money for a long time,” she says. “There’s not a lot of research, but I hope they find a faster cure.”

Jennifer Gilbert

Sydney’s necklaces are available for purchase at the Histiocytosis Association of America’s Web site (go to histio.org and click on “Histo eStore”) and at E Street, 1876 First St., Highland Park. Sydney will be at E Street 11-3 p.m. Nov. 28 selling her necklaces in person. For more information, call the store at (847) 433-8338.

Do you know a great kid age 14 and under who’s done something amazing? E-mail names and information to chiparent@chicagoparent.com.

FRANK PINO/Staff Photographer