

# The *Miracle* Connection



## Hero Cards help our kids

If you're looking for a great way to help kids with medical challenges, pick up a package of our Hero Cards. One hundred percent of card sales help fund "miracles" for local families, thanks to the generous donation of time and materials by Empire Screen Printing in Onalaska. They've been producing fundraising cards for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®, a service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation, for more than 25 years.

Each child we serve has a story of courage and perseverance. We asked five special kids (we call them our heroes) to share their stories and create the colorful artwork featured on these blank notecards. Perfect for any occasion, the cards make a unique way to show your support for a worthy cause.



Pictured L-R: Abel Boettcher, Jonas Kugler, Lindsay Schmidt, Caleb Berger and Emma Groll



Hero Cards are available in packages of **20 for \$8.00 plus tax** at the following locations:

- Degen Berglund
- La Crosse Children's Museum
- Gundersen Lutheran Gift Shop
- Children's Miracle Network Hospital Office

# Honoring Pat and Joanie Smith

Pat Smith, managing partner of the La Crosse Radio Group, says that teaching Dale Carnegie courses for nearly 20 years taught him a major lesson—the importance of speaking from your heart. Pat and his wife Joanie will be the focus of many heartfelt tributes on April 5, when they are honored as King and Queen of the 5th Annual Emerald Ball.

The entire evening is a celebration of the children and families who are touched by Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®, a service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation. It is a cause the Smiths have embraced from the very beginning, when Pat was asked to answer phones at the first CMN telethon in 1986.

Over the years, the Smith's support has grown and evolved in many ways. First there was the radio auction, then the Blarney Party Challenge with Ed and Sally Sullivan. Now the La Crosse Radio Group hosts the three-day

CMN Hospitals Radiothon, broadcast live each fall on three stations.

Through it all, it's been a family affair for the Smiths, whose children (Nate and Amy) grew up with CMN Hospitals being part of their lives. The Smith family now includes their healthy grandson Jaxon. "We've been so blessed, and that's the reason we want to help others," says Pat. "When a child is very, very ill, it changes a family's entire life. Relieving just a little worry makes a big difference."

It's impossible to quantify what Pat and Joanie Smith have done for CMN Hospitals through their decades of service; their passionate involvement has raised community awareness and created a broad, dedicated base of donors. As Joanie says, "The tradition of giving to CMN Hospitals continues to be strong, because when people are asked to donate, they know what it is and they know what it does."

*Pat and Joanie Smith, the 2013 Emerald Ball King and Queen.*



The Miracle Connection



**Friday, April 5, 2013**  
The Cargill Room,  
328 Front Street, La Crosse

*Proceeds from this event benefit CMN Hospitals, a service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation. All of the funds raised will stay local to help children, no matter what their illness or injury or where they receive their care.*

## Evening's Events

- Social Hour
- Silent Auction
- Dinner and Program
- Dessert Auction and Children's Art Auction featuring original artwork by our 2012–13 CMN Hospitals Heroes

*The staff of Children's Miracle Network Hospitals would like to thank our friends and community partners for their generous support of this year's Emerald Ball!*

## Presenting Sponsors:

- Charter
- La Crosse Radio Group

## Waltz Level:

- Digi Copy
- Winona Heating and Ventilating

## Young Artists Sponsor:

- Ronald McDonald House Charities of Western Wisconsin and Southeastern Minnesota

## Tango Level:

- J.F. Brennan Co., Inc.



*The revitalized Community Teen Center continues to grow under the direction of Lisa Luckey, who collaborates with community partners to provide meaningful programming for area youth.*

## Partnering in support of adolescents

According to research by the National Institute of Mental Health, half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 where social stigmas and lack of healthcare access can delay diagnosis and treatment. It is not uncommon that a decade or more may pass before this vulnerable population receives treatment, leaving a critical gap where untreated disorders can lead to more severe and difficult to treat mental illnesses.

Gundersen Lutheran, a Children’s Miracle Network Hospital, has been working to address this issue in partnership with the La Crosse Family YMCA. In 2009, a Community Teen Center (owned by and located adjacent to the Y) was opened to provide meaningful youth development and prevention programming both at the Center, and within the community. Major grant support from Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals® and the La Crosse Community Foundation has helped realize the vision of creating a sanctuary for teens to safely congregate after school and on weekends.

Over the three years of the grant, the goal was to reach an estimated 1,000 youth through educational efforts, opportunities to connect with peers and adults, skill-building activities and timely and coordinated mental health care and prevention programs designed with their special needs in mind. In just one year (September 2011–August 2012) more than 500 teens had visited the Teen Center 6,600 times, with hundreds more reached through presentations at schools and other community organizations.

Gundersen Lutheran plays a major role in program development, with therapist Sarah Johnson, MS, LPC, working as Behavioral Health Teen Center Liaison. The Center has flourished under a youth and adult partnership that aims to assist youth and families in the community to live healthfully by:

- Offering positive youth development and prevention programs that are attractive and challenging while making use of the young people’s talents, creativity and strengths;
- Fostering collaboration between youth-serving agencies, individuals and the community;
- Providing streamlined, timely and appropriate referrals for addition care or support;
- Involving youth in leadership, planning and implementation of services and programs.

The Teen Center has a full-time director, a mental health professional for those seeking help, facilities for teen activities and relaxation, and a room set aside for the Kaitlin’s Table Resource Library, an initiative funded through gifts to Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation. This successful community collaboration has been instrumental in making a positive impact on the health and well-being of area teens.



*Pictured L-R: Elli Biermeier, Marli Overgard, Molly Young and Silas Cardo with his stuffed bear. Marli and Molly named their foundation Hugs from Hunter in memory of Hunter Biermeier (pictured above.)*

## Comforting kids in crisis

Marli Overgard and Molly Young are not your typical Minnesota teenagers. In the fall of 2011, Marli's family suffered a terrible loss when her cousin, Hunter Biermeier, died from injuries sustained in an ATV accident. While her grieving family gathered at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center at Hunter's side, Marli noticed how her youngest cousins were affected. They had nothing to distract them from the frightening circumstances around them, and that experience gave Marli an idea.

Marli and her best friend Molly were inspired to turn the tragedy into something positive, and began raising

money to provide stuffed bears and blankets for children at the hospital where Hunter died. In less than a year, their original vision attracted so much support they formed a permanent charity, the Hugs from Hunter Foundation, in honor of Marli's bright, fun-loving cousin. They intend to extend their efforts to comfort children in crisis at every Children's Miracle Network Hospital in the country.

The girls sought guidance from CMN Hospitals staff at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation to help give their idea wings. The compassion and commitment demonstrated by these

young philanthropists earns the respect of all who meet them. In fact, Marli will receive the 2013 Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals at their international conference, held April 7-9 in San Diego.

Going forward, Marli and Molly expect to spend an average of 40 hours per month raising funds, planning events, and other responsibilities related to the charity. **Information and ways to donate may be found on their website at [hugsfromhunter.org](http://hugsfromhunter.org).**



Children's Miracle Network Hospitals  
Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation  
1836 South Avenue, La Crosse, WI 54601



(608) 775-4424

## Together, we help children

Children's Miracle Network Hospitals®, a service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Foundation, is dedicated to saving and improving the lives of children. We directly assist children and their families, and support pediatric programs and services that help kids battle diseases and injuries of every kind. In the Gundersen Lutheran service area, Children's Miracle Network Hospitals has raised more than \$13.6 million since 1986. Each charitable donation—whether through special events, annual gifts, business partnerships, sponsorships, or planned giving such as bequests—benefits children in this region and provides support for specialty medical care, research and preventive education.

**To give, text HOSPITAL to 27722**

**To learn more about Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and the work we do, please visit us online at [gundluth.org/cmnhospitals](http://gundluth.org/cmnhospitals)**