

From the Cover



The annual Jason Dreams for Kids Turkey Bowl has grown during the past six years from four teams to 16 teams. Below, Saturday's Turkey Bowl featured tag-football games to raise money to grant wishes to children diagnosed with catastrophic or life-threatening illnesses. (STAFF PHOTOS: ADENA STEVENS)

WISHES

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months after his nephew, Jason Douglas Creager, died of Burkitt's Lymphoma, a cancer characterized by tumors containing lymphoid cells. Creager died Jan. 18, 1992, at age 18.

For years, McGinnis would ask his nephew what he wanted for his birthday or for Christmas, and then grant that wish.

However, when Creager found out he only had six weeks to live, he asked his uncle for only one thing — "to always remember him."

"Uncle DeeDee, (Jason called him DeeDee) just don't forget me," McGinnis recalled his nephew saying.

In keeping his promise, McGinnis began Jason's Dreams.

Since the organization began, McGinnis said they have raised more than \$700,000 and granted a few hundred wishes to children with catastrophic illnesses.

Liz Halpin, and her son, 10-year-old Connor Halpin, were at the games to help volunteer their time.

McGinnis met the Halpin family about seven years ago.

When Connor was 27 months old, he was diagnosed with the same cancer Jason had, Liz Halpin said. And, by his third birthday, she had contacted Jason's Dreams For Kids.

"He wanted to go to Disney World — and did," she said. After months of treatments and chemotherapy, Connor was diagnosed cancer-free in 2000.

"When Connor was in first grade, he brought me to Bring a Friend to School Day," McGinnis said. "He told the class he really didn't know what I did for work, but I did help him get better."

The wishes range from going to Disney World to going for a ride in airplane, he said. However, he told a story about a 4-year-old girl, who lives in Keansburg.

"I told her she could ask for anything," he said, his eyes filling with tears, as he continued



the story.

"She thought about it for a few seconds, and then said, 'I know, could you make my mom stop crying?'" he said.

"She did cry, but we were able to divert the mom's tears that day, a few Christmases ago, from sadness to joy," he said. "Before we left the house, the living room was filled from top to bottom, wall to wall, with presents."

The organization's purpose is to put a smile on the children's faces, and hopefully their parents, too, McGinnis said.

Donations to the organization are tax deductible.

For more information, call (732) 758-0060 or visit www.JasonsDreamsforKids.com on the Web.

Terry Gauthier Muessig: (732) 291-2643 or terrygm@app.com