

Teen raises funds to fight cancer

Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation to host luncheon

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A Santa Ynez Valley teen is this year's Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation "bronze sponsor" for raising \$1,000 from bake sales in a year for the families of children who are battling cancer.

Paloma Angel, 16, is the youngest sponsor of the foundation's third annual month-long pediatric cancer awareness and fundraising effort, the Gold Ribbon Campaign, which honors National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month in September.

"It feels pretty amazing because I put so much hard work into it," Paloma said. "I was really excited because I get to donate the money. I didn't expect to reach my goal (\$1,000) within that first year."

Paloma sold homemade cupcakes and chocolate chip cookies to raise the funds in memory of Lexi Krasnoff, a 3-year-old Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation youth who lost her battle with leukemia.

Paloma first heard of Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation when Lexi, the daughter of a family friend, was assisted by the foundation. Later, another family friend's child also faced cancer and received the foundation's help.

"Sadly, both of them passed. Knowing their stories made it closer to my heart," Paloma said of her inspiration to volunteer with the foundation.

The Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides financial and emotional support to families of children with cancer who live in Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties.

The money donated to the foundation helps families with everyday necessities, such as rent, gas, hotel vouchers when traveling to hospitals, counseling and even Christmas trees and gifts in December.

The parents of children fighting cancer face an enormous financial burden on top of medical bills, said Lindsey Leonard, executive director of Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation.

They often must miss work or even quit



COURTESY PHOTO

Paloma Angel holds a photo Lexi Krasnoff, whose losing battle with leukemia inspired Paloma to volunteer for the Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation.

their jobs to spend time with their sick child, Ms. Leonard said.

"Until there is a cure for cancer, we need the community's support now more than ever because we continue to see an increase in the demand for our services," she said.

Paloma began volunteering for the foundation when she was 12, stamping mail from Teddy Bear to the families of children with cancer.

"That's when I realized, this really needs help because the first time I did it, all the mail was going to families with kids with cancer and that stack was really high of envelopes with names and addresses," Paloma said. "It was really surprising to see how many kids are actually having cancer in our own community."

Paloma, who has worn gold jewelry and metallic gold temporary tattoos all month long, finds being the foundation's youngest sponsor "encouraging" because she feels she is helping the next generation.

"I think people should learn that kids are the next generation," she said. "We should do something more for them to grow up and stay healthy because without them, who would be here to do anything?"

Paloma will host her final bake sale of

the month from 10 a.m. to noon today at her namesake restaurant, Paloma's restaurant in Goleta.

"Paloma is an amazing volunteer," Ms. Leonard said. "She is creative, she is inspiring and she is very mature."

Paloma's future goal is to raise another thousand dollars this year before she begins her senior year of high school.

"She's gone above and beyond. She has a heart of gold," Ms. Leonard said.

The Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation will host a Gold Ribbon Campaign Luncheon from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 1 at the Four Seasons Resort The Biltmore Santa Barbara to raise awareness and donations for pediatric cancer, as National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month comes to a close.

The tented outdoor event will feature a live and silent auction, raffle and a program hosted by Shirin Rajaei, with an award ceremony that will honor Dennis Miller and other supporters of the foundation.

Local band Dishwalla will perform an acoustic set at the luncheon.

For tickets, visit www.teddybearcancerfoundation.org or call 962-7466.

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