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HopeKids Helps Support Young Cancer Patients, Families

December 21, 2017 at 10:01 pm



Filed Under: [Dave Kling](#), [HopeKids Colorado](#), [Howie Hutchinson](#), [Jackie Unternahrer](#), [Local TV](#), [Osteosarcoma](#), [Solei Unternahrer](#), [Trevor Kling](#)



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DENVER (CBS4)- Solei Unternahrer is having breakfast with her [mom](#) and friend at the Hard Rock Cafe in downtown Denver, and it is almost the 11-year-old's turn to meet Santa.

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(credit: CBS)

“LEGOS,” Solie says when asked what she will request from Santa. “Just LEGOS.”



(credit: Jackie Unternahrer)

Solei is one of about 20 HopeKids and their families having a private breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Clause.



(credit: HopeKids Colorado)

HopeKids is a non-profit organization that according to its mission statement provides “ongoing events, activities and a powerful, unique support community for families who have a child with cancer or some other life-threatening medical condition.”



(credit: Jackie Unternahrer)

“HopeKids is fun!” says Solei. “Like, really fun.”



Solei Unternahrer (credit: CBS)

However, her last 12 months, have not been so fun. A year ago, pain in Solei’s leg was diagnosed as osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of cancer, and Solei’s right femur had to be removed.



Jackie and Solei Unternahrer (credit: Jackie Unternahrer)

“I was really scared,” Solei says. “I held on to my mom and I cried a lot.”

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“I was devastated,” says Jackie Unternahrer, who adopted Solei from Guatemala when she was two-months old.



(credit: Jackie Unternahrer)

“I am sure any parent feels this way, but you feel so responsible for their lives, their happiness and their well-being,” says Unternahrer. “And to be told my child has cancer, and an aggressive form of cancer, it was terrifying.”



(credit: CBS)

Since Solei's diagnosis in December 2016, mom and daughter spent nine months living at either Children's Hospital Colorado or the Ronald McDonald House as Solei underwent 18 rounds of chemo.



(credit: Jackie Unternahrer)

Jackie says the HopeKids Colorado events were one of the few bright spots.

"Solei and I would look on the calendar of events and sign up for them and it would give us something to look forward to," Jackie says. "Because when you are in the hospital there is not a whole lot to look forward to."

In two years, the HopeKids Colorado chapter has hosted a couple hundred of free events for about 400 registered families.



(credit: HopeKids Colorado)

Howie Hutchinson is the executive director and says the outings are meant to provide normalcy for the families, and create a very supportive sense of community.

“They see other families and they have a special connection that I can't put into words,” Hutchinson says. “But they come into a room and they may have never met but they see each other and know that they are going through something similar and that is powerful.”



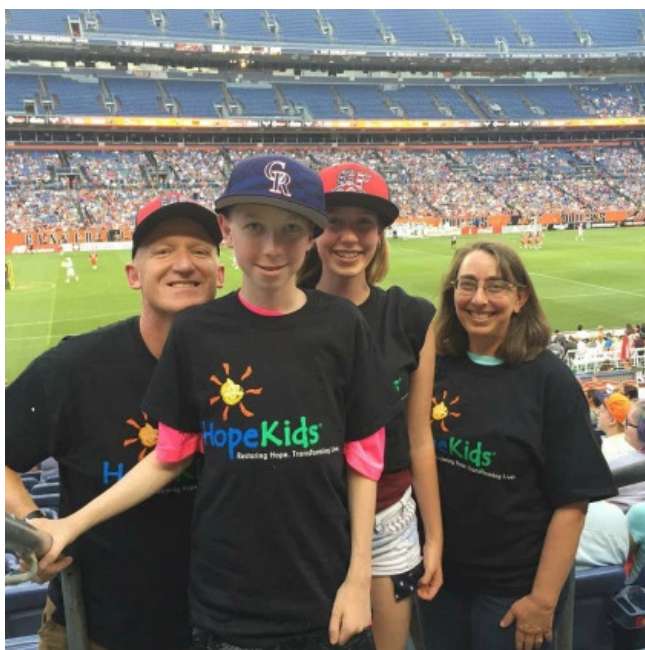
(credit: HopeKids Colorado)

For Dave Kling, the HopeKids community became a second family for him while his son Trevor was battling brain cancer.



(credit: Dave Kling)

“The smile is worth more than any money in the world,” Kling says about Trevor at HopeKids events. “For Trevor to get to go out and have fun and not worry that he has brain cancer and that he has to go into chemo... everything just goes away.”



(credit: Dave Kling)

In October, Trevor passed away. He was 14 years old.

Dave though, still attends HopeKids events as a volunteer.



(credit: CBS)



(credit: Dave Kling)

“Something that I taught Trevor is it is better to give than receive,” Kling says. “And all through his cancer he would get all these gift cards for doing radiation and he gave them all back to give to other kids. I taught him that, and now that he has passed away I can’t stop doing the same.”



(credit: HopeKids Colorado)

As for Solei, her latest scans were clear and she was just cleared to start walking again on what her mom calls her “bionic leg.”



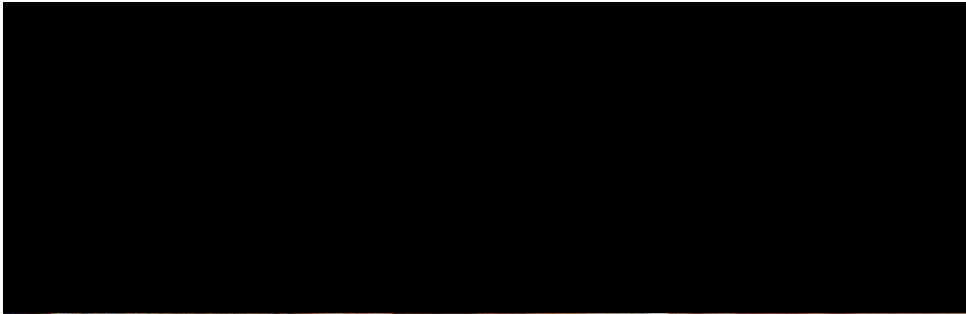
(credit: HopeKids Colorado)

“She’ll never be able to run and jump and play like she used to and there is a sadness with that,” Jackie says. “But to be able to see the kindness of people and see that yes this world does care about kids like Solei – that has been a miracle.”

LINK: [HopeKids Colorado](http://denver.cbslocal.com/2017/12/21/hopekids-cancer-patients/)

Mark Haas is a sports anchor/reporter for CBS4. Read his [bio](#) or follow him on Twitter [@markhaastv](#) or on Facebook.

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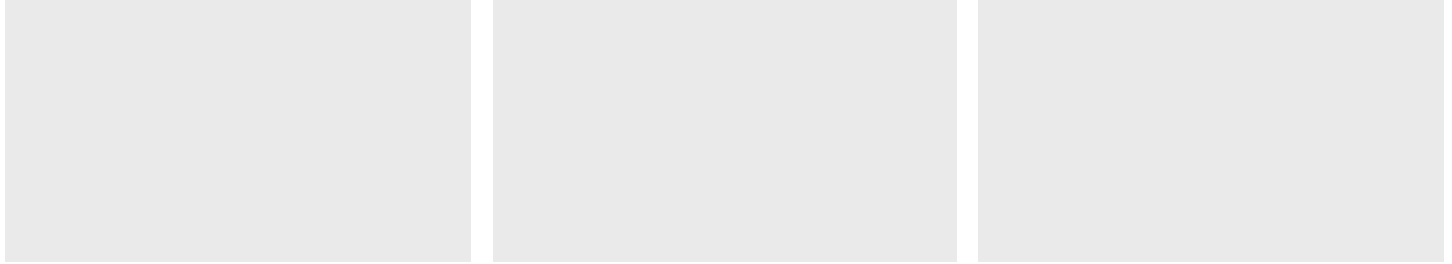
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