

# Hero News

The newsletter for everyone who dreams of being a hero

2009

## Ten Years: It's Hard To Imagine

Gregg Russell  
Founder

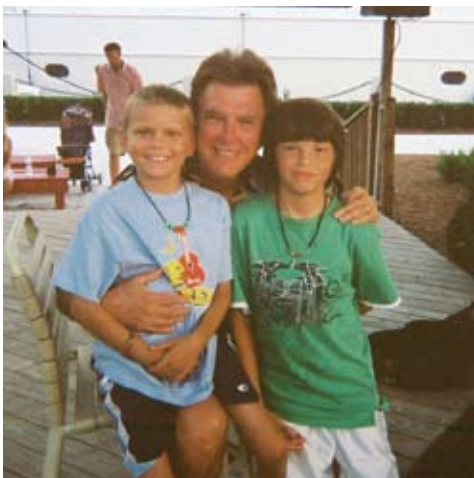


It's hard to even imagine that we are approaching the tenth anniversary of Hilton Head Heroes. So much has happened and so many have joined our ranks along the way that it's impossible to understand how different our lives would have been if we had not met all of the wonderful people involved with the Hero program.

Admittedly, we had no idea of what we were doing when we started this adventure. But like many worthwhile endeavors in life, simply starting can be the quickest way to finding the right roads to take. Thanks to the generosity of our island community, what started out as distributing baseball caps to chemo kids, developed into hosting hundreds of family members for cost free vacations.



And although our dedicated Board of Directors has seen many new faces over the years, our mission has always been consistent and has never wavered. For ten years, we have found a special way to "create memories that last a lifetime" for countless numbers of hurting families.



Many who visit the Hilton Head Hero House in the Sea Pines Resort for the first time comment on the strong feeling of warmth and love that permeates its rooms. They are struck by the myriad of photos of very fragile children playing on the beach, spotting a dolphin, eating fried shrimp in a restaurant, taking a bike ride or seeing the Lowcountry stretched out before them from the top of the Harbour Town lighthouse. If you look closely at the photos, you will see that smiles abound in spite of the reality that some of these families are silently saying good bye to one of their brave little soldiers.

To quote a recent note from a grateful Mother, "The many acts of kindness and generosity shown by the residents and business owners of Hilton Head truly overwhelmed us. Please know that you have made an incredible difference in our lives. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts". And while many of our young Heroes don't survive their courageous battles, for a brief moment in time, we hope that they experience unbridled joy and love through the open arms and hearts of a remarkable community. There are Heroes everywhere, and we are honored to be in their presence.



*"...When you feel like hope is gone, look inside you and be strong, and you'll finally see the truth, that a Hero lies in you."  
—Mariah Carey*

One frigid, overcast morn, with enough biting wind to keep most islanders indoors, a race-worthy trimaran prepared to shove off from Hilton Head Island's Harbour Town marina. Captain Pat's passengers this day did not include seasoned sailors, but a fatigued and financially strained family whose young son, battling a life-threatening illness, dreaming of an offshore excursion.

As the graceful vessel slid out to the Calibogue Sound, sad faces and discouraged figures, burdened with the exhaustive weight of perpetual hopelessness and despair, magically metamorphosed to long forgotten smiles and renewed vigor. And, for a few blessed moments, a beautiful family rediscovered joy and normalcy – temporary refuge from physical pain and emotional anguish, while creating memories to be cherished for a lifetime.

Some dream of sailing or tennis lessons, or simply escaping the confines of their hospital room. Through donations from generous supporters, Hilton Head Heroes helps children, whose carefree childhood is disrupted by the pain, fear and turmoil brought on by life-threatening illnesses, and their families. The organization makes it possible for them to enjoy a resort vacation, away from IVs and medical care.

Their challenges, dreams and smiles may vary, but, they are all inspiring Heroes.

Blanche T. Sullivan  
Director – Publicity & Marketing

## DO WE HAVE YOUR INFO CORRECT?

Thanks to David Clayton at Chaos Designs, we are now able to record information on you in our new database, whether you are a patron, donor, host family, social worker, grantor or Hero family. When completed, the program will save us hours of volunteer time, eliminate duplication, and allow us to contact you more easily to email, snail mail or phone. In addition to mailing you a newsletter a couple of times a year, we want to be able to send notices of fundraisers, such as the TidePointe Event, Sunset Cruise and Birdies for Charity. Won't you help us by filling out the form on the back page and returning it to us, so that we can verify your information or add new data. If you prefer, you may email your information to Eleanor@EleanorOkey.com.

Eleanor Lightsey O'Key  
Secretary

**CHAOS**  
DESIGNS

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We are deeply sorry to report that Hutch Hutchinson, our gentle and gracious long time Board member, recently passed away. Hutch was a driving force behind the acquisition, refurbishment and upkeep of the Hilton Head Hero House. We celebrate his extraordinary life and take some small comfort in knowing that all of the brave young children who have passed through the Hero House doors on their way to Heaven, can now rest their little heads on the warm safe teddy bear shoulders of someone who served them wholeheartedly in such a kind, generous and loving way. When asked how he was doing, with a twinkle in his eye, Hutch would always answer, "better than I deserve". We will greatly miss our Hero, Hutch, a better friend than most of us could ever deserve.



*Our family, including our hero child Shelby, were blessed enough to be chosen to spend Christmas week 2008 at the Hilton Head Heroes house. Shelby has always been a "water baby" crawling into the ocean for the first time at 6 months! This visit was no different-- she walked straight into the 50 degree water, walker and all."*

*"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment to improve the world."*

—Anne Frank

At Hilton Head Heroes we are improving the lives of children and families, giving them something tangible to think about while they undergo treatments, endure medical procedures and learn to live with the reality that they have an illness that might shorten their lives. Hilton Head Hero vacations are planned when the Hero children are diagnosed with an illness. The stress and realization that their child has a life threatening illness is almost too much for most of these families and the rollercoaster of treatments, hospital and doctor visits become a part of life that means giving up one income for most families, plunging them into financial situations that seem hopeless. A large part of our families come from rural settings, and must set up temporary housing in cities with



pediatric medical centers, leaving behind siblings, family support and friends.



It is easy to help us improve the world for these very special children, your donations help Hilton Head Heroes continue to maintain the Hilton Head Hero House and the many aspects of our program that make Hilton Head Hero vacations so special

for our families. Hero vacations are a time to reconnect as a family and just enjoy each other's company for a week, for some families it is a chance to say goodbye to their beloved child. As one Hero child told me, "it was great just being a regular family on vacation."

Lindy Ellison Russell  
Director/Founder  
Admissions



*Lissandra wanted to come on her Hero vacation on New Year's Eve and just sit and watch the ocean.*



A note from Hannah's mother:

*"Our family will cherish this Rob Eichorn photo forever, as our brave Hannah lost her battle with cancer a few weeks after our Hero vacation. Thank you for this amazing week and memory."*

## Heroes Families Are Not Alone

As the Hospitality Coordinator for Hilton Head Heroes, I would like to share a note left in the Hero House by a departing family: "To all the families that enter this house we are all like a family, so be encouraged; know that you are not alone on your journey." In my position, it is a great privilege to be part of a very special team of caring local hosts, who personally meet and interact with each arriving HEROES family, helping make sure in every way possible that they have a memorable vacation, while ensuring that they do not feel alone on their journey. If you would like to inquire about volunteering to host an arriving Hilton Head Heroes family, please contact me at 843-686-6856.

—Nancy Kelly, Hospitality Coordinator





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## Mission Statement

Our mission is to bring families with a child between the ages of four and eighteen who have a life-threatening illness to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina for a resort vacation. These children are referred to our program by doctors, healthcare providers, social workers and chaplains. The families are housed in the Hilton Head Hero House located in the Sea Pines Resort. They are given gift certificates to local restaurants and a grocery store, as well as other island amenities.

### HONORARY BOARD 2008-2010

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## In Memory

We honor the Heroes of our program who lost their heroic battle this year. We also honor the mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, teachers, pastors, chaplains, rabbis, priests, social care workers, doctors and friends of our HERO children who provided them with support, comfort and strength when they needed it most. We have a program in place that will allow you to have contributions made in honor of departed friends and family members. We will mail a donation card to the person being honored in your name. This can be used in lieu of flowers at a ceremony or to celebrate an event in the life of someone special.

**YES**, I will help a family make memories to last a lifetime.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$5,000, \$2,000, \$1000, \$500, \$100, \$50, \$25

Name: (Mr.) (Mrs.) (Ms.) \_\_\_\_\_  
(please include first name of husband and wife, if applicable)

Permanent Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(P. O. Box or Street Address)

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_  
(dates)

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail to: Hilton Head Heroes, P. O. Box 3027, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928

Hilton Head Heroes is a registered non-profit 501c3 organization

A sincere thank you to Accurate Lithography, 43 Goethe Rd., Bluffton, 757-2612 for printing our newsletter!