

## Local leukemia patient named community hero

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By Sean Morgan



Cooper Miller of Sweet Home has been named a Community Hero by the Children's Cancer Association. Photo by Joni Kabana

Six-year-old Cooper Miller of Sweet Home, who has battled JMML leukemia for more than a year, has been named a 2009 Community Hero by the Children's Cancer Association.

The annual award recognizes courage in those who battle life-threatening illnesses. Cooper was nominated and selected for the award because of his exceptional courage, wisdom, and grace in the face of serious medical challenges, according to CCA officials.

The CCA announces its roster of Community Heroes each August. The award is given to children and teens in Oregon and southwest Washington.

Community Heroes are honored throughout the year with the Wall of Courage, a traveling display that features photographs and information about each honoree. The wall celebrates the remarkable achievements of each hero, and serves as inspiration for everyone who visits this display.

Winners are "an exceptional group of 25 children and teens," selected from a group of 100 nominees chosen by local medical professionals, who have fought a diverse range of "life-threatening illness with strength and character," according to a statement from the organization.

The Portland-based CCA is a non-profit organization that provides seriously ill children and their families with programs and services not offered by other organizations.

Chester Miller, Cooper's father, said last week that doctors are thinking of sending Cooper to St. Jude's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. for specialized treatment.

"It's one of the No. 1 cancer research treatment centers," he said.

If that works out, some of the family will have to stay in Memphis area for four or five months.

"One of us will have to go for sure and we'll try to be there as much as we can," he said.

He said the family is supposed to find out more this week.

Kerry Miller, Cooper's mother, said her son has had an "active" summer.

"We went camping and went to the zoo one day," she said. "In a couple of weeks we're going to Pacific City to the Caring Cabin," a family retreat home coast sponsored by CCA.

Miller said Cooper, who will be 7 in October, goes to Doernbecker Children's Hospital every two weeks for platelet transmissions, when necessary, and gets his blood checked every week.

"He never went into remission with it," she said of the illness, which is a rare type that occurs once in every 10,000 cases of leukemia.

The family has insurance, and she said the family doesn't need financial help at the moment, but if another transplant should be necessary, she said there may be a need.

Cooper has an active donation account at Umpqua Bank.

Kerry Miller has taken a leave of absence from Hawthorne School, where she is a kindergarten assistant, while Chester is still working at Overhead Doors.

She said Cooper, who will be in first grade this year, will be tutored at home.