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Dear Educator,

Thank you for dedicating your life to the enrichment of our children. I'm writing to ask for your help. Childhood cancer is the #1 cause of death from disease for our children in the United States. Approximately 12,500 children will be diagnosed this year and more than 2,400 of those children will lose their battle. Three-quarters of the survivors will suffer devastating long term and/or late term side effects from the treatment they receive to cure their disease—including secondary cancers. There is a very good chance, if childhood cancer hasn't already impacted your classroom or school, it will soon.

My son, Johnathon, was diagnosed with brain cancer in October 2008 and lost his battle May 2, 2009 at the age of 3. He will never have the opportunity to go to school—to learn to write his name or how to count to 100. I frequently spend my days trying to explain the unexplainable to his 5 year old brother and best friend. I imagine there will be struggles as he begins kindergarten this year when and sees siblings walking and playing together. In honor of Johnathon, I have made it my mission to raise awareness of childhood cancers and need help from people like you to advocate for the families coping with this devastating diagnosis. When you have a child battling cancer—there is no time for anything but caring for your child. I can't help but think that if I had begun advocating for childhood cancer when my oldest son was born over 21 years ago, maybe there would be more awareness which would lead to more money allocated to research, and then maybe I would not have lost my baby. Currently all 12 branches of childhood cancer combined receive less than 4% of the research budget of the National Cancer Institute—while breast cancer receives more than 11% and prostate cancer about 5%.

In 2008, September was designated as National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. As we approach September 2009, I'm asking that you find a way to honor our children with projects and activities during the month that help raise awareness. What can you do?

- Have the children in your school/class make cards for children who are currently undergoing treatment at a Children's Hospital near you. My son's eyes lit up when he received a colorful card along with his meal tray. The second or back sheet of this letter contains guidelines or making cards for children that are battling a life threatening illness.
- Host a Lemonade Stand in honor of children fighting cancer. Alex's Lemonade Stand provides you with all the information you need! www.alexlemonade.org
- Host a Food Drive for the Ronald McDonald House closest to you. Because cancer treatments are not available at every hospital, families spend much of their time traveling to get the best treatment for their child—many make Ronald McDonald House their second home. Find the Ronald McDonald House closest to you at www.rmhc.org.
- Host another type of fundraiser (cook-off, bake sale, etc) and donate the proceeds to www.curesearch.org. Because research is the key to a cure, CureSearch unites the world's largest childhood cancer research organization, the Children's Oncology Group, and the National Childhood Cancer Foundation through their mission to cure childhood cancer.
- Enlist your school to participate in Johnathon's Rainbow Road's first Childhood Cancer Awareness Coloring Contest. More information will be available at www.johnathonsrainbowroad.org on August 15, 2009.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 817-689-1825 or teri@sweetsurprisesbyteri.com.

Please email me to receive a gold ribbon to wear with pride and hope for a better tomorrow for our children at no charge. Gold is the color for Childhood Cancer Awareness. Additional awareness items are available for purchase (proceeds are used to advocate for awareness) at www.johnathonsrainbowroad.org.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated!

Teri Doerr

Homemade cards designed with love are appreciated.

Writing or printing must be legible.

The text of the cards can be any length.

Cards should contain an upbeat and inspirational message.

NO GLITTER on the cards.

NO GET WELL CARDS - We do not send cards that say "Get Well," or " Hope You Are Feeling Better" as many of these children will not. The cards should be upbeat and positive.

DO NOT write form letters of "I have, I want, and I like.

These cards could go to children of all religious backgrounds. Please DO NOT include Bible verses, religious stickers, peace signs or references to the Zodiac on any cards.

Please DO NOT put dates on the cards.

Ideas for Inspirational Messages Written Inside Love Letters Cards

**You Shine Like A Star
Believe In Yourself
Sending You A Heart Full of Love
Just Dropping by to Say "Hi"
Hope You Have A Wonderful Week!
Let the Sunshine In
You Are A Shining Star
Sending You A Great Big Hug
You Are Surrounded with Love
You Are Awesome
Have A Flower Power Day
You're Absolutely Fabulous Inside and Out
Have Fun in the Sun (beach scene)
Fly High in the Sky (Kites, airplanes, butterflies)
#1 Kid (blue ribbon)**