

Health And Well-Being

Cancer, Art, Family And A Duck Inspire Holiday Cheer

(NAPSA)—In 2009, at the tender age of 14, Monica Sandoval was diagnosed with leukemia. You might think that enduring chemotherapy, radiation, two bone marrow transplants and hair loss would have gotten her down. But you couldn't be more wrong. Cancer has given Monica and her family a new mission—to teach people about the importance of family and friends when cancer strikes.

Together, the Sandoval family has battled leukemia as one would an uninvited guest. They didn't crumble in the face of the adversary; they stood tall and embarked on what they knew would be a long, arduous journey, with optimism and determination. In May, Monica's little brother Cody, only 9 years old, donated bone marrow to his sister for the second time. Like her guardian, he hopes his gift will expel the intruder and restore his sister's health.

This joyful, determined, energetic teenager from Winder, Georgia, has a passion for life. She also loves art and cheering up her friends. She enjoys roaming the halls of the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Children's Healthcare of Atlanta—a reluctant home away from home but one with warm arms and a big



A limited-edition plush holiday version of a well-known duck is being used to raise money to fight children's cancer.

heart—finding little ones who are battling cancer and plying her theatrical makeup skills to turn them into princesses or pirates. Monica's goal is to inject joy into what might otherwise be a tough day. She has organized mock proms and impromptu celebrations for other cancer patients. In short, her altruistic spirit makes other kids feel beautiful.

Cancer is always challenging Monica, but it doesn't know who it

is dealing with. Monica recently earned her green belt in tae kwon do and proudly boasts that she will kick cancer's butt. Last year, the Georgia chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Pennies for Patients campaign made her its 2011 State Hero, honoring her commitment to helping others overcome cancer.

So it is only fitting that when Aflac asked cancer patients to design the 2012 annual Holiday Duck it selected Monica's design. This special limited-edition plush holiday version of the Aflac duck is the first-ever patient-designed Aflac duck. "I am proud that my design was selected to be sold in Macy's stores across the nation and at www.Aflacholidayduck.com," said Monica. "I am even prouder to know that the proceeds will go to help support children battling cancer across the country."

This very special collector's item is available in six- and 10-inch versions and costs \$10 and \$15, respectively. Most importantly, all the proceeds go to fight children's cancer. Since 2001, the Aflac Holiday Duck has raised more than \$3 million for many hospitals across the nation. It has raised as many spirits along the way.