Local Family Gives to Help Children with Chronic Illness

Hugs for Hunter 3 was created by the parents of Matthew, Michael, and Hunter Hodges, three boys who shared the same rare disease – dyskeratosis, a genetic form of bone marrow failure – identified in fewer than 30 cases in the world. Michael and Hunter have both passed away from their disease and Matthew continues to fight. The Hodges family has made it their mission to help other families who are experiencing a similar, long-term, health battle. Hugs from Hunter 3 recently donated $50,000 to the Nemours Mental Health Support Fund, ensuring that children with chronic illnesses who do not have access to mental health resources will have access to that care.

Children with chronic illnesses often find themselves at doctor's appointments and hospitals stays and many times these visits can be scary or painful. While fighting their disease or condition, these children also struggle with a heavy mental toll from their diagnosis. They typically experience increased stress, poorer mental health and higher reported episodes of depression than their healthy counterparts and in many cases, insurance will not cover the cost of mental health services.

Through this gift, 250 sessions will be available to help patients and families who would not otherwise have access to mental health services. The psychologists at Nemours Children's Specialty Care are specially trained to treat children with chronic medical conditions.

In addition, Hugs for Hunter 3 has also given an additional $25,000 to the Nemours Patient and Family Emergency Fund. Families who have a demonstrated need or are in acute crisis are eligible for up to $250 that can help to provide transportation to and from doctor's appointments, food, lodging, home medical supplies, health screenings, or other safety equipment.

"My family and I are thrilled to honor the memory of Michael and Hunter by offering hope to families who are facing a chronic illness. We have been in their shoes and knowing that these funds will go to families who really need the support brings us great comfort," said Laurie Hodges, mother of Matthew, Michael, and Hunter Hodges, and founder of Hugs for Hunter 3.

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