



**Brighter Tomorrows**  
 An Outreach to Families Touched by  
 Childhood Cancer  
 P.O. Box 126  
 Rochester, MN 55903  
 BrighterTomorrowsHope.org

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# THE BEACON

## Brighter Tomorrows Newsletter

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## Family Winter Retreat

Our Brighter Tomorrows' families once again enjoyed coming together at our Family Winter Retreat, held January 6-8<sup>th</sup> in the Miracle Lodge on the beautiful properties of Ironwood Springs Ranch! We filled the lodge to its capacity (over 100 people) with laughter, excitement, hope, and friendship. This has become one of Brighter Tomorrows' most revered events. The families arrived on Friday evening to a welcoming reception which allowed everyone to get to know one another better. After a great night's sleep in beautiful accommodations, they awakened to a day packed full of camaraderie and fun! After breakfast our B.L.A.S.T. (Children's Program) volunteers arrived and provided a morning filled with every child's dream! They engaged all of the children/teens in games, activities, and fun. While the children were being entertained the parents were invited to attend a presentation by Dr. Amit Sood on "Resilience" in the face of a childhood cancer diagnosis. Dr. Sood is a world renowned presenter and we were honored to have him.

After lunch, the families were invited to join in an activity of their choosing. They were invited to participate in horse drawn sleigh rides, laser tag, snow tubing, painting, games, or just enjoy their time with one another in front of the lodge's huge stone fireplace. The weekend was designed to allow everyone to enjoy at their own pace.

In the evening, everyone came together over a candlelight dinner, followed by more fun. Families were invited to join us in the lodge's Theater Room for a pajama movie night complete with popcorn. At the same time the Recreation Building was open for basketball, whiffle ball, nerf gun fun, board games, etc. Brighter Tomorrows is both grateful and honored for the opportunity to provide this well received event.



# BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

**Liz Canan**

President

**Mary Hansen**

Secretary

**Tanya Brown, Ph. D., LP.**

Board Member

**Heather vanKoeverden**

Board Member

**Brandon Passon**

Treasurer

**Sherrie Decker**

Board Member

**Ronald Petrovich**

Board Member

**Isaac Horn**

Associate

Board Member



Register for the race at  
[www.goforthegoldrochester.com](http://www.goforthegoldrochester.com)  
 and take your photo with  
 Star Wars characters  
 from the 501<sup>st</sup> Legion Central  
 Garrison!

The Mission of Brighter Tomorrows is to provide emotional, educational, and spiritual support by listening to, understanding, and supporting families touched by childhood cancer. Brighter Tomorrows is a Minnesota non-profit corporation supported entirely by charitable contributions and primarily volunteer labor.

## Winter Retreat Continued

In closing we'd like to share how you, the community can help! If you are interested in sponsoring a family at our retreat, here is how you can get involved. It costs around \$125 per attendee, so a family of four is around \$500 to attend. We range from families of two up to families of ten. If you are interested or have questions about sponsoring a family (you choose the family size) we invite you to connect with us at [info@BrighterTomorrowsHope.org](mailto:info@BrighterTomorrowsHope.org) or 507-254-3952. Or if you'd just like to drop us a check and indicate you are sponsoring a family for the retreat, you may do so by remitting a check to Brighter Tomorrows, Inc. PO Box 126, Rochester, MN 55903. We thank you in advance for considering a sponsorship!



## Saying Goodbye - Board of Director Spotlight

**Bruce Bonnicksen:** I served on the board for five years after being invited to serve by Liz Canan, president of the Board. At the time, Brighter Tomorrows (BT) was going through a transition in the organization from being governed by the four founders, to a board that included people with specific skill sets that could help it grow. My skills are in fundraising and nonprofit organization growth.



Fourteen years ago my son had a serious medical matter that was successfully addressed (not cancer) and serving on the BT board was a way to repay the kindnesses extended to my family in a challenging time.

Being part of BT was an inspiring and humbling experience. I was in awe of the children and families served, gratified to see how so many people rallied around them to help, and was privileged to be part of the organization as it grew and developed stability. I watched my colleagues on the board put in incredible hours, especially Sherrie Decker, Liz Canan, Mary Hansen and Sue Graff. In recent months, the Brighter Tomorrows Board has expanded once again, to include even more people with skills and experiences the

organization needs to continue to grow. I am excited to see how it continues to serve families and become more deeply connected in the community.

**Sue Graff:** I served on Brighter Tomorrows' (BT) board for two terms as the board's treasurer. This was both a new and exciting experience for me, one in which I grew both professionally and

personally through the different challenges and opportunities associated with being a working board member. Although my experience was finance related, the most rewarding and fulfilling aspect of the position was being able to be part of BT's largest annual fundraising event; "Go for the Gold". This opportunity allowed me to interact and hear firsthand the stories and circumstances that our BT families experience. I believe in BT's mission "that no family or child should have to experience something as difficult as cancer alone". Being allowed to be part of this wonderful and caring organization, and fundraising event that will be able to provide a very small fraction of relief that these families face, is very humbling and I am ever so grateful. Thank you!

## Be BOLD and Go Gold!

Sometimes the things that we can't change end up changing us. Pediatric cancer intruded on our life in 2008, and lingered for 5 long years. The journey became a marathon, not a sprint. As the **Go For The Gold** quickly approaches, I reflect on our race against childhood cancer, and I am filled with gratitude for those who laced up next to us. We didn't have a singular coach, but rather a never-failing support crew through Brighter Tomorrows; a constant source of ideas, encouragement and confidence. We had steadfast teammates who ran along side us, keeping stride and helping us pace. They shared their momentum when we couldn't sustain our own. I will never forget those who lined the streets along the course to cheer us on and re-ignite our flame of hope. Support in any form, from a complete stranger, delivers a hope so pure it's indescribable. No matter how small it may be, it was never insignificant, for it was a true gift. We needed Brighter Tomorrows, we needed our close friends, and we needed the strength of our community at large. Indeed, we have been changed by the marathon that engulfed us against our will; but quite possibly, we are better because of it.



If you are getting this newsletter, your life has likely been changed by childhood cancer in one way or another. There are so many ways we can unite in this fight, and there is incredible strength in numbers. There are 101 ways to support Brighter Tomorrows, and certainly a way that utilizes how you are designed to give. I have been granted the privilege to join Brighter Tomorrows' Board of Directors, and would love to get to know you, your journey, and deepen your connection with our mission. Gifts come in the form of creative ideas, time, service and finances; all gifts are crucial in succeeding at our mission that no family faces childhood cancer alone. Together we are better. Thank you for being here! **Let's be BOLD, and GO GOLD!**

Heather vanKoeverden  
(mother to cancer warrior Ana & super-sib Elsa, and wife to Superman)

# Go For The Gold

5k Run/3k Family Walk and Children's Races!  
**July 8, 2017**  
Silver Lake Pool NE, Rochester

*100% of net proceeds benefit Brighter Tomorrows, Inc.,  
an outreach to families facing pediatric cancer!*

**Meet Star Wars Characters**

**5k Run begins at 8:30 am**  
*Certified Race Course and Chip-timed  
Techweave Race shirts*

**3k Family Walk begins at 8:35 am**  
*Stroller Friendly  
Pets welcome if on leash  
Face Painting  
Balloon Animals and Popcorn!*

**Awards Ceremony at 9:30 am**  
*Congratulate our winners and hear from our honorary  
family members! Great prizes include Bose Revolve  
Blue Tooth Speaker, Specialized Crossroad's Fun  
Fitness Bike, and Radisson Blu - MOA!*

**Children's Races begin at 10:30am**  
*Race T-shirts and ribbons!  
Cool Prize Drawings*

*Preregister to reserve  
your race shirt!*

