

The Ace Hardware Foundation Announces Eighth-Annual Ace All-Star

Avery Kazakewicz of North Strabane Township in Pennsylvania named “All-Star” at special surprise event

The Ace Hardware Foundation is thrilled to name Avery Kazakewicz (age 11) of North Strabane Township, Pennsylvania as the organization’s eighth-annual Ace All-Star. On January 15th, the Ace Hardware Foundation and UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh surprised Avery at a special event at the barn where she takes horseback riding lessons.

As Ace’s eighth-annual Ace All-Star, Avery will serve as national ambassador for the Ace Foundation, raising awareness for the excellent work that is done at local Children’s Miracle Network (CMN) Hospitals across the country. Through the support of Ace’s vendor partner Duracell, the Ace Cares for Kids program enables Ace stores to raise funds for their local CMN Hospital using Avery’s incredible story as inspiration.

Two days before her seventh birthday, Avery was diagnosed with Stage 4 Hepatoblastoma, a type of liver cancer. She immediately underwent numerous surgeries and chemotherapy treatments at UPMC Children’s, where it was discovered that most of Avery’s liver was blackened and mottled with cancer.

The tumor on Avery’s liver was so large that it caused her lower abdomen to stick out. It also twisted her stomach, so she had to have a tube inserted down her nose to bypass her stomach and feed nutrients directly to her intestines. The original treatment plan was for seven rounds of chemotherapy, after which it would be determined if her cancer numbers had lowered enough to be placed on the transplant waiting list.

On December 8, 2015, Avery received her liver transplant. In all, she underwent 10 rounds of chemotherapy, a liver transplant, lung surgery, and various other treatments and surgeries in order to get to where she is today.

“Avery endured a tremendous amount of treatment with chemotherapy and surgeries, including a liver transplant, and miraculously did so with a smile on her face,” said Avery’s doctor, Brittani Seynnaeve, MD, MS., Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, UPMC Children’s. “Her strength and resilience are remarkable and it has truly been a privilege to care for her and watch her become the smart, feisty, and caring young individual that she is today.”

Avery, now a healthy and happy 11-year-old, loves to help other kids that have been in her situation and show them that they too can lead a normal, healthy life. She hopes to one day graduate from college and then become a nurse at UPMC Children’s, as she has seen first-hand how helpful it can be to receive treatment from someone who has experienced what children like her have gone through. Avery is finally starting to get back into extracurricular activities following her treatment, and she loves to sing and take horseback riding lessons.

“We are proud to officially welcome Avery into the Ace All-Star family,” said Kane Calamari, President of the Ace Hardware Foundation. “Her bravery and strength in the face of such hardship, along with her perseverance and dedication to helping others, makes her a perfect choice for the 2020 Ace All-Star. Avery and her family will share her story to raise awareness for CMN hospitals and help generate the crucial funding to ensure other children can receive the same life-altering treatments.”

Avery was selected by the Ace Foundation following a nationwide campaign that gave every Children’s Miracle Network Hospital an opportunity to nominate a deserving patient. As the eighth-annual All-Star for the Ace Cares for Kids Program, a \$10,000 donation from Duracell will be made to UPMC Children’s in Avery’s honor. In addition, the Kazakewicz family will be treated to an all-expense paid trip to Walt Disney World. Throughout the year, Avery will make special appearances and will be treated to exciting surprises from Ace Hardware.

As a proud supporter of CMN Hospitals, Ace Hardware is dedicated to raising funds for children’s hospitals across the country, including UPMC Children’s. Over the past 28 years, the Ace Foundation has raised more than \$120 million for Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals.

As the official charitable division of Ace Hardware Corporation, the Ace Hardware Foundation helps enhance the vision of being the “Helpful Place” in local communities across the country and around the globe through charitable giving. The Ace Foundation provides support and philanthropic opportunities to its consumers, retail store owners, vendors and team members to give back to local communities through fundraising efforts for Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals and American Red Cross Disaster Relief. Ace Hardware has been a national partner for Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals for the last 28 years, raising over \$120 million during that time.

About Ace Hardware

Ace Hardware is the largest retailer-owned hardware cooperative in the world with more than 5,300 locally owned and operated hardware stores in approximately 70 countries. Headquartered in Oak Brook, Ill., Ace and its subsidiaries operate an expansive network of distribution centers in the U.S. and have distribution capabilities in Ningbo, China; Colon, Panama; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Since 1924, Ace has become a part of local communities around the world and known as the place with the helpful hardware folks. For more information, visit acehardware.com or newsroom.acehardware.com.

About Children's Miracle Network Hospitals

Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals® raises funds and awareness for 170 member hospitals that provide 32 million treatments each year to kids across the U.S. and Canada. Donations stay local to fund critical treatments and healthcare services, pediatric medical equipment and charitable care. Since 1983, Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals has raised more than \$5 billion, most of it \$1 at a time through the charity’s Miracle Balloon icon. Its various fundraising partners and programs support the nonprofit’s mission to save and improve the lives of as many children as possible. Find out why children’s hospitals need community support, and learn about your member hospital, at CMNHospitals.org and facebook.com/CMNHospitals.

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