



News

Girl collects games for sick children

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Angel Thompson sits with some of the games she has collected. Submitted photo.

By Joanie Morris

For the Salisbury Post

ROCKWELL — When Myra and Alan Thompson had their little girl six years ago, she looked so angelic and sweet and perfect. Just like an angel. It seemed fitting that they named her Angel.

Now, six years later, and a year after she was diagnosed with a Juvenile Pilocystic Astrocytoma brain tumor, Angel is living up to her name. The tumor is a rare childhood brain tumor, usually benign, and slow-growing.

Angel was diagnosed after teachers and administrators at her school, Grace Academy in Rockwell, noticed that the soft-spoken, shy girl was becoming increasingly clumsy, was having vision troubles and had changed behavior. One Monday in March 2010, school administrator Sandy Phillips called Myra and told her Angel was not herself and Myra needed to take her to the doctor.

"We started noticing different things with her coordination and her eyes," said Phillips. "We knew something was different."

Myra, who works at Carolinas Medical Center-NorthEast, knew something was wrong and rushed Angel to the emergency room at the Concord hospital. Doctors there did a CT scan and found the tumor.

"She was in the hospital for one month," said Myra. During that time, surgery was performed — even though she will never be completely without the tumor since it is wrapped around her brain stem. Angel went through a series of treatments, including rehabilitation at Levine Children's Hospital because she had to learn to walk again after surgery.

On the rehabilitation floor, Angel and her family spent days playing games — card, board and skill. Games were even a part of her rehab, and her favorite was Hi-Ho! Cherry-O. When she got out of the hospital, Angel kept telling her mom she wanted to do something for the other kids at the Levine Children's Hospital. Myra kept putting it off, and Angel kept pushing.

Since May is National Brain Tumor Awareness Month, Myra and Angel decided that it was time to do something. "We played a lot of games (at the hospital)," said Myra. "That's what inspired her.

"The kindergarten teachers even came to play games with her," Myra added.



Angel Thompson poses with her parents, Myra and Alan. Submitted photo.



Isaac Cawley, 5. Looks at a game. Submitted photo.

Angel decided she wanted to collect games to take to the Levine Children's Hospital. The game drive kicked off this month at Grace Academy, but they will take games at any time. Collected games have to be new for the hospital and the little Kannapolis girl hopes that enough games are collected that when children go into the hospital, they can get a game to take home, instead of having to give the games back like she did.

The project, called Gift from Angels, is like therapy for the children, as well as mind-occupying. Children at Grace Academy collected 180 games — 80 more games than the original goal — for the hospital. The games were delivered May 19 by

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Myra during one of Angel's regular check-ups.

"Angel came up with the name because everybody that gives a game is an angel," said Myra.

Doctors have said the tumors are starting to come back, but they are unable to do radiation to remove the tumor because of Angel's age. And since the tumor is wrapped around her brain stem, they are unable to remove it with surgery without significant risk to Angel.

"We just pray," said Myra. If the tumor comes back, they will do chemotherapy, or maybe another surgery to remove parts of it. Until then, Angel sees an oncologist every month, has MRIs every three months, sees a neurosurgeon every three months, visits the eye doctor every eight weeks and has one occupational therapy, one horse therapy and two physical therapies every week.

"It's amazing how Angel keeps up with her work," said Phillips. "She has her off days. It's amazing the progress she's made. ... Because we are a private school and have smaller classes, we're able to keep her monitored."

"I know she's in good hands here," added Myra.

The blonde, curly-haired girl with one blue eye covered with an eye patch and a distinctive tilt to her head spoke briefly on her project.

"I did it because I did have the directions or the pieces" for all the games, she whispered. "Now, (sick children get) to keep them at their house."

Games are being accepted at Grace Academy, 6725 Hwy. 152 E., Rockwell; Cabarrus County Group Homes, 288 Aviation Drive, China Grove; and Mount Mitchell Fire Department, 5875 Old Salisbury-Concord Road, Kannapolis.

For more information or to arrange pick-up/drop-off of games, contact Myra Thompson at 704-791-1762 or email amt6973@gmail.com. Visit the Caring Bridge page of Angel Thompson at www.caringbridge.org/visit/angelthompson.

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9:40 AM on 5/24/2011

Angel we love you so much. Keep up the hard work. This is Katie and LaShaun's mom. May God Bless you Angel and may God keep blessing Grace Academy. I am so proud to know you and your mother Myra. God Bless, Lisa

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