



PRESS RELEASE

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MEDIA – FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Mike Bratten, (361) 548-6073

17-year-old cancer patient sees his condition in a positive light

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month will be celebrated at Driscoll Children's Hospital with a hair cutting event that will benefit young cancer patients

CORPUS CHRISTI – Lying in his bed at Driscoll Children's Hospital, recovering from his latest chemotherapy treatment, Javier Duran talks openly about the positive experiences he's had since he discovered he had lymphoma earlier this year.

"Before I got cancer I never told my parents I loved them once in my life," said Javier, 17. "About a month ago I told them for the first time. They cried because they had never heard me tell them that. In a way, having cancer has kind of changed me."

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and Driscoll Children's Hospital is aiming to focus the community's attention on patients like Javier. On Sept. 14, a mayoral proclamation will be read in the Corpus Christi City Council chambers declaring the day Childhood Cancer Awareness Day. Later that evening, Driscoll will host a hair cutting event in the auditorium for the purpose of making wigs for young cancer patients who've lost their hair due to chemotherapy. Driscoll is encouraging members of the community

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to grow their hair to at least eight inches from the ponytail and donate it during the event. A bloodmobile from the Coastal Bend Blood Center will be on site, and refreshments and door prizes will be featured.

“We want to raise awareness among the public that there are many children in this community who have cancer,” said Mara Ellis, child life specialist at Driscoll Children’s Hospital. “They are courageous young people who are experiencing a life-changing disease. Donating hair and giving blood are simple acts that can improve their lives.”

Javier, who comes to Driscoll Children’s Hospital every three weeks for a five-day chemotherapy treatment to battle the cancer, said the disease has changed his life dramatically. Late last year, he started coughing severely and at one point was unable to breathe. He thought the ailment would go away until one day he passed out at his workplace, a local taqueria. Simultaneously he developed a tumor on his neck. After being checked out at Driscoll Children’s Hospital, he was diagnosed with pneumonia and lymphoma.

Although he missed almost a half year of school and was unable to join the football team due to his cancer, Javier did some self analysis and now sees his condition in a positive light.

“Cancer made me think of life differently and appreciate things like the support I get

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from my family,” he said. “Before, I didn’t think of anybody else, only myself.”

“I’ve learned that there are people who have cancer worse than I do. What am I complaining about? I can be strong. I don’t have to think negatively.”

An artist who enjoys drawing, Javier said a potential career path he may take after high school is graphic designing. But he’s not certain yet.

“The other day I was thinking about becoming a nurse. I would like to help people like they’ve helped me at Driscoll.”

- **What:** Childhood Cancer Awareness Month hair cutting event and blood drive
- **When:** 5:30-7:30 p.m. Sept. 14
- **Where:** Driscoll Children’s Hospital auditorium, 3533 S. Alameda St.

***Note to editors: Photos of Javier Duran are available.**

About Driscoll Children’s Hospital...

*“Improve the health of adults and you give them back their health...
Improve the health of children and you give them their life.”*

Driscoll Children’s Hospital is a 189-bed pediatric tertiary care center with pediatric specialists representing 32 medical and 13 surgical specialties offering care throughout South Texas, including Corpus Christi, the Rio Grande Valley, Victoria and Laredo. Each year, more than 100,000 children receive care through Driscoll, including the 40,000 patients seen at South Texas’ first emergency room created specifically for pediatrics.

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