

CAUSE + EFFECT

COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWS, NOTES AND IDEAS

In Search of Sidekicks for Superheroes

When pediatric cancer patients aren't shuffling from waiting rooms to hospital beds and enduring exhausting and painful treatments, they're often isolated from places and activities — such as school — where germs can harm their seriously weakened immune systems. It can be a lonely gig.

Stepping in to help is local nonprofit Connor's Heroes, which assists families with children who are being treated for cancer at Children's Hospital of Richmond at Virginia Commonwealth University's Medical Center. To bring a bit of companionship and normalcy to the lives of those affected, Connor's Heroes is introducing Sidekicks and Superheroes, an initiative that pairs teen and adult mentors, or sidekicks, one-on-one with cancer patients, their siblings and their parents.

Funded in part by a \$15,000 grant from the Altria Cos. employee community fund, the program requires participants to undergo mentor training and to spend four hours a month with their superhero, whether it's running errands for a parent, giving attention to a sibling or hanging out with a young cancer patient, as well as communicating with them on a weekly basis. — KATHERINE HOUSTON

TO GET INVOLVED

Sidekicks must be 16 years old or older, dedicated to developing a meaningful relationship with a patient and willing to make a one-year commitment. For information or to apply, visit connorsheroes.org or call 221-8991.



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