

## Once Upon a Hero Beneficiary – 2016

### Grace Davison

*Butler, PA*



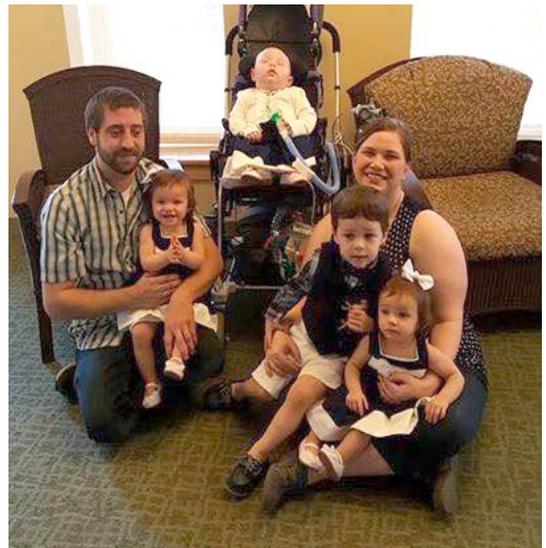
*Sweet Baby Grace*

The beneficiary of this year's Halloween Party is Grace Davison (and her family) of Butler, PA. Tom and Joy Davison have four children; a two-year-old son named TJ, and triplet, one-year-old daughters named Vivian, Natalie, and Grace.

The girls were born prematurely at 32 weeks, and while Vivian and Natalie were born healthy, Grace was not so lucky. Her list of medical issues is a very long one. She was born with a brain defect that causes her to have seizures and even though she is on five different medications, the seizures are not under control. Her muscles are tight and weak due to Cerebral Palsy. She has undergone multiple surgeries already in her short life, for a myriad of reasons, and her lungs are so weak that her family struggles to make sure she doesn't get sick. Her condition is critical. She receives visits from home nurses 119 hours per week to help relieve some of

the stress from her parents. Although she is very sick, Grace is a happy baby.

Once Upon a Hero is honored to have this beautiful little girl as our event beneficiary. It is our hope that we can make a difference in Grace's life and in the lives of her family as well. To that end, we are trying to raise as much money as possible and are donating ALL of the proceeds from the 2016 Halloween Party to this cause.



*Tom and Joy Davison with their children; TJ, Vivian, Natalie and Grace.*

## Once Upon a Hero Beneficiaries – 2015

### **Fred and Janet McIntyre**

*Evans City, PA*



The McIntyre Family lives in the Woodlands development outside of Evans City. In 2011 Fred and Janet McIntyre lost the well water on their property due to chemical contamination following the drilling of gas wells nearby. Some residents, including the McIntyres, received 1,500 gallon water buffalo tanks set up outside their homes. This water is for everyday use such as showering, cooking, laundry, etc., but it is not drinkable.

The McIntyre home is located on a dead-end road that is not publicly maintained. This limits access for the large trucks that are sent to refill the water buffalo tanks. Last winter, they went almost 2 months without any water due to the poor conditions of the road and driveway due to weather.

Both Fred and Janet suffer from several health issues. Janet suffers from Leukemia and has kidney problems, as well as back pain from an old injury. Fred has Emphysema and heart problems. Both of them are on disability and unable to work. Their youngest daughter (age 14) has special needs. While dealing with all of these issues, they lack the financial resources to make the improvements to their driveway so the trucks can deliver the water without getting stuck. The driveway was in very poor condition with very deep mud, making it extremely difficult to drive on or even walk from their vehicle to the door of their house. This made water delivery impossible during the winter months and other severe weather.

After meeting with the McIntyres, we at Once Upon a Hero were glad to help and a plan was put into place. Mark Thomas Excavating, of Butler, knew of the McIntyres and generously donated a crew and all heavy equipment required to get the job done. Once Upon A Hero covered the cost of the material for the driveway improvements, along with a submersible water heater for the water buffalo to keep it from freezing in the winter.

## Once Upon a Hero Beneficiary – 2014

### Amelia Boccardi

*Ross Township*



Matt and Leah Boccardi are the parents of a beautiful three year old daughter named Amelia (Mia). Up until this spring, life was pretty normal for this Ross Township family. In May, Matt and Leah began to notice that Mia had an unusual number of bruises and a recurring fever. The family was sent off to Children's Hospital where blood tests revealed extremely low platelets and red and white blood cells. At that time, Mia had 2 blood transfusions and a plethora of antibiotics. She had a port put in so that doctors would have quick access to give her more transfusions. Eventually, Mia was diagnosed with aplastic anemia. Aplastic anemia is a disease of the bone marrow. It occurs when the bone marrow stops making enough red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets for the body.

This disorder affects only one in 2 million people. With reduced white blood cells comes reduced immunity to infection.

With reduced red blood cells and platelets come fatigue and frequent, uncontrolled bleeding. As a result, the Boccardi family's days have been filled with midnight Emergency Room admissions, long inpatient stays, and bi-weekly outpatient appointments. Emergency Room trips begin with a high fever or bleeding and end in days-long hospital stays. Mia wears a surgical mask on these hospital trips – the only times she goes out in public – to prevent infection. If that wasn't enough for a three year old to endure, she goes to bi-weekly outpatient appointments to have blood counts checked and blood product given as needed. While her friends start preschool, Mia has learned a different vocabulary altogether: one that includes "platelets," "machine" (her medicine pump), and "tubey" (her IV tube).

Most people know little to nothing about aplastic anemia. It's not a disorder you can just manage easily with a pill. While Mia has received immunosuppressant therapy that her family had hoped would be a "fix," she, unfortunately, has been slow to respond. A bone marrow transplant is probable, and is the only thing that can truly cure her disease. The family is now hoping that the cord blood collected from her baby brother, born days ago, will be a match for Mia. If it is not, she will most likely receive a bone marrow transplant from a matched, unrelated donor.

The family has insurance which covers the medical bills, but there is no assistance for many associated and uncontrollable expenses that they regularly face such as gas, parking and food for those extended hospital visits.

## Once Upon a Hero Beneficiary – 2014

**Tom Palkovic**  
*Economy Borough*



Tom Palkovic is a 42 year old man who lives in Economy Borough with his wife and seven year old son. He has had lifelong kidney issues stemming from his childhood. Over the years he has been losing blood and protein as his kidney function has declined. In the summer of 2012 his energy levels took a very noticeable turn for the worse. His primary care physician believed it to be high blood pressure, so Tom was prescribed medications to regulate it. They didn't know at that time that his blood pressure was high because of his failing kidneys.

Last spring, with his blood pressure still elevated, he returned to his primary care physician complaining of not feeling well. After running some tests, his doctor referred him to a nephrologist because he suspected that his kidneys were failing.

Earlier this year he underwent two surgeries to prepare for dialysis, and he's had a preliminary evaluation for a kidney transplant. He's still undergoing medical testing before the transplant committee can make a final determination as to when to put him on the waiting list.

The hardest part for Tom and his family is the uncertainty. Tom works as an automotive technician at a body collision shop, and is still working full-time. He has dialysis three days a week for four hours at a time. He works weekends to make up for lost wages because his job does not offer paid sick time or short- or long-term disability pay.

## **Once Upon a Hero Beneficiaries – 2013**

### **Daniel Branchen**

On December 17, 2012, Daniel Branchen's life changed forever. Unexpectedly, a blood clot formed in Daniel's left leg that traveled through his body causing total organ failure and led to cardiac arrest. As a result of the lack of oxygen to his brain, Dan ended up with severe brain damage. He also lost his left leg and spent 8 months in the hospital. Our goal is to help raise money for him and his family to purchase a handicapped accessible van. Having this vehicle to drive Dan from place to place would lift a huge burden off of their shoulders. He has many doctors and physicians appointments that he has to go to on a weekly basis.

### **Dominic LeFebvre**

Dominic LeFebvre was born on August 14th, 2013. He has Trisomy 18 and although he is currently back in the hospital, doctors are impressed with everything that he has overcome. He has a lot of daily care and doctors appointments and our goal is to help him and his family with a lot of the medical bills they have. Dominic's Mom stays home now and takes care of little Dommie full time and we want to help lift the financial strain that this has caused.