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Little League | North Bothell 9-10s rolling through state all-star tournament. [Page 13]

Brauns is an 'inspiration' to family, friends



Ashley Hughes flew in from New York to accompany her 10-year-old cousin, Brandon Brauns of Bothell, who has cancer, at his Kids Kickin' 4 Kids benefit soccer camp July 15 at Soundview Playfield in Seattle. ANDY NYSTROM, *Bothell-Kenmore Reporter*

Bothell boy with cancer holds soccer camp to benefit Fred Hutchinson Center

BY ANDY NYSTROM

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Ashley Hughes' emotions flow when she hangs out with her little cousin, Brandon Brauns of Bothell.

One second, she's smiling big, and the next, she's whispering in his ear with a caring, serious demeanor.

The New York resident flew into town last week to visit with her family and support 10-year-old Brandon, who has cancer, at his Kids Kickin' 4 Kids benefit soccer camp at Soundview Playfield in Seattle. Seventy kids attended the Skyhawks sports camps clinic and raised \$1,300 for the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center.

"He has a huge heart. It means a lot — he's my inspiration and he's my high school's inspiration the last two years," said Hughes, who played soccer for the Aquinas Institute in Rochester, NY, and received a scholarship to play ball

at the University of Akron (Ohio) in the fall. "We all made shirts for him that we wore, and we called him from the locker room. We only had two losses last year."

While watching Brandon climb the stairs to the family's RV to take a rest, Hughes noted that her time with her cousin would extend beyond the soccer field last week.

"This isn't just it, we've got other things planned," Hughes said. "I just want to make sure that he's having fun. He's done so much for me, and I want to do what I can to help him out."

Following the two-hour camp, which featured an enthusiastic group of players and coaches, mom Kris led Brandon onto the field to present a large check to Dr. Jim Olsen of the Hutch Center. Olsen's goal is to help find a cure for pediatric cancer or improve the lives of kids who have it.

"He says, 'Thank you,' This means a lot to him because his

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Another local need may face desire



Above, Kids line up on the field to prepare for last week's Kids Kickin' 4 Kids soccer camp in Seattle. Top right, Kris Brauns gets the players pumped up about the camp. Bottom right, Jana Monroe, left, hands off two camp T-shirts to Laura Root. PHOTOS BY ANDY NYSTROM, Bothell-Kenmore Reporter

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life is a lot different than others. He has to go to the doctor a lot," Kris said while addressing the crowd with the message Brandon whispered to her. Dad Jeff kept busy snapping pictures of the two greeting Olsen.

Doctors diagnosed Brandon with a brain tumor at the age of 3, he's had two major resection surgeries and has endured multiple rounds of radiation. The two surgeries stretched his cranial nerve and left him with facial palsy and a paralyzed left vocal chord. He's currently on chemotherapy, Kris said, noting that Brandon had a pair of two-year stints of remission.

"He's OK ... days are tough," Kris said. But that doesn't stop the "super-smart, funny

and very determined" boy from getting kids out on the soccer pitch for a worthy cause, Kris said. This is the fourth benefit camp and featured several University of Washington women's players along with future Division I player Hughes.

"He was ready to roll today. Ready to organize. He loves to help me do everything," Kris said.

Added Dianne Forth, Kris' mother, with a laugh: "And Lord help you if you don't do it right. He'll let you know."

Sporting knee-length blue shorts, a Kids Kickin' 4 Kids T-shirt, a Washington State University Cougars beanie and shades, Brandon sat in the RV and silently plugged away on his handheld game device during the camp. However, every five minutes it was showtime when he honked the RV's horn to signify the players to move to the next coaching station.

"That's perfect — that's a better horn than I thought we had, Brandon," Forth said after the first of many honks.

This has been a good summer for Brandon, said Kris, who took time off from her Skyhawks regional-manager job to engage in activities with her son. Highlights included watching the movie "Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs" and Brandon driving the family speedboat.

"It's about every little thing. I enjoy being with him," Kris said.

Come fall, Brandon will enter the fifth grade at Shelton View Elementary in Bothell, studying half days in the learning center and socializing with his friends, some of whom slapped high-fives with their buddy while registering for the camp.

And it's the camp that is by far the summer's best two hours for Brandon and his family.

"This is very cathartic for us. It gives us something positive to focus on," Kris said. "We're stronger, probably a better family. We've always said we'd give cancer back, but we'd never give back the friends we've made — the things we've learned."

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