

The ties that bind: Cancer patients design neckwear

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by lane page

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Fifteen-year-old Emily Davis, left, and Victoria Ero, 11, are cancer patients at Johns Hopkins Children's Center

"Miracles come in all shapes and ties," they say at Johns Hopkins Hospital Children's Center, and now they're saying it in Howard County, too. Fifteen-year-old Emily Davis, of Ellicott City and Victoria Ero, 11, of Clarksville are among five young artists whose designs were chosen for this year's Miracle Collection neckties, available exclusively at Jos. A. Bank Clothiers. The ties are 100 percent silk and cost \$44.50. All profits go directly to the Children's Center to improve patient care and support pediatric research.

Despite being under treatment for Ewing's sarcoma, a rare form of pediatric cancer, Emily reports having had no trouble getting into the Christmas spirit when approached by hospital child life specialist Kim Robison in the play room last spring. Robison was scouting for drawings illustrating what the winter holidays mean to the young patients.

Victoria, a Hodgkin's lymphoma patient, suspected that everyone would think of picturing Christmas trees first, as she had done, "so then I thought, 'What's the second best thing about Christmas? Snow!'" For her drawing, she produced a whole storm-ful of snowflakes. Representatives from Jos. A. Bank and manufacturer Mulberry Neckwear together selected motifs from the 20 or so larger drawings.

Along with Emily's sprigs of holly and Victoria's snowflakes, the other three youngsters whose work is in the collection drew Christmas trees, snowmen and, of course, Santa Claus. Each design comes on several different background colors, offering something for any taste or winter wardrobe. Emily prefers her holly on bright red; Victoria her snowflakes on silvery-blue.

When the Miracle Collection project began eight years ago, tie designs were based on the molecular structure of disease-fighting drugs. Later, young patients were asked to submit drawings showing whatever was important in their lives. While neckties are reputedly the quintessential Christmas gift, this is the first time the collection has had a holiday theme, according to Holly Hamilton of the Johns Hopkins Children's Center Office of Communications and Public Affairs.

The festive neckwear was modeled by local media personalities at a recent fashion show at Bank's downtown Baltimore location. Each artist appeared with four escort/models, including Dr. George Dover, pediatrician-in-chief and director of the Children's Center, WMAR-TV (channel 2) news personalities Brian Wood and Keith Mills and WILF (101.9-FM) radio hosts Greg Carpenter and Tamara Nelson.

Gents and ladies, as well as the young artists, all sported the ties. More than 60,000 ties have been sold in the previous seven years, Hamilton says, bringing in some \$40,000-50,000 annually. Together with WILF's yearly auction of celebrity-autographed ties (scheduled for the second week in December), nearly \$500,000 has been raised for Hopkins and has been used for a wide variety of purposes

They range from arts and crafts materials and videos for the hospital's Child Life Center to chair-beds for parents to stay overnight to the establishment of a brain tumor registry to a Web site connecting and educate survivors of childhood cancer.

Miracle Collection VIII ties can be seen on Jos. A. Bank's Web site, www.josbank.com, and in its stores, one of which is located in Columbia Crossing shopping center. But you'd better shop soon. On business in Chicago last week, mom Lauren Ero and colleagues stopped in at the local Jos. A. Bank to check out the Miracle Collection display. Two of the styles, including her own Victoria's design, had already sold out. E-mail Lane Page at lpag@patuxent.com.

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