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Cancer survivor brings comfort to UCSF pediatric oncology patients

Submitted by Elizabeth Dietsch

Colby Suppiger, a Life Scout rank in Troop 224, is a cancer survivor who chose to give back a “whole big bunch” and then some, working tirelessly on his Eagle Scout project, which took over his entire garage and house, and involved over 45 people and 165 hours to make 250 blankets for children who will be undergoing chemotherapy at UCSF Benioff Children’s

hospital in San Francisco and Oakland.

Suppiger’s original goal was to make 100 blankets, but thanks to special additional contributors, that goal was far surpassed.

When he was in the seventh grade, Suppiger was diagnosed with lymphoma, a blood cancer that was located in his bone marrow. “Those six months were probably and will probably be the

worst six months of my life,” Suppiger said in an announcement to his Troop in July. “However the doctors, my family and my friends helped me get through the chemotherapy and I can’t thank them enough. Something that I will never forget is my orange blanket I always carried with me to the hospital. It sounds simple but my blanket gave me the feeling of safety and hope that I would be home and feel better soon.”

Suppiger said he took the blanket with him everywhere he went for the six months he was going through treatment – and he still has the blanket today. “I want every kid who has to go through what I went through to have their own blanket,” he said. “That feeling of safety and security goes a long way.”

Organized and supervised by Suppiger, Boy Scout Troop 224, Girl Scout Troops 33132 and 32913, and many parents worked closely together over one

weekend making the blankets. Over the past year Suppiger successfully raised over \$1,000 he needed to make his target of 100 blankets. Then, there was a very generous donation from Cary and Stacy Schirmer of Lafayette. Cary Schirmer is the CEO of Walnut Creek-based HPG International, who felt the contribution to pediatric oncology was an invaluable cause to support.

UCSF Hematology/Oncology Department of Pediatrics is “particularly known for work in childhood cancers such as leukemia, lymphoma, brain tumors, neuroblastoma, sarcomas and retinoblastoma.”

One of Cary Schirmer’s main suppliers of materials is Polartec. His supplier from Polartec had survived breast cancer and was also very sympathetic toward the cause.

Together, HPG and Polartec donated approximately 350 liner yards – which is over 400 pounds of very



Colby Suppiger during chemotherapy treatment in the seventh grade with his orange blanket. Photo provided

high quality fleece. This was in addition to the 200 yards of material Suppiger purchased.

The Troop came together in full force both Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 25-26, cut the material and wove the blankets.

While making the blankets, people quietly gathered ahead of time and said a quiet prayer for someone they knew who had survived or had not survived

cancer. At the large tables throughout the house and garage, one could hear summer stories and fall plans. There was laughter and joy and most of all a great feeling of gratitude by Suppiger, who extend special gratitude for the incredible support he received from his family, Mikaela Truong, Justin Lee, Matthew Raffel, Troop 224, Girl Scout Troops 33132 and 32913 and Ms. June Jung, his Eagle Scout mentor.

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