



The CLIMB Program

1. **History.** The Children's Treehouse Foundation was founded in January of 2001, in Denver, Colorado by Peter van Dernoot, the foundation's executive director. Peter was inspired to begin the foundation out of personal experience. When his wife was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer, they felt very alone in their quest to meet the needs of their two children while focusing on the medical needs of his wife. After the death of his wife, Peter was motivated to ensure that others families going through a similar experience, would feel more equipped to handle such difficult challenges. Tides and the Mount Nittany Medical Center are collaborating to bring the CLIMB program here to families in our own community.
2. **Mission.** The mission of the CLIMB program, which is an acronym for Children's Lives Include Moments of Bravery, is to ensure that every child whose parent (or loved one) is diagnosed with cancer is given the early tools and emotional support to cope. The vision is create a world where preventing the inevitable psychosocial impact on children whose parents have cancer is taken as seriously as finding a cure for cancer itself.
3. **The Need.** In the United States, the American Cancer Society estimates that more than 315,000 parents with children under 18 will be diagnosed with invasive cancer each year. For the children, more than 667,000, this permanently changes the family dynamics, evoking in the children many fears, doubts and questions about their future and that of their parents. The Children's Treehouse Foundation fills a critical gap between parents who have been diagnosed with cancer and the often overlooked emotional needs of their children.
4. **The Goals of the CLIMB Program.**
 - a. To educate children about cancer, the various forms of treatment, and side effects related to treatment.
 - b. To normalize feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear and anger of the child.
 - c. To increase communication among family members.
 - d. To understand and cope with dramatic changes they are witnessing and experiencing in the home, including: the physical and emotional changes their loved one in experiencing, the shift in roles in family members that often occurs, and the lost time together due to doctor appointments, treatments, and increased need for rest.
 - e. To meet and share feelings with other children in similar situations, and learn they are not alone.

5. Logistics of the CLIMB Program. The CLIMB Program will be offered to children ages 6-12 and their caregivers recently given a cancer diagnosis. It is a closed ended six week session. The initial plan is to offer this program two times a year. If the need is greater, staff will evaluate the necessity to offer additional six week sessions. Referral is required in order to assess the appropriateness for group as well as vital information for the facilitators who will be working with the children. At the beginning of each session, dinner will be provided. Following the meal, children and adults will separate into smaller group discussions. Sessions will focus on getting to know each other, learning more about cancer, and the various emotions that may exist when a family member has cancer. Each group will have a lead facilitator to direct the activities and discussion for the evening. The role of the volunteers is to assist with the activities, be available to the children and parents, and listen, listen, listen. Each evening will end with a closing circle to reinforce the belief that they are not alone.
6. Registration. The first six week session of CLIMB is scheduled to begin on Tuesday, October 5, 2010. Five of the six sessions will be held at Mount Nittany Middle School. The second session, scheduled for October 12th, will be held at Mount Nittany Medical Center. There is no cost to attend the CLIMB program. Participants do not need to be receiving cancer treatments specifically at Mount Nittany Medical Center in order to take part in the program. To learn more about the CLIMB program or to register, please contact Kristin Sides, the Patient Navigator of the Cancer Program at Mount Nittany Medical Center, at (814)234-6175.