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# CCIA - Donor Care Letter

I want to show you one of the best examples of donor care that I've ever seen.

I got it more than 10 years ago, from the Children's Cancer Institute <https://ccia.org.au/> in Australia.

We typically think of a donor newsletter as the best kind of donor care. This letter shows a different -- and very effective -- way to show donors they matter.

In a personalised, four-page letter, here's what it does:

- Specifically thanks the donor for his giving.
- Reminds the donor about Anna, a cancer survivor whose story was told in a letter previously sent to the donor.
- Shares an inspiring quote from a fellow donor.
- Reminds the donor how important the work he supports is.
- Describes some interesting recent research projects and thanks the donor for making them possible.
- Talks about some recent appeals that the donor gave to and thanks him for it, and updates the stories that were in the appeals.
- Tells the donor about an upcoming change in leadership.

Special thank you to Children's Cancer Institute for allowing us to share this with you.

Sean

16 February 2007

Dear Sean,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to write and thank you for your support **over the past year**. It's been a year in which we have achieved so much, and I am really pleased to be able to bring you an update on just what your support has meant to us.

**I also want to thank you for making the wonderful decision to become a CCIA supporter in 2006 in response to my letter in March 2006. Your kind gifts of \$20 each month are already being put to good use funding our vital research into the causes, better treatments, prevention and ultimately a cure of childhood cancer.**

I have talked to so many children and families who have been touched by childhood cancer and whose stories I have shared with you over the years. It's wonderful to be able to pass onto them news of all the valuable support generous people like you are providing to our medical research programs.

As recently as December 2006, I caught up again with an incredible young woman named Anna Rausher. Anna knows the importance of making the most out of life. She was only nine years old when she was diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma (a cancerous tumour in her leg). Sadly, Anna lost her leg but is now using her experience to help others who have not only been affected by childhood cancer but who have suffered the trauma of losing a limb.

I find Anna a very inspiring young woman. Now in her early thirties, she is kept very busy with full time work and study, but she always finds time to do advocacy work for children with cancer, raising awareness of CCIA's research and young amputees. She is a wonderful role model for other young Australians and is doing amazingly well despite the challenges she has faced in her life.

Our work aims to eliminate the suffering of children diagnosed with cancer, and, ultimately, find a cure for this debilitating group of diseases. Meeting people like Anna always reminds me why it's so important to support our dedicated researchers here at CCIA.

**Last September I sent out our Annual Supporter Survey, and I wanted to thank you for your response. Nearly half of the supporters who responded said they believe developing better treatments is the most important childhood cancer issue facing Australians at the moment, and I'm pleased to say this has been a major research focus for CCIA in the past year.**

Like me, the team here at CCIA love to hear from our supporters and our Annual Supporter Survey continues to provide a great opportunity for you to let me and the team know what you think about our research and how we communicate with you. I received so many thoughtful and inspiring words which I have shared with my colleagues here at the Institute. One of our supporters was kind enough to write to me last year with this message:

*"I received your letter the other day and was pleased to find that it was about feedback on how those appeals went. I, like many others, have to be careful how we spend our money and I was pleased to see how a combined effort can achieve a substantial dollar value.*

*I for one would be most pleased when a cure for Children's Leukaemia is announced as I lost my second son Wayne to Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia in 1994. I wish you and the team all the best for the future. Find that cure." B Schultz, QLD*

I find comments like these very moving and inspiring. They reinforce to me and my colleagues why we work so hard to make a difference for all children diagnosed with cancer. I am also incredibly touched when people share their own personal stories and experiences of childhood cancer.

I've spoken to many people this past year who have personal experiences of battling childhood cancer – some sad, some happy, always heart wrenching. In each and every story there's a belief that CCIA is making a difference, and will continue to make a difference to the outcomes for children diagnosed with cancer.

Medical research takes dedication, time and patience. In the past 12 months we have made promising progress which has been the culmination of many years of research. Progress which takes us closer to our vision of saving the lives of all children diagnosed with cancer. This wouldn't have been possible without committed supporters like you **Sean**.

I've written to **you** before about the Minimal Residual Disease (MRD) project, headed up by our Deputy Director, Professor Murray Norris, who is also the Head of our Molecular Diagnostics Program.

Research being conducted by scientists like Professor Norris and his team give hope to families with children battling Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL), the most common form of childhood cancer and one which sees 20 percent of cases relapse. Over the last 15 years the team has been working hard at developing an innovative new technique for detecting relapse before leukaemia symptoms begin to reappear.

This test is so accurate that it can detect one cancer cell amongst a million healthy cells – well before the leukaemia has had a chance to spread. This technique is in its third year of a major clinical trial in five children's hospitals in Australia and one in New Zealand. The trial aims to secure a 20 per cent improvement in the outcome for ALL patients identified as likely to relapse.

If this trial succeeds – and the results will be known within the next two years – it will have enormous implications for children suffering leukaemia around the world. It would be a massive breakthrough that would allow doctors to determine the best course of treatment for children at high risk of relapse, before they relapse, in the hope of preventing their cancer from returning. This would relieve so many families from the added uncertainty of waiting to see if their child relapses.

Professor Norris' MRD program is the culmination of 15 years of painstaking research. This couldn't have been possible without the support of people like you and the brilliant researchers working tirelessly here at CCIA.

The work we have done in the area of neuroblastoma, which has been recognised as the best in the world, has led to new areas of investigation like the work of Dr Wayne Thomas and his team. They are part of our Molecular Carcinogenesis Program, and have extended upon this research to also include investigations into medulloblastoma – the most common brain tumour in children and often affecting very young children.

This is another area of work we're incredibly proud of. Medulloblastomas are often fast growing and invasive and are incredibly hard to treat.

Children diagnosed with medulloblastoma only have a 50 percent chance of survival. Dr Thomas and his team are working hard at investigating the causes of medulloblastoma and identifying more effective treatments.

**The reason I am excited by Wayne's research is that I truly believe it holds the promise of new strategies to improve treatments, reduce side effects and increase the chance of survival for children with cancer. I also believe it has the potential to find a way to prevent this cancer from developing.**

**As one of CCIA's most committed supporters, your regular gifts play a vital role in the success of our work. I cannot thank you enough for your generosity in helping us find better treatments, improve survival rates, prevent and ultimately find a cure for childhood cancer.**

Nearly one-third of those who responded to our Annual Supporter Survey in 2006 told me they have a relative or friend who has been affected by childhood cancer. Many of these families have offered to share their stories with you, and I really can't thank them enough. These stories not only inspire me and the research team here at CCIA but they inspire other members of the community to support our medical research as you have done so generously **this past year.**

We've had some great community-based events happen this year, like the Townsville to Cairns Bike Ride which is organised by local community members. The ride was conceived by one of their members who had a grandchild diagnosed with cancer, and he wanted to do something to give other families hope. Two hundred riders took part in 2006 and raised an incredible \$209,000.

Our May 2006 Appeal was our most successful ever, raising more than \$215,000 for our medical research. **Thank you especially for your kind gift of \$50.** In my letter I introduced three incredibly brave children – Sophia Raso, Nick Latter and Nicholas Butters, and I would like to thank them and their families again for sharing their heartbreaking yet inspiring stories with us.

The Butters family sadly lost Nicholas at age 14 to medulloblastoma, and have been unfailingly generous in sharing their story to encourage others to support CCIA. Nicholas's mother Jenny, his father Craig, and their two boys helped us put together a moving video which has touched thousands of people at CCIA events and helped us to raise much-needed funds. Nicholas leaves a wonderful legacy – which I hope we can continue to honour as we search for a cure for this terrible disease.

We also had a wonderful response to the letters I sent to our supporters at the end of last year, which featured the story of little Riley Belcher and her battle with ALL.

I was delighted to be able to let Riley's mum, Denise, know what an incredible impact her daughter's story has had on CCIA supporters. She was so pleased that Riley's story now has the chance to touch the lives of others, because it's so important to her that people support CCIA's work. Denise had this message to share:

*"With enough help, I know that children like Riley will be able to beat cancer in the future, and families like ours will no longer have to go through the pain of losing the child we love."*

As a result of this appeal we also welcomed 202 new regular monthly givers helping us to raise a total of \$3,420 each month towards our work.

Regular monthly gifts are incredibly important to the future of CCIA, they help us ensure funds are available to continue our current research programs. They also allow us to plan for the expansion of our research to one day eliminate the suffering of children diagnosed with cancer, and ultimately find a cure. **Thank you for increasing your monthly gift this year.**

The past year has seen much success in welcoming regular monthly donors with our face to face program - the fundraising we do out in the local community. More than 4,000 committed supporters have demonstrated their willingness to help us in the fight to find a cure for childhood cancer. Our team will be on the streets of major NSW, ACT and Queensland cities this year as we continue to raise awareness about childhood cancer, our research and the need for support.

**Sean, I am so grateful for your support in 2006** and I would like to thank you once again for all that you have helped us do in the past **12 months**. We simply could not do it without you, and I look forward to your continued support in 2007.

Finally, it is with great sadness that I sign off my last letter to you as I am leaving CCIA. At the time of writing I am preparing to leave the Institute on the 9th February to move on to new challenges. After nearly eight wonderful years at CCIA, I move with a great sense of achievement, knowing that, together with your support, I have made a contribution to the future of children diagnosed with cancer. I thank you for your tremendous support, messages of hope and thanks. But most of all I thank you for sharing in the vision of this exceptional team of people who I believe can and will improve the outcomes of children with cancer through medical research.

You will be hearing from my colleague Emma Vincent in the future about our progress and how you can continue to support our vital research work. I know that Emma is looking forward to talking with you and receiving your feedback. You can contact her directly at any time on 02 9382 1810 or email on [evincent@ccia.org.au](mailto:evincent@ccia.org.au).

My very best wishes to you and thank you once again for all that you have done and continue to do for children diagnosed with cancer.

Warm regards,



Lisa Cheng  
Fundraising Director

PS: Thank you for your support **in 2006**. I know Emma is looking forward to updating you on the progress of our research throughout 2007. I would like to encourage you to fill in the feedback form included with this letter. We're particularly interested in your thoughts on how we communicate with you in terms of the level of detail we give about our research and the need for your support. Of course, if you would ever like to contact Emma directly, she'd

love to hear from you. Please call her on 02 9382 1810 or send her an email on [evincent@ccia.org.au](mailto:evincent@ccia.org.au)

PPS: I am also delighted to share with you the news that our Executive Director at CCIA, Professor Michelle Haber, was recently awarded the honour of Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her service to science in the field of research into childhood cancer, to scientific education and to the community. We're all extremely proud of Professor Haber's achievements, knowing that it is only with the support of people like you that this incredibly important work can continue.