

Imaginary trip delights cancer-care kids

"Good afternoon, boys and girls, and welcome to Santa-Air Flight 1987 to the North Pole. Please have your tickets ready and prepare to board."

By Bill Koto
staff writer

Only the Christ of Christmas is getting Sally Galloway of Farmington Hills through the pain of watching her 6-year-old son battle leukemia.

Doctors discovered Frank Galloway's bone marrow cancer in June 1986 — just three days after his fifth birthday.

After treatments three times a week at Detroit's Children's Hospital, the disease went into remission until Oct. 27, when Frank had a relapse. He now faces a possible bone marrow transplant in Seattle.

But Monday, Frank and 33 other cancer-care children celebrated Christmas by giggling inside an Air America L101/11 jet bound for the North Pole.

The event was hosted by the "Silverliners," a national non-profit group of former Eastern Airlines flight attendants.

Frank and the other children who boarded the flight in hopes of getting a glimpse of Santa weren't even born when Marilyn Toohy of Rochester Hills co-founded the Silverliners' Detroit chapter 13 years ago.

BUT TOOHEY, a former domestic stewardess, says it was all worth it just to bring some joy to the tiny chemotherapy patients.

FOR THE parents who watched quietly as their wide-eyed children chattered on the plane, the event was a bright spot in a bleak holiday season.

"It's been really heartwarming and touching to us to have so many people really care," Sally Galloway said.

"Part of me says, 'Oh, I wish (Frank's relapse) didn't have to happen now.'" But this time of the year, there's so many wonderful things like this that Frank can take part in. You live each day to the fullest."

"Because of our faith, we've been able to get through it one step at a time. It can be grim and it can be hopeless, but it doesn't have to be."

"The Rev. Steve Floyd, pastor of Holy Church of the Nazarene and the father of 4-year-old Joshua, a leukemia patient since July, said his son's disease is helping him counsel members of his church flock who face the same plight.

"We understand because we've been there," Floyd said. "We know what the pain's like."



CAMILLE MCCOY/staff photographer

On board the flight to the North Pole, a clown constructs a balloon animal for Frank Galloway, 6, of Farmington Hills. The balloons kept breaking.

"Once you've been a flight attendant, it's something that's in your blood," Toohy said as the jet taxied around Detroit Metropolitan Airport — without actually taking off — for an hour Monday.

Inside, Toohy and fellow Silverliners dressed as elves served lunch to the children and escorted them one by one to the cockpit as clowns provided entertainment.

"They really seem to believe they're on a trip to the North Pole," she said. "At the time of the year, it seems to keep them going."

The event was held in 34 other cities in the United States and Mexico, according to Toohy.

Lorraine Schultz, a Silverliner from Birmingham, said the festivities provide the children with an extra jolt of Christmas spirit to fight their cancer.

Many of the youthful passengers' leukemia and brain tumors Monday were in remission. Even so, most had a grim survival odds of 50 percent.

"I'm really touched by the whole thing," said Schultz, a former stewardess on international flights to Puerto Rico and the Caribbean islands. "It gives them a chance to go somewhere else besides the hospital."

"I'm beginning to believe this, too. I think I'm going to the North Pole."

Karen Couser, a social worker at Children's Hospital, agreed: "All we do is bad things to them in the hospital. To be able to do something fun with them is just wonderful."

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

As far as Farmington Hills city councilman Joe Alkateeb is concerned, dogs are a part of the family. Nonetheless, the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission's proposed rules for the city's parks ban dogs and any other pet from the parks, particularly the 212-acre Heritage Park on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile.

"Every family in America has three kids — a boy, a girl and a dog or cat," Alkateeb told city council members and parks and recreation commissioners at a special joint meeting Monday in the Spicer estate house in Heritage Park.

"I think you're causing difficulties for our citizens if you say no dogs, period," Alkateeb continued.

The draft set of rules, adopted by the parks and recreation commission, was reviewed at the joint meeting. Though the proposed ordinance was debated, the city council could not formally make changes or vote because the meeting was not a scheduled city council meeting.

The council is expected to discuss the proposed rules at a scheduled meeting, perhaps the next regular meeting, Monday, Dec. 21.

THE PROPOSED rules actually ban pets from Heritage Park only. In all other parks, such as Blosser Park on Farmington Road, just north of 13

Park talk Hills to consider rules, regulations

Mile, pets are allowed on leashes. But city councilman Terry Sever suggested making the rules consistent — either ban pets or allow them in all parks.

"Our concern in Heritage Park is that dogs are scaring geese and other wildlife," city manager William Costick said.

The draft ordinance also addresses issues such as littering, park curfew, hunting, destruction of plant life and natural surroundings, assembly, distribution of literature, fireworks and fireworks.

"Though discussion was limited, city councilman Aldo Vagnozzi took exception to the definition of littering as used in the proposed ordinance. 'No person shall litter or stand about in any parking lot in any public park unless actively engaged in loading or unloading goods or merchandise from a motor vehicle,' according to the proposal.

Vagnozzi criticized the phrase, "standing about. I don't see where that's a great threat." He also expressed concern about the wording

of a provision banning distribution of literature. Written permission from the city manager is required before "any circulars, cards, or written matter" may be distributed.

Vagnozzi gave an example of a family gathering in Heritage Park singing from song sheets that are distributed among family members.

OTHER COMMENTS, both positive and negative, were made about the park's proposed curfew, as well as the lack of notice about motorized bikes, such as mopeds.

A provision prohibits use or entry of public parks between sunset and sunrise. Also prohibited is the possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages or firearms and fireworks.

Hunting, trapping, catching, wounding, killing, treating cruelly, or robbing or molesting any nest or lair of any animal or bird is prohibited. The same goes for plant life and "natural surroundings," including the earth, sod, boulders or gravel.

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