



Media Release
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For immediate release

Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation introduces new Child Ambassador

Sometimes it takes more than doctors and nurses to make a medical miracle. Sometimes it takes a superhero.

Three years ago, Willa Marshall was diagnosed with a rare blood disease that only two to four children in Canada have, called Sideroblastic Anemia.

In the past, this diagnosis meant a life of constant blood transfusions for Willa. Thankfully, specialists at the Alberta Children's Hospital had another option. Dr. Victor Lewis, a Pediatric Oncologist and bone marrow transplant expert at the Alberta Children's Hospital offered a bone marrow transplant as a cure.

"We've had great success with using bone marrow transplants to cure kids with cancer," says Dr. Lewis. "Now we're beginning to use them to cure kids with other types of diseases – like Willa's. It's very exciting."

In 2007, Willa was among the first in the world to undergo a bone marrow transplant for her disease. Willa's little brother James was a perfect bone marrow match, which was vital to the transplant's success. Today Willa is a healthy and happy little girl who dreams of being a doctor one day so she can help kids too. Willa adores her little brother who she affectionately calls "Supes" - short for "Superhero" and will never forget how he helped saved her life.

This afternoon, the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation introduced Willa as its official ambassador, the ***2009 Children's Miracle Network Champion Child – part of the Children's Miracle Network Champions Across Canada Program Presented by Wal-Mart Canada.***

As a thank you to these kids for inspiring us all, Wal-Mart Canada sponsors this program, which allows the Champion Children from across Canada to meet in Ottawa in March. They then join Champions from across North America at Disney World in Florida!

"We are delighted that Willa is our official ambassador this year," says Jonathan Hoehn, President and CEO of the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation. "Willa's story is the perfect example of how our specialists' innovative research is saving and improving the quality of our kids' lives everyday."

Willa is one of 76 thousand children cared for by specialists at the Alberta Children's Hospital each year.

The Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation raises funds for excellence in child health and family centred care. Through the generosity of donors, the Foundation provides funding for innovative family centred programs, state of the art equipment, advanced medical training and internationally recognized pediatric research.

About Children's Miracle Network

Children's Miracle Network is a non-profit organization helping kids by raising funds for 170 children's hospitals across North America. In Canada, Children's Miracle Network raises funds for 14 children's hospitals, and has raised more than \$250 million since its inception.

About Walmart Canada

Walmart Canada's sponsorship of the Champions Across Canada program is an expression of its focus on making a difference in the communities its customers and associates call "home". Walmart Canada operates one of the country's strongest community involvement programs. Since 1994, Walmart Canada and its associates have raised and donated more than \$50 million to Canadian community groups and not-for-profit organizations through the Good Works program, with \$26 million of that going to the Children's Miracle Network and \$2 million dollars to the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation.

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