



KIDstruction Week Makes Big Impact

A shared passion for two St. Louis construction industry leaders turns into model for fundraising success

Rich Ledbetter, who led the civil construction firm Castle Contracting for 15 years, doesn't do anything halfway. So when, after being on the St. Louis Children's Hospital Foundation development board for a few years, he felt he wasn't making enough of a contribution, he considered resigning. But, after a conversation with a Castle Contracting foreman whose son was being treated for pneumonia at the hospital, it hit him.

"Why not create a way for people in the construction trades to support the hospital in a meaningful way?" Ledbetter says. "These are salt-of-the-earth folks with huge hearts and pride in their community."

KIDstruction Week was born. During one week in August, Ledbetter gave his employees the opportunity to contribute \$1 for each hour worked. The idea spread like wildfire, he says.

"One hundred percent of our 80 tradesmen participated. We grew closer as a company because we heard each other's stories about Children's. That's when we thought, let's take this to the greater construction community and see what happens."

For the past five years, regional architectural, engineering and construction industries have joined together in support of Children's Hospital through KIDstruction Week. The companies can match their employees' gifts as a percentage of their choice or make a lump-sum donation to demonstrate their commitment to the cause. More than 115 companies participated in the 2015 campaign, completed in August, with many of the companies matching their employees' gifts dollar for dollar.

Since the program began in 2011, KIDstruction Week has raised more than \$1 million. Funds raised help Children's Hospital fulfill its promise of providing a superior patient experience through such programs as music and art therapy, pediatric neuro-critical care, the hospital's Family Resource Center and sibling playroom and the *Healthy Kids Express* mobile health vans.

Chairing the campaign for the third year in a row, Patrick Kozeny, president, Kozeny-Wagner Construction Services, shares Ledbetter's passion for building KIDstruction Week participation in the St. Louis construction community. He matches that passion with energy generated from his family's personal experience with the hospital.

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In 2005, while visiting her cousins in California, the Kozenys' then 10-year-old daughter Elizabeth was diagnosed with anaplastic ependymoma, a very rare and aggressive form of brain cancer.

"We were devastated," he says, "and naturally were willing to travel the globe to find the best of the best for her. As it turns out, we had that in Dr. Josh Rubin, right here in St. Louis."

Joshua Rubin, MD, PhD, a pediatric neuro-oncologist at St. Louis Children's Hospital and associate professor of pediatrics at Washington University School of Medicine, had been a Harvard University mentor to the Los Angeles doctor who took care of Elizabeth.

"When we arrived back in St. Louis, Dr. Rubin was our first stop, and he did not disappoint," Kozeny says. "He is one of the most talented and compassionate caregivers a parent could ever ask for. We have been blessed to have him orchestrating Elizabeth's care."

That level of skill and compassion, Kozeny says, is the rule, not the exception, at Children's. That and the fact that Elizabeth is a vibrant, healthy 20-year-old and a college student celebrating her 10-year anniversary being cancer-free are two of the many reasons he dedicates so much time to making sure KIDstruction Week gets bigger and better each year.

"In our fifth year of KIDstruction, we have pushed the total amount raised over the \$1 million mark and we hope to eventually raise that amount every year," Kozney says. "But most importantly, we want St. Louis Children's Hospital to always be able to attract and retain the best and brightest talent. We want the hospital to continue exploring new frontiers in pediatric care."

