



SHRINERS

CARE FOR KIDS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shriners Care Cruisers provide lifesaving transport to Vancouver chemo treatment for leukemia patient and his family

(Kamloops, BC) When Anne Bombardier's son was diagnosed with leukemia after her husband retired, she faced the question of how to manage frequent trips to Vancouver for chemotherapy treatment on a diminished income and with a car that wasn't in peak driving condition. The answer was the Shriners Care Cruiser program.

Bombardier learned about the program -- which offers free passage on buses specially designed to transport children and youths with disabilities to Vancouver health care facilities from locations throughout BC -- during a visit to Ronald McDonald House. From that point forward, she and her 18-year-old son, Jeremy, were regular passengers.

The buses offer a clean travel environment which is imperative for someone with leukemia, not to mention beds and comfortable La-z-Boy chairs, movies to watch, and tables at which families can gather to visit and/or play cards.

"Our only other option would have been to rent a car or take the bus -- expenses we couldn't afford given that I lost income during the periods Jeremy was in Vancouver, and my husband was only receiving his retirement pension. I don't know what we would have done without the Shriners' help. It would have been financially crippling," said Bombardier.

Jeremy, now 22, is in full remission and working in retail while he determines his next steps. Formerly employed in the residential construction field, he is no longer allowed to be exposed to the dust and mold that are part of the job. Bombardier expects that he may go back to school after some additional recovery time.

For now, she identifies the Care Cruiser buses as one of the rare positives that emerged from the experience of her son's illness, and especially applauds the kindness and consideration of the drivers.

"The bus drivers and the Shriners are wonderful. They go out of their way to help people. My family will always be grateful for their generosity," added Bombardier.

“Some parents have so many things to remember and take care of with a disabled child, they can barely think themselves. Our specially equipped coaches enable children to travel comfortably and safely with their parents without adding to the mountain of medical expenses parents are already facing. A trip to Vancouver could be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back. We help make sure they don’t break,” said Tracy Cromwell, executive director for Shriners Care for Kids.

To promote and raise funds for this critical service, Shriners Care for Kids is teaming up with Carl’s Jr. Restaurants to present the first annual “Stars for Kids Day” on April 9 with a portion of proceeds from purchases benefitting the 3,500 people Shriners serves each year. Kamloops residents may visit a Care Cruiser in person between 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. at 1789 E. Trans-Canada Highway. They may also make a donation at www.bcshriners.com.

More than tasseled hats, clowns and mini-cars, Shriners Care for Kids provides access to exceptional pediatric care. The transportation network, including the Care Cruiser buses, enables children from throughout the province to travel to Vancouver health care facilities. The Care Cruiser program has logged approximately two million miles within BC since it began in 2001. No other Shrine Club in North America provides this unique service. As well, transportation, accommodation, and all medical treatment are provided at Shriners Hospitals for Children for patients requiring specialized procedures.

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