

Family day to benefit effort to store the blood of newborns

By **GARY SOULSMAN**
Staff reporter

When 2-year-old Brady Kohn was treated for a rare bone-marrow disorder in 2001, his parents experienced how important it is to save a child's umbilical-cord blood.

Carolyn and Andrew Kohn of Carrcroft, in Brandywine Hundred, had saved Brady's blood at birth so he was able to undergo a promising bone-marrow transplant using stem cells taken from his blood.

It was an opportunity that the Kohns were glad they could provide their son, even though he died in March 2002 from complications that came from having a weakened immune system. He had been diagnosed

with aplastic anemia.

Today the Kohns want new parents to know that they can play a role in fighting more than 45 life-threatening diseases, if their newborn's blood is banked at public blood banks that can be made available to patients in need of bone-marrow transplants. It's an effort that can help with diseases such as leukemia, blood disorders, immune deficiencies and cancers.

With this in mind, the Kohns have formed the Brady Kohn Foundation, which will hold its first fund-raising event from 3 to 10 p.m. May 31 at St. Anthony's in the Hills near Avondale, Pa. The event is billed as a family



Brady Kohn

day with a dinner, auction, music and games. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$10 for teens and free for children 12 and under.

Among the items being auctioned are an overnight sailing trip on the Chesapeake Bay; a dinner for four at Le Bec-Fin in Philadelphia; a one-week stay at Sea Colony in Bethany Beach and an overnight stay in New York City, which includes dinner and a Broadway show.

More than 100 volunteers will help with the event.

"Brady was the love of my life and he touched so many lives in his brief time here on Earth," says Carolyn, adding that Brady

was an expressive and energetic child who loved trucks, trains and "Bob the Builder."

"Our hope, our vision with the foundation, is to keep Brady's memory alive while raising awareness about the importance of donating umbilical-cord blood and bone marrow, and to fund leading research that will help uncover the mysteries around transplant complications," she said.

Dr. John Wagner, a former resident of Hockessin, has agreed to serve as medical director of the foundation. Wagner is scientific director of clinical research of the blood and marrow transplantation program and stem cell institute at the University of Minnesota. He was part of the medical team that made

history in 1991 by performing the world's first umbilical-cord blood transplant for leukemia.

"Ultimately, what we'd like to see," Wagner has said, "is that cord blood can be a donor source of stem cells for everyone, not just children."

It's Kohn's view that expectant parents can make arrangements to donate their newborn's umbilical-cord blood, at the time of birth, with no impact on labor or delivery.

However, less than 1 percent of parents make arrangements to store their cord blood in public blood banks. At present, she says, most cord blood is simply thrown away, though it's a "potential lifesaver."

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IF YOU GO

For the Love of Brady

WHAT: A dinner, raffle, auction, music and day of games

WHEN: 3-10 p.m. Saturday, May 31

WHERE: St. Anthony's in the Hills, Kaolin Road, near Avondale, Pa.

INFORMATION: 765-2875; www.thebradykohnfoundation.org

ADMISSION: \$25, ages 13-18 \$10, 12 and younger free