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Parents of 4-year-old: 'Please go and enjoy your life. Danny did.'

Chicago boy who died of seizure befriended the lonely, consoled the sad

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Danny Stanton lived only about 1,750 days. But he made the most of each one.

He befriended shy kids and adults. He came to older kids' baseball games in full uniform, mitt in hand, because he always wanted to be ready to play.

Last summer, the 4-year-old stepped up to help a team of 7-year-olds who were short a man during a championship game at Wildwood Park, 6950 N. Hiawatha.

"He walks out, his shirt is down to his calf because it's so big on him," said family friend Mary Duffy. "He hit the ball. He made plays. He got on base."

The little boy who family and friends called a rare treasure died Saturday from complications from a seizure.

"He kind of had a knack for who needed his attention and his love," said his uncle, Tom Stanton. "If he felt you were down, he would come and sit on your lap and give you a hug. To know Danny and spend time with him is to know joy."

Grateful mothers in his Edgebrook neighborhood recalled how Danny drew out their shy children.

When Mary Duffy encouraged her son Charlie to join in with other kids who were playing, Danny overheard and took things in hand. "Danny took him inside and laid his Power Rangers and Transformers on the floor, and said, 'Charlie, let's play with this,'" she said. "That's all it took. That started a friendship."

Danny performed the same magic on grown-ups who seemed withdrawn or preoccupied. One of them, only half in jest, told his family after his death: "What am I going to do now? Danny was the only one that would talk to me."

"All was right in the world when Danny was around," said his neighbor Pete Lazzara, "because he had a very infectious smile."

Danny loved to play baseball, football and kickball with his brother Johnny, 6.

He enjoyed drawing for hours alongside his sister, Mary Grace, 8. When he took care of his 1-year-old brother, he'd lower his voice and softly say, "Tommy, what do you need?"

Danny grew up in the fun house on the block. Other kids would ask: "When are we going to the Stantons'?" Games were always breaking out on the lawn, and he was always in the middle of them.

"The kid was a natural athlete," said his father, Michael. "He could hit lefty, he could hit righty. He rode his bike at 3."

Danny attended Creativo Preschool in Edgebrook. He was baptized at St. Mary of the Woods Church, 7000 N. Moselle, where his funeral will be held at noon Wednesday, followed by burial at All Saints Cemetery.

Danny will be buried with his baseball mitt, his dad said.

Visitation is 3-9 p.m. today at Smith-Corcoran Funeral Home, 6150 N. Cicero.

Danny is also survived by his mother, Mariann; and grandparents Thomas and Cheryl Stanton and Mariann Murtaugh.

"He wanted a hug every morning," his father said. "This is the thing I'm going to remember forever -- after he put his arms around you, he would tuck his arms into the front, and he'd lay his little face against yours and he'd let you wrap your arms around him.

"After he passed, we were at the hospital. He had gone. We just took everything off -- the tubes and the tape. And I laid him on my chest and tucked his arms on my chest and laid there for about an hour. We were taking him into our hearts."

His family said they hope that Danny's legacy to the world will be that other parents remember to hug their kids and to live -- fully live -- every day.

This is how they put it in Danny's death notice: "Please go and enjoy your life. Danny did."