

## The Wilmette Beacon

# Wilmette, Loyola Academy hockey players skate for Danny Did Foundation



*Members of the Loyola Academy girls' hockey team make their way around the rink.*

**Neil Milbert, Freelance Reporter**

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After the sudden death of his 4-year-old son on Dec. 12, 2009 because of a sudden epileptic seizure, Mike Stanton wrote at the conclusion of his obituary: “Please go out and enjoy your life. Danny did.”

Maureen O’Donnell of the Sun-Times was touched by those words and wrote an obituary for her newspaper. An Associated Press reporter picked up on her obituary and did a story that went out to papers all over the country on Christmas Eve.

It was then that Mike and his wife, Mariann, decided: “We’re going to start something in Danny’s memory. This is going to be his continued place in the world.”

That was the birth of the Danny Did Foundation, an organization whose primary mission is to prevent deaths caused by seizures.

It attempts to do so by advancing public awareness of epilepsy and sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP), striving to improve communication about SUDEP between medical professionals and families affected by seizures and advocating for the mainstream acceptance and use of seizure detection and prevention devices that may assist in preventing seizure-related deaths.

The foundation’s first venture was pizza and beer after a Loyola University basketball game in February, 2010.

That was the start of something big: in the intervening years, the Danny Did Foundation co-founded by Mike and Mariann has raised more than \$5 million and has assisted families in all 50 states and 11 countries.

Mike's brother, Tom Stanton, is the foundation's executive director. The other full-time employee is Mary Duffy, whose son, Charlie, was one of Danny's friends.

Playing a supporting role as volunteers at Foundation events are the three other Stanton brothers, Liam, Pete and Paddy, and three sisters, Katie, Megan (Stanton-Anderson) and Anne (Colassanto) and their families.

There's a strong Loyola Academy connection — Mike, Tom, Liam, Pete, Paddy and Anne all are graduates.

On Sunday, April 7, the Foundation held a major event at Lake Forest Academy's MacKenzie Ice Arena.

It was called "100 Miles for Danny" and it consisted of 20 teams skating legs of five miles — 55 laps of the rink — from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. Mike Stanton headed the Friends of Danny team that skated miles 96-100.

Each team raised a minimum of \$1,000.



Among the participating hockey teams from the North Shore were the Lake Forest Academy boys, the Loyola Academy girls, the Lake Forest Falcons and the Wilmette Braves and Tribe. Winnetka's Sacred Heart elementary school also was represented by a contingent of skaters.

Providing some big-time atmosphere were Blackhawks' mascot Tommy Hawk, the Blackhawks' Ice Crew, the Blackhawks' Street Team and retired Blackhawk player Brandon Bollig.

"We do these events in the spirit of Danny," said Tom Stanton. "If he was here this was the kind of day he would love."

“100 Miles for Danny” was the brain child of Nick Curley, a Taft High School freshman from Chicago’s Norwood Park neighborhood who in 2012 conceived an earlier fund-raising bonanza by the same name for the Danny Did Foundation.

“My parents went to a Danny Did fund-raiser and I had no clue what it was about,” remembered Nick. “I asked them about it. They explained to me the whole story about Danny and the Foundation his parents and family had created. My cousin has the same disease and I didn’t want what happened to Danny happen to her. I wanted to do something.

“Being a 7-year-old at the time my options were kind of limited. What I was good at was hockey. I asked my parents: ‘What if I used hockey as a fund-raiser?’ and my parents gave me the idea of skating 100 miles over the summer. Obviously, I couldn’t do it all in one day so they contacted a bunch of different rinks.”

Not only did 20 rinks respond, they helped generate publicity for “100 Miles for Danny,” first in Illinois and then nation-wide.

Nick began his tour at the Glenview Ice Center and it concluded between periods of a Chicago Wolves game in Allstate Arena.

At one of his stops he was joined by the Blackhawks’ Hall of Fame center and current ambassador, Denis Savard.

Another stop was in Rockford at the home of the Blackhawks’ farm team, the Ice Hogs.

“That was during the NHL lockout and a lot of Hawks had dropped down to Rockford,” recalled Nick. “I met Brandon Bollig and Andrew Shaw.

“The whole thing got a lot publicity. There were donors from all 50 states and around 26 foreign countries.”

According to Tom Stanton, “Nick raised almost \$40,000.”

Last September the thought of a different format for the 100-mile skate crossed Nick’s mind:

“Instead of having all this publicity generated from one person going a total of 100 miles at 20 different rinks why not have 20 different teams go a total of 100 miles at one rink?

“That way they would tell their friends and their friends would tell other friends. I told Tom and he thought it was a great idea so my parents and I reached out to all of our friends from different teams in the hockey community.”

Again, the response was excellent.

In addition to the contingents from the North Shore, the list of teams that were represented included Notre Dame College Prep, Saint Ignatius College Prep, the Skokie Flyers’ Bantams,

Nick and his teammates on the Lincolnwood Bulldogs, the McFetridge Bulldogs from Chicago, the Chicago Fire Department and the Ozaukee Ice Dogs from Wisconsin.

John McShea, the father of two children with epilepsy, skated miles 86-90.

“We had about 300 hockey players and skaters doing five miles each,” Tom Stanton said.

“I also want to thank Darrin Madeley, the former NHL goalie who directs and coaches the hockey team at Lake Forest Academy, for having us here and donating the ice for the entire day.

“We’re going to keep the fund-raising for ‘100 Miles for Danny’ open until the end of April.”

For information on making a donation, contact Tom Stanton at 773/307-2336 or the Danny Did Foundation at [www.dannydid.org](http://www.dannydid.org).

Other Internet sites include Facebook: @Dannydid; Twitter: @DannyDidOrg; Instagram:@Danny-did-Foundation; LinkedIn: @the-danny-did-foundation.

Among the other sports undertakings under the auspices of the Danny Did Foundation are sponsorship of a 60-member team in the Chicago Marathon, a kids’ kickball tournament in the Edgebrook neighborhood of Chicago and a youth basketball tournament in Niles.

The Foundation’s major social event is the Hearts and Hugs gala at Theatre On the Lake in Lincoln Park on Nov. 9.

Epilepsy affects 3.4 million people in the U.S. and 65 million people worldwide. One in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy during their lifetime. Thousands of deaths occur annually from sudden unexpected death in epilepsy.