

A CANCER SURVIVOR'S PARENTS RUN A SCHOOL FOR SICK KIDS

NANCY AND ROD ZUCH

Plainview, N.Y.

It's show-and-tell on a recent Friday, and 5-year-old Jessica can barely contain herself. "I got pom-poms!" she says, shaking them at her pint-size classmates.

A typical preschool scene, but the Morgan Center (themorgancenter.org) is anything but ordinary: All 24 kids, ages 2 to 5, have cancer. The school was launched in 2003 by Rod

and Nancy Zuch, whose daughter Morgan, now 11, survived leukemia diagnosed at age 2. Nancy, 44, recalls her frustration that Morgan, her immune system weakened by chemo, couldn't go to school and risk being exposed to routine illnesses: "She was missing learning and friendship. Where was the justice in that?"

Today the school has a staff of six—led by Nancy, a grade school teacher—instructing kids in reading, math and art. Maintaining strict sanitary standards, teachers clean surfaces with

antibacterial wipes and send a child home at the first sneeze. Projects start and end in a day to provide a sense of accomplishment for kids who miss school for doctor appointments.

All that means the world to Matt Perlungher. His son Jack, 5, battling kidney cancer, has blossomed socially since starting last fall. "He learns his ABCs," says Matt, "but more important, he's made two best friends and has fun. This place is a blessing."

By Jennifer Wren

"We want to give these children and families a sense of normalcy—where it's not just about the hospital," says Nancy (with Rod and students).



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