

Heroes Among Us – Submission

Hanna's Dream, Inc.

Glass shattered, metal bent, lights flashed and the sky opened up. Her mother lifted Hanna; arms stretched and handed her only daughter to God.

Hanna died that day suffering from fatal head trauma but her life was not without gifts – she was an organ and tissue donor and saved the lives of six people because of her gift, the gift of life. <http://hannasdream.squarespace.com/home/2009/8/7/organ-donation.html>

Hanna was 6. She was blonde with blue eyes. Her smile lit a room and you were never the same after meeting Hanna. But her life was short but not unnoticed. At 5 years old Hanna had a dream, literally. She woke one morning to tell her mother, Robin, of her dream – the dream of helping other little children through art. And then the dream came true, Robin, with the help of Hanna created Hanna's Dream, Inc.

Hanna's Dream, Inc. was established in May, 2008 less than one year before Hanna lost her life in a tragic car accident, an accident that would change the lives of Hanna's family and friends forever.

In the aftermath of Hanna's death, Hanna's Dream, Inc. has grown and fulfilled the dream of a little girl, help children in need through art. Since March, 2009 donations of art supplies have been made to:

Solevu Village in Malolo, Fiji

[CASA in Flathead Valley, Montana](#)

[The Joseph House](#), Missoula, Montana

[The Flathead Head Start Program](#), Elmo, Montana

By the end of 2009, Hanna's Dream will have completed another two donations to organizations dedicated to helping children in need with a strong emphasis on art therapy.

Robin Lyon-Cini, Hanna's mother is the driving force behind Hanna's Dream along with a volunteer Board of Directors who had all been personally impacted by Hanna, the accident and "The Dream". Robin has said that if she did not have Hanna's Dream, her days would be darker and more difficult to endure. But knowing that Hanna had a single purpose greater than herself motivates Robin and the Board to continue the work on a daily basis.

Hanna's Dream, Inc. has a website www.hannas-dream.com and a blog www.hannasdream.squarespace.com.

Photos:

The Accident - April 17, 2009



Hanna



● Doing Good

"Now my little butterfly really has her wings"



All Robin Cini's little girl, Hanna, ever wanted was to share her love of art with children less fortunate than herself. And it turned out to be a dream that would come true—healing more hearts than anyone ever could have imagined...

Everywhere Robin Cini looked, there were reminders.

A jar of "pixie dust" in the living room where Hanna had pretended she was a fairy princess. Her Barbies in the corner, waiting for Hanna to make them dance again.

But mostly, there was Hanna's art. Drawings of butterflies with rainbow wings on the refrigerator. And on an easel nearby, a half-done painting of pink and red hearts.

Now she'll never finish it, the Kalispell, Montana, single mom realized. And, her eyes clouding with tears, she felt her knees go weak...

"Hanna Banana from Montana," Robin often called her little girl, who had a heart as big as the universe. So it was no surprise that when a commercial about children growing up in poverty came on the TV screen, tears filled Hanna's blue eyes.

"Watch over those children and make them safe and happy," she prayed that night. And the next

morning, she bounced into Robin's room.

"Mommy," she bubbled, "I had a dream that we could help poor kids do art, and that will make them happy!"

Ever since Hanna could hold a crayon, she'd loved drawing, especially girly things, like butterflies and flowers. "I want to be an artist when I grow up," she often said.

And now, Robin smiled, Hanna longed to use art to help others.

To Fiji with love

Robin wasn't sure how to make it happen. All she knew was that a dream like Hanna's deserved to come true.

So Robin set up a non-profit organization called Hanna's Dream. Handing out fliers, she asked for donations of art supplies. Then, through a friend who headed a foundation that had "adopted" a village in Fiji, Robin and Hanna shipped a 20-foot-long container filled with everything from

paint to modeling clay to the children of Solevu.

"I wish I could see the looks on their faces," Hanna dreamed. But Fiji was just too far away.

So Hanna had leaned over the table, a smudge of paint on her chin, pouring her heart into a painting of palm trees and flowers. To Fiji with love, she printed, a red heart for the "o" in "love."

And when their friend returned with pictures...

"The kids do look happy!" Hanna beamed, longing to plan another project closer to home.

So when Robin heard about a Head Start facility in economically challenged Elmo, Montana, it seemed perfect.

"Can I drop them off, too?" Hanna asked as donated supplies again filled their garage.

"You bet!" Robin promised. Yet that chance never came. Because a few days later, as Robin was driving Hanna and three-year-old Bayden to school, there was a screech of tires, a crash of metal... and the next thing Robin knew, her minivan had rolled over twice, landing on the passenger side.

My babies! Robin gasped, pinned herself. When she turned, she saw Bayden in his booster seat, screaming in fear, but blessedly okay.

But Hanna... her limp body hung from her seat

belt, her breath rattling in her chest. "It'll be okay, sweetheart," Robin called out, urging her to hang on. But minutes later, when Hanna let out a cry, a heartbroken Robin knew: Her little girl was gone.

They airlifted Hanna to the children's hospital in Spokane. But nothing could bring her back.

"I'm so sorry," doctors said, tears in their eyes. So, holding her little girl's hand one last time, Robin kissed the same silky blonde hair she'd brushed so many times. And donating her organs—Hanna's lungs, kidneys, her heart—she prayed they'd give other children a way to live so no other mother would suffer the heartache she was enduring.

Did you know? Many cultures believe that butterflies house the souls of deceased loved ones.

Now she's an angel

Still, Robin told herself, I have to be strong for Bayden. "Hanna went to Heaven," she tried to explain, pulling him close. "She's our angel now."

Yet now, back home, so many memories came rushing back. She was only six, Robin wept. She was supposed to have her whole life ahead of her!

It wasn't until she stepped into the garage, half-filled with art supplies, that it occurred to Robin: Hanna's Dream.



"Hanna loved drawing butterflies, and now when I see one, I can feel her presence," says Robin.

I have to keep her dream alive, she realized. For Hanna. And for children with so little, so that they might know the beauty Hanna saw in the world.

In fact, so many people were touched by Hanna's giving spirit, more art supplies than ever arrived on Robin's doorstep.

And two days before what would have been Hanna's seventh birthday, Robin was there in Elmo, as promised.

She'd feared it might be hard, with so many kids doing what Hanna loved most. Yet as she passed out crayons, markers and construction paper, Robin felt a peace deep inside.

"Hanna can't be here today," she told the excited kids. "But if she were, she'd be drawing right alongside you."

Today, at every Hanna's Dream giveaway, Robin sprinkles a little "pixie dust," what Hanna used to call glitter.

You are still here with me, aren't you, Hanna, Robin realizes.

"Hanna knew art was healing—and it's not only giving kids hope, but healing my heart, too," Robin says. "Hanna's Dream is the perfect way to keep my little girl's legacy alive!"

—Deborah Bebb

How art helps us heal

- ✔ It erases tiredness! Even coloring for a few minutes will make you less tired, says a recent study.
- ✔ It boosts your immune system! Folks who create artwork they think is good have higher levels of disease-fighting blood cells.
- ✔ It reduces anxiety! People with an illness who participate in "art therapy" slash their anxiety by 42%, shows one study.



Photos: Craig Moore/GlacierWorld/Zuma Press (2); bpowelldesign/istockphoto.

Donations

