



One of the many missions here at Grace Lutheran is our annual Jared Box Collection. Each fall, on the second Sunday in October, we kick off our collection. Members and friends of Grace are encouraged to take home a plastic container and instructions, shop, and bring their filled shoebox back to Grace. The boxes are then distributed to local hospitals such as Mount Nittany Medical Center, UPMC Altoona, Geisinger Hospital in Lewistown, Evangelical Hospital in Lewisburg, Jersey Shore Hospital, Penn Highlands Hospital in Clearfield, Tyrone Hospital, and J C Blair Hospital in Huntingdon.

Grace Lutheran collects about 175 plastic shoeboxes filled with toys and well wishes for sick children. The boxes are placed on the altar on Dedication Sunday and included in our prayers before they are taken to local hospitals.

The goal of the Jared Box Project is to lift the spirits of children in the hospital. The boxes symbolize the importance of play and are filled with well wishes, hope, and love. Over 200,000 Jared Boxes have been delivered across the United States.

A Jared Box is a plastic storage box filled with small gifts, toys, games, and fun activities. Each box contains items selected for a specific age and gender. The boxes are delivered to hospitals. Jared Boxes provide a special diversion for young patients in emergency rooms, patient rooms, surgical centers, and clinics as they receive chemotherapy and other medical treatments. Jared Boxes bring smiles and laughter and lift the spirits of children in the hospital.

The Jared Box project was started in 2001 by the children at Our Lady of Victory School in State College, Pennsylvania to honor their classmate and friend, Jared. He was a brave little boy who battled cancer with courage and faith that continues to inspire us all.

Jared was diagnosed with an incurable brainstem tumor in 1999. At just 5 years old, he demonstrated faith, wisdom and compassion for others.

Jared maintained his sense of humor and the joys of childhood through play. He carried a backpack full of toys and games to all appointments, and questioned why the other children didn't bring toys to their exam rooms. Jared shared his toys and invited the other children to join him in a game of UNO. Jared's battle ended on November 12, 2000 while listening to his favorite song, "You'll Be In My Heart."

Jared's Mom, Ruth, shares these thoughts: "Think of one of your happiest childhood moments. Chances are it involved play - whether it was a favorite vacation, special toy, or time spent with family and friends. A Jared Box is the gift of play to children in the hospital. Play is important, and a life threatening illness shouldn't interfere with the need to play."

"Playing UNO is a favorite memory for my family. We can hear Jared's backward laugh, remember him laughing so hard he wet his pants and how he threatened that anyone who cheated had to clean the toilets! Jared was adamant about playing fair. Unfortunately, Cancer doesn't play fair. However, with your help, the efforts of the Jared Box Project will continue to give ill children the gift of play, well wishes, hope and love."

