



# GRADE SCHOOL PROGRAM

[meaganbebenekfoundation.org](http://meaganbebenekfoundation.org)



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# OUR STORY

Meagan Bebenek was just 4 years old when her family heard the words that would change their lives forever. Meagan was diagnosed with an inoperable and malignant brain tumour that would take her life a short 6 months later.



When Meagan's mother, Denise, left the hospital after Meagan passed away, she knew she had to do something to help other children who faced serious health challenges. She also knew that no family should have to walk this path alone and founded **Meagan Bebenek Foundation: Creating a Circle of Hope**.

# OUR MISSION



Share a message of hope.  
Harness the power of community.



Raise awareness about paediatric brain tumours, to foster hope and improve outcomes for affected children and their families.



Raise valuable funds for research into paediatric brain tumours.

# KIDS HELPING KIDS

Not only does a brain tumour diagnosis affect the patient, but also the entire family and their community. When Meagan was sick, her school community rallied in support around the Bebenek family.



The vibrant Kids Helping Kids school program offered by Meagan's HUG provides unique leadership opportunities for youth. The opportunities focus on the need to help others in the community.

We know that children who develop a sense of empathy have a strong sense of security and build relationships with other children and educators. This equips them well for learning.

# MEAGAN'S HUG

Every spring, Meagan Bebenek Foundation's signature 5KM Meagan's HUG event attracts thousands of participants of all ages and abilities. The event culminates with everyone joining hands to encircle The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). This human hug is a clear signal of support and a message of hope for all: you are not alone. Together, we are stronger. Together, we hug!

# SCHOOL PROGRAM

Meagan Bebenek Foundation has many school communities that, in the same spirit as the HUG around SickKids, host their own HUG events in their schoolyards or hallways. Students, teachers and administrators share that this "human hug" is a powerful experience, leaving a lasting impression within the school. The school HUG brings students together for a common cause: to support kids with brain tumours. In doing so, students develop empathy and compassion towards their fellow students and community.

“Meagan Bebenek Foundation and its 'Circle of Hope' has empowered us, the St. Jane Frances School community, to carry on after the loss of one of our Angels. We find the utmost strength in the silence as we come together and hold hands to form our circle of hope each and every year.”

**Angela Frydrych, Teacher**



# CRANE CEREMONY

The origami crane is recognized as a symbol of hope. In Japanese legend, if a person folds a thousand paper cranes, their wish will come true. Annually, Meagan Bebenek Foundation hosts The Crane Ceremony. Students from schools across the GTA present thousands of handmade origami cranes to Meagan Bebenek Foundation Heroes, children or young people affected by a brain tumour diagnosis. This gesture of support reminds the Heroes and their families that they are not alone.



# GETTING STARTED

Bring the HUG to your classroom or school. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3:

# 1

## STEP 1

Using lesson plans and activities available, Meagan's story can teach and strengthen the concepts and positive outcomes of hope, understanding, gratitude, and support for others.

# 2

## STEP 2

Engage and empower students to take a lead role in planning the Meagan Bebenek Foundation campaign, helping them to connect not only with the cause but also develop leadership skills in a meaningful way.

# 3

## STEP 3

Bring your school community together for a HUG using whatever space you have available. A sports field, playground, or sidewalk around the school will all work well. Take pictures and share them with us @meaganbebenekfoundation

## WHY WE HUG

- because brain tumours are the leading cause of cancer-related death in children and adolescents
- we want to make a difference
- to show our support to the patients and families affected by paediatric brain tumours
- to demonstrate the strength of community when someone is in need
- to provide financial support for research projects, some resulting in seminal discoveries, which can lead to the establishment of clinical trials, translating into less toxic treatments, better quality of life and improved survival rates for young brain tumour patients
- to share a message of hope
- TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

"Seeing how our whole school community came together to support such a meaningful cause made me incredibly proud of our school."

Lauren,  
Student Ambassador



# THE IMPACT

Children returning to school after a prolonged illness or absence often experience higher levels of anxiety than their peers. Some children have physical or neurological impairments attributed to their treatment plans. They often suffer from low self-esteem and experience bullying at a higher rate. The key learnings from the Kids Helping Kids school program can make the transition back to the classroom easier.

The school program can help all children! Every school has a "Meagan" who could use the help and support of their community to overcome whatever challenge they may currently face.

120,000+

students

in Kids Helping Kids  
school program



With your support, we are improving outcomes, quality of life, and survival rates for children and young people with brain tumours. Our goal is to translate research observations into tangible benefits for our children affected by brain tumours.

## DONATIONS SUPPORT

- Families throughout their cancer journey
- Seed research projects
- The purchase of cutting-edge equipment
- The ongoing funding of the Toronto Brain Tumour Network tissue bank
- Meagan Bebenek Foundation Neuro-oncology Fellowship

“Meagan Bebenek Foundation has helped tremendously in the acquisition of cutting-edge critical equipment that is enhancing the future landscape of discovery and recovery in brain tumour research.”

– Dr. James Rutka, Director  
of the Brain Tumour  
Research Centre

## MEET HERO CHRIS

After only a few days of symptoms, 11-year-old Chris was rushed into the ER, hardly conscious. A biopsy showed that he had an inoperable brain tumour. The seed money used to develop his chemo protocol was provided by Meagan Bebenek Foundation



Since graduating with a Bachelor of Commerce from Queen's University in 2020, Chris is now working as an analyst at a strategy and consulting group.

"I vividly remember a reporter asking what Meagan's HUG means to me. I stood there speechless while tears poured down my face."

– Meagan's HUG Hero, Chris

# HOW WE HELP



The Kids Helping Kids school program team will be by your side to provide support and guidance along the way. We will provide you with the necessary resources to help make the program a success!

- A dedicated team member to answer questions and provide any planning support
- Share resources such as audio visual materials and flyers facilitating the integration into your school program
- Collateral to support your program and fundraising, and create awareness in your community
- Arrange for a speaker to visit your school to share Meagan's story
- Act as a resource for fundraising efforts and HUG logistics

## NEXT STEPS

Have questions about bringing Meagan Bebenek Foundation's HUG to your school? Interested in a presentation to your students to kick-off your campaign? Reach out to us for support:

Email: [schools@meaganbebenekfoundation.org](mailto:schools@meaganbebenekfoundation.org)

Call: 416-239-7843

Visit our website: [meaganbebenekfoundation.org](http://meaganbebenekfoundation.org)

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