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Cause for celebration in the fight against cancer

Cicero students, staff to host parade for third-grader completing leukemia treatment at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

Cicero, Ill. — Dec. 1, 2021 — When starting kindergarten, playing with friends and learning the ins and outs of school are the biggest to-dos for a five-year-old. But for Jencarl Ponton of west-suburban Cicero, being diagnosed with leukemia at the start of his academic career three years ago meant much of the fun that comes with being a young child in school had to take a back seat.

Fortunately, just in time for the holiday season, eight-year-old Ponton, who returned to in-person learning this school year even while undergoing chemotherapy treatment, received the best news of his life — on Tuesday, Dec. 7, he finally gets to ring the celebration bell at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, signaling the end of treatment for the toughest battle of his life.

To kick off the celebration a few days early, Ponton's classmates and staff members from Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in Cicero will be hosting a community celebration for him on Friday, Dec. 3.

The fun kicks off at 1 p.m. as the Cicero Fire Department and Cicero Police Department pull up in front of Lincoln School (3545 S. 61st Ave.) to ring their bells and sound their horns for Ponton.

Immediately following the first responders' arrival, Lincoln will host a school-wide celebration for Ponton and his family, encouraging all students and staff to wear gold and yellow-colored clothing — the international awareness color for childhood cancer.

At 1:30 p.m., the entire school will line up along the perimeter of the school, where Ponton and his family will walk around the school in a celebratory parade. Firefighters and police officers will stick around to flash their lights as students and staff will congratulate the Pontons with balloons, homemade signs and cheers.

"As his teacher, I am so proud of his determination and strength," said Megan Irvine-Caravello. "Attending school every day — even after a chemo treatment — he has never complained once, and he has been eager to come to school, learn and make new friends."

For the Pontons, their Christmas miracle came true this year, and Cicero District 99 invites local media outlets to join the District in celebrating the strength of one of its own in overcoming childhood cancer. Camera crews and reporters are welcome to attend the celebration in-person.

For more information, please contact the District's Public Relations and Communications Team at jpisano@cicd99.edu and teukovich@cicd99.edu.