

US martial arts program helps kids manage cancer pain

February 19 2015, byMike Householder



In a photo from Jan. 28, 2015 in Southfield, Mich. Jayson Harris punches a pad held by Michael Hunt during the Kids Kicking Cancer class. The class, run by Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg, teaches martial arts relaxation and meditation techniques to children facing cancer and other serious illnesses. The program is designed to help the kids manage the stress, anxiety and pain of their illnesses and medical treatments. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

The young people who learn martial arts at a studio north of Detroit are not considered students.

Their instructors use a different word.

Heroes.

That's because the techniques these children learn will be used not to take on an opponent from a rival studio but against the [deadly diseases](#) that ravage their young bodies and threaten their lives.

Called Kids Kicking Cancer, the program helps [sick kids](#) learn to use [martial arts](#)-style breathing and [relaxation techniques](#) to manage stress, anxiety and pain stemming from their illnesses and medical treatments.

It was founded by Elimelech Goldberg, a rabbi and first-degree black belt in the art of Choi Kwang Do. Known to the children as "Rabbi G," Goldberg said he was motivated to start Kids Kicking Cancer by the memory of his daughter Sara, who was diagnosed with leukemia just before her 1st birthday and succumbed to the disease a little more than a year later.

"My daughter, at 2 years old, contributed so much to this planet, because she brought in this light. And now that's the light that I'm privileged to help spread to the rest of the world," Goldberg said before leading a class of 16 preteens and teenagers suffering from cancer, [sickle cell anemia](#) and other ailments.

One child in the class of "little heroes," as Goldberg calls them, is Jayson Harris, a 9-year-old from Detroit whose cancer is in remission.

"Being in class is like a second family to me," Jayson said shortly before taking his spot on the mat and driving his fist into a striking pad held by instructor Michael Hunt.



In a photo from Jan. 28, 2015 in Southfield, Mich., Da'Sean Williams, center, punches a strike pad held by Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg as Daunte Davis, left, and Jania Jordan, right, look on. Rabbi G., as he is affectionately known teaches martial arts relaxation and meditation techniques to children facing cancer and other serious illnesses. The program, Kids Kicking Cancer, is designed to help the kids manage the stress, anxiety and pain of their illnesses and medical treatments. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

The training also is designed to teach the kids to take control of their situations. Or as Goldberg says, to teach them to be victors instead of victims.

Hunt, 27, joined Goldberg's first class in 1999. He had already undergone a year of chemotherapy to treat a cancer of the muscles known as rhabdomyosarcoma, as well as having four ribs and a tumor removed from his side. Hunt later had two steel rods surgically implanted on either side of his spine.



In a photo from Jan. 28, 2015 in Southfield, Mich. Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg teaches martial arts relaxation and meditation techniques to children facing cancer and other serious illnesses. Goldberg watched his 2-year-old daughter lose her battle with cancer and decided he wanted to give sick kids a fighting chance. So, Rabbi G., as he is affectionately known founded Kids Kicking Cancer. The program is designed to help the kids manage the stress, anxiety and pain of their illnesses and medical treatments. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

Being a part of Kids Kicking Cancer allowed him to cut down on the medications he had been taking to manage the pain, and as a trainer he is an ever-present reminder to enrollees that the program can help.

"I'll tell them my story, and they're like, 'Oh, OK. Now, I know I can do it,'" Hunt said.



In a photo from Jan. 28, 2015 in Southfield, Mich. Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg meets with his class which teaches martial arts relaxation and meditation techniques to children facing cancer and other serious illnesses. Goldberg watched his 2-year-old daughter lose her battle with cancer and decided he wanted to give sick kids a fighting chance. So, Rabbi G., as he is affectionately known founded Kids Kicking Cancer. The program is designed to help the kids manage the stress, anxiety and pain of their illnesses and medical treatments. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)



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More information: kidskickingcancer.org

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Citation: US martial arts program helps kids manage cancer pain (2015, February 19) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-02-martial-arts-kids-cancer-pain.html>

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