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### GWU Baseball Team Visits Children Fighting Cancer

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# GWU Baseball Team Visits Children Fighting Cancer

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Office of University  
Communications

December 9, 2014

## *Program Continues Tradition of Supporting Kids with Disease*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Throughout the past three years, Gardner-Webb University's baseball team has raised thousands of dollars to help children fight cancer. Players experienced first hand how that support impacts lives during a recent visit to Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, N.C.

Ten GWU baseball players and coaches toured the hospital, learned about its services and interacted with children on a day that helped foster an appreciation for the challenges cancer patients face, said GWU Head Baseball Coach Rusty Stroupe. "I hope our team left the hospital with a deeper appreciation of how fortunate they are to be healthy, talented college baseball players," Stroupe offered, "and I hope they came away realizing the difference they can make in the lives of others."

The team's support of children battling cancer began several years ago when players and coaches developed a friendship with a local girl, Carey Heavner, who later lost her life to the disease at 11 years old. "It hit us really hard," Stroupe reflected. "I wanted to make sure we remembered her and tried to do our part to help other children fight cancer."

As a result, the baseball program has raised money for the Vs. Cancer Foundation, a nonprofit organization that has helped more than 40,000 children in their fight against the disease. Student-athletes shaved their heads for the St. Baldrick's Foundation and grew beards during "No-Shave November," generating more than \$12,000 in donations.

Levine has received half of all funds the GWU baseball program has raised. During this month's visit to the hospital, players like current sophomore pitcher Jeremy Walker saw how fundraisers make a difference in the lives of real people. While meeting children at the hospital, Walker connected with Skye, a young girl battling cancer. "We did crafts and she was smiling," Walker remembered. "She looked so happy, despite her health. Going in there and seeing her and the other children happy in such sad situations touched me."

Walker said he has always desired to support people with cancer, after a childhood friend's mother battled the disease. He said his cancer-aid experiences as a member of the GWU

baseball team have deepened that drive to help others. “I realize that kids with cancer don’t have the opportunity to play baseball the way I do,” he shared. “What we can do is reach out, spend some time with these kids, write them a letter, get to know them and make their day. We need to realize that God has given us so much and we need to give to others.”

*The largest children’s hospital in the southeastern United States, Levine Children’s Hospital in Charlotte, N.C., provides expert care in more than 30 areas of pediatric medicine in a child-friendly, child-focused, family-centered atmosphere.*

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).*