



***“My son felt joy, and the feeling of someone caring. He felt cool, not different.”***

In 2003, Megan Turcotte’s son Josh was born with a rare medical condition called gastroschisis. It is a birth defect that leaves a hole in the abdomen, allowing the “insides” to be on the outside. As a result of complications, he lost most of his small intestine and a portion of his large intestine.

Josh’s parents work hard to give him as normal a life as possible. But, while other children fill their days with school, friends and sports, Josh has spent a good portion of his life in the hospital, enduring multiple surgeries and very rigorous medical treatments.



A few years ago, Josh’s parents enrolled him in the **Beads of Courage Program**. Beads of Courage, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that helps children with serious illness record, tell and own their stories of courage through the use of symbolic beads. It’s courage you can touch.

In the signature Beads of Courage Program, children like Josh receive colorful beads for each test and treatment they undergo. Every bead Josh is wearing represents a medical procedure he faced with courage.

Among the beads on a child’s strand, the most coveted are the Act of Courage beads. These handcrafted glass beads are given on the toughest of tough treatment days. They say to a child, who has already been through so much, **“Keep on going. Don’t give up.”**

Every Act of Courage bead is meaningful, but a bead from a professional athlete has added impact. That’s what the Carry A Bead program is all about. When Josh received a bead that was carried on the field by a pro athlete, it lifted his spirits. It made him feel “cool, not different.”

This is my personal invitation to you to help us provide Act of Courage beads to the children we serve by supporting our **Carry A Bead** program. You will tell children battling cancer and other life-threatening illnesses that they are not alone. You’ll give them joy, and the feeling that someone cares.

Most Sincerely,

Jean Gribbon, PhD, RN, Executive Director