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Cottrell family knows CHaD baseball is much more than a game

By Alex Hall New Hampshire Union Leader Jul 31, 2019



Bella Cottrell, second from left, her dad, Brian Cottrell and brother Damon Cottrell, at the 2017 Battle of the Badges game with Rochester firefighter Duane Marsh.

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Brian Cottrell wants to help Team Fire defeat Team Police in the ninth annual Children's Hospital at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Battle of the Badges baseball game Friday but he has first-hand experience with the bigger impact the game has.

For the third consecutive summer, the Gilmanton resident will take the field at Northeast Delta Dental Stadium with his daughter and CHaD buddy, Bella, before the game and his 9-year-old son Damon will serve as a bat boy.

The Cottrell family's relationship with CHaD began when Bella was diagnosed with von Willebrand Disease (VWD) at a young age. VWD is a blood disorder in which the blood does not clot properly and is the most common bleeding disorder, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Funds raised by the players and proceeds from the exhibition, which will begin at 6 p.m., benefit CHaD programs and services.

"This is special for me," said Brian, who is a Barnstead fire department captain and Gilmanton fire department call lieutenant. "I live with her every day and (it's) more that I can do to be more supportive."

VWD prevents Bella, 13, from playing sports but, while baseball is one of her favorite sports to watch and she is a New York Yankees fan, her passions have always been acting, dancing and singing.

Bella began dancing when she was 2 years old and was in her first theater production — Schoolhouse Rock — at age 6. Singing came along with her theater career. Of the three, Bella likes acting the most.

"I really enjoy being on stage and just performing in front of people, give a great show and stuff," Bella said. "Also, one of my favorite things about acting is it's cool to take on someone else's personality. It's hard sometimes because you can get a character that's totally different from your personality but it's cool."

Bella often performs with The Streetcar Company, which is the longest running community theater company in the Lakes Region, has been in several films and has appeared in commercials for companies like Hasbro. Her favorite film she has done is her first, which was a short horror movie called "Doll House" that was released in 2016.

"It was very cool," said Bella, who was 9 years old when the movie was filming. "Most kids say their first film was a little kid film. Mine was a very interesting horror movie."

Bella sang the national anthem at the CHaD Battle of the Badges baseball game two years ago and has also done so at the Battle of the Badges hockey game and the CHaD East-West All-Star football game.

Bella said performing "The Star-Spangled Banner" in front of so many people was both nerve-wracking and fun each time.

"I remember some of the first CHaD games, I remember all the bunch of people singing and I was like, 'Wow that's really cool,'" Bella said. "When I got to do it, it was an amazing experience."

With Bella's help, Brian, who grew up in Ashland, had raised more than \$1,500 for CHaD as of Tuesday. His goal is to reach \$2,000 by game day.

Bella is looking forward to seeing her friends from CHaD and watching her dad play baseball on Friday.

Brian wants Team Fire to cut Team Police's all-time series lead to 5-4, raise money that will help CHaD families like his and create another special memory with his daughter.

"I think the biggest part is it's something she can share with me," Brian said.

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