

Donor Profile: Cameron Lucas

by Jeffrey Smith & Jillian Lucas

In each issue of our newsletter, I like to share a story about a donor that I've met while working at the IOCDF. At our inaugural 1 Million Steps 4 OCD Walk in June 2013, I had the pleasure of meeting many amazing people, including a number of families who were walking together in support of one another. But, one family in particular really left an impression on me — the Lucas family.

Grandmother Jeanette, mom Jillian, and 4-year-old Cameron had formed a walk team, the memorably named, "Go Away Mr. Worry Poopy Face." Together, they raised funds and awareness amongst their family and friends — then traveled from Rhode Island to Boston to be part of the day's activities.

In speaking with the Lucas family, I learned that Cameron, who at the time was just 4 years old, had OCD. The Lucas family represents the best in grassroots fundraising: They all understand in a very personal way how OCD can affect an individual, and how it can furthermore affect an entire family. Seeing someone so young — and so courageous — also caught my attention. What a great story to help raise awareness of what OCD is and how it affects people from all walks of life, even those as young as 4 years old. Does the average person even know that OCD affects kids?

As a result, the IOCDF has selected Cameron Lucas, now 5 years old, to be a Boston Walk Grand Marshall for 2014 because of his courage, and for setting an example for how anyone of any age can get involved in the Walk, support the IOCDF, and raise awareness. Cameron's mom, Jillian, shared their story with me that day, and I wanted to share it with you here... in Jillian's own words.

— Jeff Smith, IOCDF Director of Development

CAPTAIN NEVER-GIVE-UP

My son, Cameron, has been battling his OCD for about a year, and generalized anxiety that preceded his OCD diagnosis. OCD is an unfair journey for any 5-year-old to have to deal with. Cameron has fallen victim to numerous, extremely vivid, irrational fears. His anxiety crippled him to the extent that he could not pick up a pencil, marker, pen, scissors, or use scotch tape, which dramatically affected his ability to function in school. His fears socially paralyzed him to the point where he would be petrified in social

situations at playgrounds, stores, libraries, public venues, and especially school.

Cameron explained his fears and worrisome thoughts — which he calls *bad thoughts* — in such detail, that he would begin to cry and beg me to make it stop... "Just make the bad thoughts go away, Mommy."

I could go on, but I think you get the picture of just how devastating Cameron's OCD had become. Cameron named his thoughts "Mr. Worry," and he disliked Mr. Worry so much that he called him "Mr. Worry Poopy Face." And, I have to agree — Mr. Worry needed to go! It's difficult to explain to a 5-year-old that it was OCD causing his thoughts, not him... he initially felt ashamed and did not really understand. We explained that nobody wants OCD, nobody wants anything that makes them feel bad, which is why we need to work at it to defeat it! We are determined to take all of these extra thoughts and make them positive thoughts!

Last year, Cameron, my mother, and I learned about the IOCDF Walk online. We chose to participate in the 1 Million Steps 4 OCD Walk so that we could show Cameron that he was not alone in his struggle and that he was part of a larger community of people living with OCD. There are others who are determined to defeat their own "Mr. Worry," and OCD cannot and will not hold us down!

The good news is that Cameron has been in treatment for a year. His progress is remarkable, and we are so pleased with how he is doing today. I am just awestruck at the progress that he has made and how we have clung together as a family this past year — and now, we get to channel that energy into helping others with our participation in the 2014 Walk. We were thrilled when the IOCDF wanted to honor Cameron as a Grand Marshall for his amazing attitude and courage. Cameron has gone from saying "Mr. Worry won't let me..." to "I am Captain Never-Give-Up!"

I would like to invite you to join Cameron on this journey and walk with the OCD community on June 7th in Boston. If you can't be in Boston, I would like to ask you to walk in your own community. Awareness and visibility are two important ways in which we will shatter the stereotypes of OCD and help kids like Cameron live full and productive lives.

I am so honored to be "Captain Never-Give-Up's" Mommy! ○

Go to www.iocdf.org/walk to learn how you can join the Lucas family at the 2014 1 Million Steps 4 OCD Walk.