



An Open Letter from Thomas J. Hanna

It is often said that wisdom comes with age. My corollary to this belief is that wisdom helps us establish priorities in life.

Blessed by being born in America and a Delaware native, I was mentored to care for others less fortunate than I by my grandfather and by my uncle, among other relatives. These two men, so influential in my life, matched good intentions with actions on behalf of others: supporting an orphanage in Newark, Delaware; advancing community efforts in Newport; promoting the Stormin' Norman Basketball League in Wilmington; conducting Christmas Toy Drives throughout New Castle County; supporting Little League in Stanton-Newport; expanding access to the Centerville School for learning-challenged students; and much, much more over many years.

I believe that both successes and sorrows in life shape our commitments and priorities. My journey led me to establish The Delaware KIDS Fund (Kids In Distressed Situations) to support at-risk youth in the First State. If I had to choose the key experiences in my life that furthered this commitment, it would be the threat of losing two of my own children due to unanticipated and potentially fatal health issues. In my view, there is no greater fear on Earth than the horror of possibly losing your child – and being powerless to effect a favorable outcome except through faith, the wisdom of medical professionals, and the support of others who care.

In the midst of two life-or-death experiences affecting my own children, I was exposed to other kids who were similarly afflicted but who did not enjoy the resources or the support of wonderful family or friends. When my older son – now 4 years old – was required to undergo emergency surgery and remained in critical care for several days, a child in the POD next to my son did not see a family member or friend for the entirety of our stay – no caring hand, no advocate, no love, no person whatsoever concerned with this child's treatment or care. In response to my query, one of the nurses implied that this beautiful, vulnerable child had been beaten and shaken by his father.

The Delaware KIDS Fund

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More recently, my youngest son was diagnosed with a very serious prenatal heart complication. I knew then that while my wife and I vigorously researched treatment options for our son, I also had to channel any excess emotional energy into something productive and positive for myself and others around me. After birth, my son's heart condition required prompt cardiovascular surgery. We were in PODS of 4 infants each in the critical care unit of the hospital. We could see and hear the entirety of developments and circumstances with the other infants and their families. It was impossible to ignore the anguish of parents who were justifiably hysterical after some had lost their child. What was especially heartbreaking was to watch other young children suffer without the support or advocacy of family or friends.

My vision and determination to establish The Delaware KIDS Fund crystallized in 2008 – during the prenatal period – and thus before the outcome and impact of my youngest son's heart condition was known with any certainty. For many of us, the emotional energy required to take on such a charitable mission emanates from real life loss and sorrow coupled with other life successes that afford us the strength and opportunity to reach out and give back.

Through your support and participation in The Delaware KIDS Fund, you will learn about a young man named Elijah. Elijah was a victim of parental violence and abuse here in Delaware. Fortunately, Elijah's plight was caught in time by New Castle County Police, and with the partial assistance of the Delaware KIDS Fund, he was placed in appropriate foster care and has since been adopted by this loving family. One more at-risk child was helped.

As you visit our site, I welcome your partnership in supporting the Delaware KIDS Fund. Through our leadership, fundraising, and accountability, I assure all benefactors that we will put every dollar to work to help at-risk youth; and to target those resources to maximum needs.

Together we can create a better tomorrow for these Delaware KIDS. Join me please. We are bound by our commitment to this great State and to our community. And after all; it's for the KIDS.

Thomas J. Hanna
Chairman

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