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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kiera's Dream Makes Research Grant a Reality

The Brian Morden Foundation (BMF), a member of the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation, sponsored Kiera's Dream on December 8, 2019, in hopes that enough money would be raised to help fund a childhood cancer research study. Kiera's dream before she passed away in 2017 was to hold a concert to benefit the Brian Morden Foundation, paying it forward to the organization that had helped her since her diagnosis in 2010.

The Brian Morden Foundation is thrilled to announce that Kiera's Dream a benefit concert was very successful. Board president and co-founder Dawn Morden noted, "The concert was amazing on so many levels, one of which is the amount of money raised. We'll be able to help fund at least two research studies and continue to help our local children with transportation expenses and other needs that they have." Sponsors' and Hopekeepers' donations resulted in nearly \$44,000, and advertising revenue was more than \$4600. Even though concert expenses totaled in excess of \$12,000, the generosity of numerous individuals helped the Brian Morden Foundation realize a total of **\$49,104.61**. Kiera's grandmother Cathy Chirdon remarked, "I know Kiera is thrilled and thankful to all who made her dream come true, bigger than she ever dreamed."

A number of Altoona Symphony Orchestra musicians donated their time and talents as did all of the Altoona Youth Orchestra members and their directors, Kiera's musician friends, and singer Victory Brinker, the seven year old who wowed the audience. The use of the Mishler Theatre was also donated as well as the reception following the concert.

On Tuesday, January 28, 2020, Dawn Morden and Cathy Chirdon, Kiera's grandmother and BMF Board secretary, will be traveling to Pittsburgh with Kiera's grandfather Bob Chirdon to present a \$35,000 check to Kelly Bailey, MD, PhD. Dr. Bailey is a physician scientist at the UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. Her clinical and research focus is on the adolescent bone tumor Ewing sarcoma. The goal of Dr. Bailey's work is to discover more effective treatment combinations for patients with metastatic or relapsed Ewing sarcoma. Currently, Dr. Bailey is working toward this goal in the laboratory by investigating ways in which immune cells in the body interact with Ewing tumor cells and other pediatric sarcoma subtypes. Ewing's is the type of cancer that took Brian Morden's life and Kiera Chirdon was diagnosed with another type of sarcoma, epithelioid.

On learning that she was being awarded research funding through the Brian Morden Foundation, Dr. Bailey commented, "Funding for rare tumor research is vitally important. I am impressed by the Brian Morden Foundation's dedication to raising funds to support research for Ewing sarcoma and other rare sarcoma subtypes diagnosed in adolescents and young adults. I am absolutely honored to receive support for my work from a foundation driven by patients, family members, and supporting members of the community. I thoroughly enjoy sharing my research with the people it impacts the most---the patients diagnosed with sarcomas and their families. I look forward to working and discussing data with the Brian Morden Foundation Board for years to come."

In conjunction with this donation, Dawn, Cathy, and Bob plan to visit 10 year old Hollidaysburg resident Addison Zearfaus (soon to be 11 on January 26th) who has been at Children's Hospital since December. Addison received a bone marrow transplant on December 10th and needs to remain in Pittsburgh for treatment until the end of March.

What began as a dream for Kiera Chirdon, a young violinist battling cancer, has become a reality and a ray of hope for many others in the same circumstance.

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