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## A day of fun for kids facing illness



Mark Vergari/The Journal News

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# Kids, families coping with tumors get a day of fun

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The Journal News

CHAPPAQUA — Ten-year-old Erin Bentivegna of Mahopac has overcome two tumors — one in her brain and another in a kidney.

"She's strong and never gave up," her mother, Margaret, said. "We were always honest with her about what the doctors were saying and today she's the best she's ever been."

About 400 people went to the home Saturday of Edward Manley, whose group, the Making Headway Foundation, supports families with children diagnosed with brain or spinal cord tumors.

"We're trying to give children a day of fun away from their hospital treatments," Manley said. "We're also trying to get the parents to know one another to remind them that they're not alone in their struggles."

Manley and his wife, Maya, have a daughter who overcame a brain tumor.

"I've met a lot of families going through the same struggles I've

been going through," Margaret Bentivegna said. "But Maya's family was the first time I met someone who had overcome a tumor. She really gave me hope."

Wanting to share that hope with others, the Manleys formed the Making Headway Foundation in 1996. The foundation is partnered with the New York University Medical Center and supports about 400 children in the tri-state area, 20 to 30 of whom live in Westchester.

Each year, the Manleys host a Family Day Celebration at their home that features clowns, petting zoos, Lego-building stations and a wide array of games.

"I went on the pony ride," Erin said. "It was No. 1 on my list of things to do here."

A handful of volunteers from the community were also present, helping the children out, including the high school football teams from Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua. Last year, the football teams raised more than \$13,000 for the Making Headway Foundation and

made regular visits to the children at NYU Medical Center.

Ben Green, 16, is a lineman for Greeley's varsity team. He shared his experiences visiting the children getting treatment at NYU.

"At first I was a little nervous because I didn't know what to expect," Green said. "But then you realize how great of a cause this is after you interact with these kids and play games with them. I always want to see our community doing well and help out whenever I can."

Visit [makingheadway.org](http://makingheadway.org).

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Amal Kharbouch, right, of Manhattan has her nails done Saturday by Anne Yim during the Making Headway Foundation's Family Day Celebration hosted by Edward and Maya Manley at their home in Chappaqua. The event is for families of children with brain and spinal cord tumors.