

**SOCIETY**

# Student with cancer helps others

Jan-Willem Knapen would like to build a house for families who have children under-

going cancer therapy at Kaiser Hospital in Santa Clara. An admirable effort for anyone, but for Knapen it's an extraordinary story of courage and perseverance.

**POSTSCRIPTS**



**CARLA SCHEIFLY**

Jan-Willen Knapen, or JW to his legions of friends, is a 16-year-old Bellarmine student who is battling brain cancer. During the last two years his education, as well as his beloved music classes (JW can play a mean bongo), have been interrupted by surgeries, radiation and chemotherapy treatments, but the young man continued to be buoyed by his simple motto "never, ever give up."

Last April doctors discovered a new tumor. This tumor is virulent and inoperable yet JW is still resolute in his motto, this time focusing on a new challenge, the building of JW House.

"I don't really even remember how the topic came up," said JW's physician, Dr. Alan Wong. "He was in the hospital, the hospital may have been busy and I mentioned that it would be great to have a home where families could stay."

"The next thing I know," said Wong, "JW is standing in my office with a check for \$10,000." It was in place of a "welcome home" party in



JW's native Belgium, that friends gathered and raised the first \$10,000. At his 16th birthday celebration \$8,000 more was raised. The momentum continued through the summer, a "JW House" committee was formed and applied for non-profit status and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation agreed to oversee donations until that status is approved.

Saturday night JW invited friends, teachers and doctors to "Doodles and Giggles," the first public exhibit and silent auction of his art. Three dozen framed drawings (with titles like "Mr.

Enthusiastic" and "Happy As Can Be") and hundreds of guests filled the Triton Museum in Santa Clara as JW was helped into the lobby by his parents Geert and Anne Marie Knapen.

"I feel so good," said JW as he sat down in a folding chair in the museum's foyer. "I can't believe so many people would be here for me." The evening's proceeds and recent donations (100 percent of which go to the house) brought the total amount of money raised by JW to \$100,000.

"We need \$250,000 to build the

house," says Helen Marchese Owen who co-chaired the event with JW's music teacher Barbara Mount. "JW asked me to fax him copies of the checks we receive," said Owen, "and last Sunday I knew I would have to call him and tell him since there was no mail, I had no checks to fax. Then I went out to run some errands, it was like a miracle, someone handed me a check." For more information on "JW House" call (408) 927-7885 or visit [www.jwhouse.org](http://www.jwhouse.org).

Also, currently blue bracelets with JW's motto "never, ever give up"

are being sold at Bellarmine for \$2 a piece. For more information on the bracelets call the school at (408) 294-9224.

And remember, tomorrow is Veteran's Day. No mail. Pray for a miracle.

Carla Scheifly's Postscript column appears regularly in the Daily News. For event consideration, send information to Carla Scheifly, 324 High Street, Palo Alto, CA 94301. E-mail [society@sanmateodailynews.com](mailto:society@sanmateodailynews.com) or call (650) 327-9090 ext. 536.



**ART WITH HEART** — Left, JW Knapen and Carol Chapman; above, Barbra Mount, left, and Helen Marchese Owen; below, JW Knapen with his parents Geert and Anne Marie Knapen. Daily News photos by Carla Scheifly.



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