

Posted on Thu, Nov. 25, 2004

Jan-Willem Knapen

LIVING TO FULFILL A MISSION

Mercury News Editorial by John Fensterwald

With the time that he has left, Jan-Willem Knapen is on a mission: to help families with children who are, like himself, very sick.

For two years, 16-year-old J.W. has been fighting terminal brain cancer with chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Twice this year, he was on the verge of death, only to bounce back with remarkable energy. What drives him on are a love of life and a determination to build a home for families of young cancer patients at Kaiser Permanente's Santa Clara hospital. The J.W. House will be his legacy.

Through events big and small, J.W. and his supporters have raised \$100,000 toward their goal of \$250,000. An auction of his artwork raised \$12,000 this month. J.W.'s blue bracelets with the inscription "Never Ever Give Up!" -- selling for \$2 apiece at local Starbucks -- are joining Lance Armstrong yellow as primary colors on Silicon Valley wrists.

J.W. is wise beyond his years; the messages on his Web site (www.jwhouse.org) are worth quoting at any Thanksgiving table. "I would encourage every family to make time for each other. To sit down and enjoy the presence of one another. . . . As much as possible. And to hug and love each other."

You can donate online to J.W. House at www.jwhouse.org/donate.htm or by check to the Community Foundation of Silicon Valley (60 S. Market St., Suite 1000, San Jose, Calif. 95113). Note J.W. House in the memo of the check.