

‘Reward Their Courage’

In Alton, Ill., members of Post 1308 present the Courage Inspiration Determination Medal to sick youngsters battling life-threatening diseases

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Since 2015, members of VFW Post 1308 in Alton, Ill., have uplifted sick and terminally ill children — more than 500 in the U.S. and even one in London, England.

According to member Wayne Able, the Post presents the Courage Inspiration Determination (CID) Medal to children in hospitals in nearby states. On July 19, Able said “several” children at Norton Children’s Hospital in Louisville, Ky., received CID medals. (See November/December 2016 Checkpoint for more on the CID.)

Able, co-creator of the CID program, said that wherever Post members travel to present a medal, he calls the local Post to participate in the ceremony as well.

The thought behind this gesture, Able said, is to recognize the battle each ill child faces and reward their courage.

“While their brothers and sisters are getting trophies, they’ll have a medal that’s the same size and same dimensions as the men and women in uniform,” said member and co-creator Bill Perkins.

Able said after he read about a dying child named Cody Green and Marine Sgt. Mark Dolfini, the Post presented a CID to the child’s family in 2016.

In 2012, Dolfini had heard that Green wanted to grow up to be a Marine. He went to Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis to visit Green, who was already unconscious. Dolfini made the decision to stand watch outside Green’s room until he passed, which turned out to be eight hours later.

After a nurse told Dolfini that Green’s end was near, Dolfini presented the 12-year-old with his navigator wings before leaving.

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Able and other VFW members were so moved by the story once they heard about it, they contacted Dolfini and the Green family.

On the fourth anniversary of Green's death, Dolfini and the CID team made the trek to Lafayette, Ind., to present the family with a CID medal encased in a shadow box.

On another occasion, Able recalled getting a call asking if he and Perkins could present a medal to a little girl. The VFW members happily obliged.

"We visited the little girl on a Sunday afternoon and she passed away the next day," Able said. "Her parents and grandparents were overwhelmed. The dad later said he had the image of the medal tattooed on his body."

To make this program happen, Able said he "begs and pleads" for donations from Veterans Day to Easter. He asks other organizations and local merchants and finds that most are eager to give to the cause.

Medals are only presented from Easter to Veterans Day because the Post members don't want to get caught in a snowstorm, after making a promise to be at a hospital for a presentation.

"This is so therapeutic for me," Able said. "They like getting a gift. The [children] may not grasp the meaning of the medal yet, but when you look at the parents' faces, that's really something."

Able said that he'd like to see this program spread to Posts across the U.S.

For more information on how your VFW Post can get involved with this program, email Able at wayneable@yahoo.com or call Post 1308 at 618.466.6883.

This article is featured in the September 2019 issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.