

Second-grader wins Miracle Tie contest

Every book 7-year-old Luke Koehler has checked out from the library has been on how to draw something – dinosaurs, pyramids, people, you name it.

“He draws all the time,” said Jill Koehler of her second-grader, the young artist who was approached to submit artwork for the annual Jos. A. Bank’s Miracle Tie contest. His piece, “Santa Delivers,” depicts a Christmas scene of Santa Claus standing next to a tree.

Luke’s submission was selected and the artwork rendered into one of the silk Miracle Ties sold through Jos. A. Bank stores nationwide to benefit the Johns Hopkins Children’s Center where Luke was treated for type one juvenile diabetes.

The design is repeated in small icons on the silk tie which was produced in red, burgundy and blue. The full line of neckties was inspired by the artwork of eight other young patients at the children’s center.

When he was told he won the art contest, Luke said he “screamed his head off.” With the related flurry of activity associated with Miracle Tie, the St. Joseph, Cockeysville, second grader kept his lost head in the clouds for a little while longer.

“He kept telling everyone he was a celebrity,” said Luke’s mom, Jill Koehler, as her son modeled in a fashion show, taped a voiceover on a local radio station, and learned that Baltimore Ravens linebacker Ray Lewis had autographed one of Luke’s “Santa Delivers” ties which was then auctioned off for more than \$2,000.

Diagnosed a year ago with diabetes, Luke’s situation is “very manageable” said Mrs. Koehler. The small blond-haired student will be on insulin for his lifetime, with injections required four times a day. The Koehlers feel blessed that one of the St. Joseph’s school nurses, Kathy Noppinger, has a master’s degree in diabetes management.

Staff from the Johns Hopkins Children’s Center taught the family how to give

injections, recognize signs of low blood sugar and make diet changes. For one week during Luke's hospital stay, his family was educated thoroughly by nutritionists, social workers and nurses.

"They make sure you have an entire education," said Mrs. Koehler, "know what you're doing, know what you're talking about, and know who to call with a problem."

As a kindergartener, Luke enrolled in Abrakadoodle art classes which ignited his interest in art, said his mom. He continued with advanced drawing classes in first grade.

His grandmother, Pat Lakatta, a parishioner of Church of the Nativity, Timonium, manages an Abrakadoodle franchise, which Mrs. Koehler partly owns.

What does Luke want to be when he grows up? An artist, of course.