



July 2016

Dear Family and Friends,

Unexpected Heroes.

Each year at Friends for Life, CWD presents the Unexpected Hero Award to someone who has made a tremendous – and unexpected – difference to our families and conferences. The first year of this award, FFL 2004, Jeff presented it to a dad who jumped into the pool fully dressed to rescue a child who didn't know how to swim, and then jumped in a second time to rescue the mom who jumped in after the child, because she didn't know how to swim either. We'd never had such an award before that occasion. It seemed warranted to continue honoring Unexpected Heroes, and we've done so every year since then.

Until this year. We couldn't think of a single person who deserved this award.

Nope, not a single person. But rather – hundreds. You see, this winter, CWD faced some extreme challenges. Let me explain. Friends for Life Orlando is a conference that generally costs about \$1 million to hold. Most of the funding comes from our very wonderful sponsors, who are with us year after year and simply love spending the week with all of you. This year, however, there were some last minute changes with sponsorship support, and we found ourselves over \$200,000 short of the funding we needed to make ends meet on the event we'd planned and promised you. Without taking action, CWD would have gone out of business before December.

We decided to bring the situation to our faculty and staff, and to you, our FFL family. Every single person on our faculty and staff stepped forward and said, "I can help." Every single person found a way to decrease their financial footprint on the conference budget. Some decided that this year, they'd cover all expenses themselves. Some decided they wouldn't accept a speaker's fee. Many families made donations or found ways for their companies to support Friends for Life. Help came from all around.

I'm happy to report: We made it! All of us – together. An unexpected, very threatening situation met by the ideas, goodwill, and energy of hundreds of you.

Every one of you is an Unexpected Hero. And Jeff and I are so very humbled.

CWD and Friends for Life will continue into 2017, and, as Jeff says: We will be here for you until we're all wearing orange bracelets.

Enjoy your week, and please come find me for a hug!

Friends for Life,

Laura Billetdeaux  
 Vice President, Education and Programs  
 Children with Diabetes

