

Culbertson School Janitor Craig Schmitz's bright smile and friendly hello can always be found in the halls of the school. And when you ask the students about Craig, they will tell you they consider him a friend.

Darin Neben and his two brothers had only started school here last August, Jaret in Kindergarten and Travis in fourth grade, (youngest brother Cort turned two last summer.) Even though the Neben boys were new, they quickly found Craig to be a friend.

School was going well for Darin Neben, and then something went wrong. On Jan. 22, Tyler and Kristina Neben were finally given an answer as to why their once active, healthy son was suddenly always tired and never hungry. He had cancer. Chemotherapy began Jan. 27.

So when Craig saw a chance to help the Neben family he took it. Craig wrote a letter to Big Al at KRVN Radio in Lexington. In his letter to Big Al, Schmitz told about the second grade student from Hitchcock County Elementary in Culbertson, who was diagnosed with stage 4 neuroblastoma cancer. And that he has been undergoing treatment at Omaha Children's Hospital for the past four months.

Big Al hosts a radio program Sunday mornings from 6 to 10 a.m. The show is a mix of music and prayer. Occasionally, Al shares prayer requests with his listeners. That's exactly what happened with Craig's letter.

A man named Larry Shindle was listening when the story of the little boy with cancer was shared, it brought back memories of his brother, who passed away after being diagnosed with bone cancer in the 1950's. Larry immediately decided he needed to help Darin and his family any way he could. So he and the other members of the Lexington Car Club began gathering gifts and money.

A group of Sunday School students from the Calvary Assembly of God Church in Lexington wanted to help Darin as well. The children and their families held a bake sale at their church and were able to raise \$219.

Sunday afternoon. Larry and his wife Eleanor presented Darin Neben and his family with a bag full of legos and a check for \$1,400 from the Lexington Car Club while Ladonna Kwiatkowski presented the Sunday School children's check.

Craig Schmitz's letter to Big Al and his kind gesture paid off with a donation to a grateful family. And the extra prayers that came as a result of Big Al's show, are sure to help in many ways both seen and unseen.

Young Darin is the grandson of Deb and Jim Hayes of Imperial.

Story courtesy of the Hitchcock County News.