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*James Petty, the 'Rider mascot  
photo provided by Frisco RoughRiders*



## RoughRider Hero 'Connects' Patients

By Deborah Anderson

**YOU MIGHT** recognize James Petty from his days of entertaining as “The Rider” for the Frisco RoughRiders baseball team at Dr Pepper Ballpark. Shortly after learning of his son’s Hodgkin’s Lymphoma disease, Mr. Petty discovered a need for not only his son, but also for other patients in the hospital going through chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants and stem cell treatments.

“My son, Art, who was a sophomore in college, was in the hospital for seven

weeks. He had to be isolated because chemotherapy kills red and white blood cells, so he was more susceptible to infections. There’s only so much television you can watch with that much time on your hands. He was not able to see his friends and he was disconnected from the outside world. I got the idea that it would be great to provide a laptop in every recovery room of the Baylor Cancer Center at Dallas,” explained Mr. Petty.

That same year James Petty and his

wife, Dianne, bought season tickets for the RoughRiders. Mr. Petty approached former ‘Riders General Manager Mike McCall with suggestions for improvements for their mascot. Mr. Petty, who owns horses and always wears a cowboy hat, recalls the conversation. “As far as a mascot, what the ballpark needed was a big, black horse with a beautiful saddle and a rider with red chaps, rockin’ and rollin’ to the music of the band Big & Rich. I wanted to be the consultant to develop the character and my idea was for a younger rider. Mr. McCall asked why I wanted to do this job and I mentioned the need for twenty laptops at Baylor Hospital. Without any further thought, he replied, ‘Done.’”

Mr. Petty continued, “When Mr. McCall asked me if I would be the rider, even though I was surprised, I eventually agreed.” His first year of riding provided funds to hire Tom Hall, a skilled horse trainer and a retired Dallas policeman as well as a horse trailer. The second year of Mr. Petty’s performances finally funded his original dream. “We dedicated the computers on the ball field when we reached our goal,” Mr. Petty said. Thrilled as he was with the accomplishment, it was only one hospital. “So why can’t we do this for all the hospitals in Texas?” Mr. Petty remembered asking himself.

Jay Lockett, another RoughRiders manager, asked Mr. Petty every time he saw him at the park, “James, are you going to do anything else involving computers? If so, maybe my dad could help.” With this persistent, never-ending question, Mr. Petty decided to inquire regarding who Mr. Lockett’s father was and how he might be able to help. David Lockett

was vice president of the Health Care Division for Dell Computers.

Two weeks later, Mr. Lockett called with news that Dell would make an exception from existing policy regarding his request and supply laptop computers to the remaining bone marrow and stem cell treatment centers in Texas. Mr. Petty recalled his ecstatic reaction, "This was a major dream realized providing 135 computers. Dell Computers didn't know how they were going to support this cause until the idea was presented to them." He elaborated, "But why stop there? I have a list of all of the hospitals in the country. I'm sure there's somebody out there with \$8 million to fund all of the hospitals in the country with this same idea."

Mr. Petty reflected, "My son went through all of the uncomfortable treatments and the night we threw a big party for him celebrating his recovery, we got a phone call informing us the cancer had returned. Telling my son was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. But after a second round of treatment, Art has now been in remission for five years; he is cancer free and he married

in 2003. Going through this together has put everything in perspective for us."

Dianne Petty commented, "When you realize your priorities, they become a lot clearer. James has the most positive attitude. Our motto became, 'This could happen,' and we found ourselves saying it to each other quite often."


James Petty could easily be considered a Texas hero with his unyielding determination to help others. "I will not stop until we have 49 more states with laptops in their facilities. Someone will see this charitable act as an opportunity. It's amazing how much people will give once you put the idea in their head. Making people happy inspires me."

The "rider" continues his quest to raise money for this charitable cause. Mr. Petty and his wife own and operate a wire and cable business and have resided in Frisco for the past 15 years. If you would like to join their efforts, Mr. Petty can be reached at [james@lan-tectexas.com](mailto:james@lan-tectexas.com).



*Deborah Anderson is a freelance writer living in Frisco. Website references are also listed on page 84.*



*James Petty greets a young fan  
photo provided by Frisco RoughRiders*



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