

# YOUR COUNTY TAX DOLLARS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



*Jonathan Rivera passed away  
April 2, 2008*



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I was amazed. He fulfilled his  
dream."*

Hillsborough County  
Government Impacts Lives  
Every Day...

## Dream Fulfilled

The founders of our country believed that an education was something to be afforded to EVERYONE.

Still, not everyone can experience a classroom setting, and in some cases, it has nothing to do with race, income or other socioeconomic conditions.

It's been Jonathan Rivera's dream to attend school, but he hadn't because of the cancer he's been fighting since he was one year old. He is now 5.

But Jonathan's mother, Mary Beltran, and his doctors knew that not even someone's grave health condition should be a barrier to fulfilling a dream of going to school.

That's where Hillsborough County Head Start/Early Head Start stepped in.

"I told the doctor that the only way I would take him was if he was in Head Start," said Ms. Beltran. "I

was more comfortable because my other son was in Head Start, too."

"I got together with the Head Start team—teachers, health staff and myself—and we developed a plan to make sure that Head Start could accommodate Jonathan and his condition," said Ray Edwards, Head Start social worker. Edwards works at the Dale Mabry Head Start Center, located on the campus of Hillsborough Community College, where Jonathan briefly attended.

Jonathan's older brother went through the Head Start program and is now doing well in second grade. Jonathan's younger brother, who is 3 years old, is currently in the Head Start program.

In November 2003, Jonathan was diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma, a fast-growing, highly malignant tumor. Since he was diagnosed, Jonathan has had six tumors removed near or

around the superficial area of his head. Removing one of those even caused him to lose his eye.

But nothing can be done about the seventh tumor, worsening over recent weeks. It is growing from the left area of his neck.

Although Jonathan only attended Head Start for a few weeks in December 2007, he touched the lives of his classmates. They have a bulletin board dedicated to him. "We Love You, Jonathan" is written, as well as in Spanish, "Te Queremos Mucho."

"Even with his cancer and not having hair—feeling a little different from the other children—he was able to speak to them and explain why he didn't have any hair and why his eye was broken," said Ms. Beltran of her son. "He did such a good job there, I was amazed. He fulfilled his dream."

Your County tax dollars...  
making a difference.

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