



THE GOLD RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Despite the fact that childhood cancer is considered a “modern day miracle” due to the significant increase in survival rates especially in developed, high income countries, children continue to lose their lives to cancer. Childhood cancer is now the leading cause of death among children and adolescents in both developed and developing countries. In some countries, deaths due to childhood cancer is more than the combined deaths from all types of childhood illnesses.

In addition, due to lack of attention on development of less toxic drugs and treatments, a large percentage of survivors of childhood cancer suffer life limiting conditions.

In developing countries, deaths due to childhood cancer is attributed to several interrelated factors such as: lack of awareness and information on childhood cancer, delayed or wrong diagnosis, absence/weak referral systems, weak health infrastructure, unprepared/untrained medical personnel and the high cost of medication and treatment.

In 1997, a group of parents in the United States started discussing about the need for a universal symbol to create awareness and mobilize increased attention for minimizing deaths and disabilities due to childhood cancer.

Several colors were considered; after much thought and discussion they chose gold as a perfect description and symbol of the childhood cancer journey and the value of children. Gold is a precious metal; like gold, children of the world are precious and priceless. In other countries, parents picked up on the fact that gold goes through a process by fire. Children and adolescents who experience childhood cancer similarly undergo painful, excruciatingly challenging experiences.

Since then, the Gold Ribbon has crossed continents and been used around the world. Diverse organizations, private and public institutions, civil society groups and academia, have used the Gold Ribbon symbol in expressing support and generating solidarity for the fight against childhood cancer. However, it has not yet reached the peak prominence and recognition that the pink ribbon of breast cancer and the red ribbon of HIV AIDS has reached.

The ICCD Gold Ribbon Campaign aims to raise awareness and visibility of the gold ribbon worldwide. It encourages people and organizations to maximize the use of the gold ribbon to show their support for the fight against childhood cancer. The display of the Gold Ribbon is also meant to inspire hope and encourage the children and adolescents with cancer, the survivors and their families.

Individual supporters and organizations can create their own Gold Ribbon Campaign to increase awareness, mobilize support and create caring networks for children and adolescents with cancer, the survivors and their families. **On February 15th, they can wear gold, form human gold ribbons in public places, decorate their work places (i.e. hospitals, schools, offices, churches) and homes, Light up Gold iconic landmarks (i.e. buildings, bridges etc.).**

The Gold Ribbon campaign can also be used to recognize and appreciate the Heroes within our midst: the children and adolescents who bravely and courageously fight cancer; the survivors who beat cancer; the families who fearlessly live with the realities of cancer and with the loss of a precious child; the volunteers, staff and medical practitioners who passionately serve and dedicate their time to the childhood cancer community. As CS Lewis once said, “hardship often prepares ordinary people for an extraordinary destiny”.

