

Young baseball lover scores another dream afternoon

Urbana Highlands' little celebrity **Dillon Papier**, 4, recently enjoyed a day on the Bowie Baysox field, a place his parents say he feels at home with the umpires, players and coaches.

Dillon's grandmother, **Maris Walker**, organized the April 29 benefit at the Baysox stadium to raise funds and awareness of Dillon's condition, a fatal disease called Niemann-Pick. Dillon is one of roughly 500 people diagnosed with the genetic disease, which slowly affects the motor system and has no known cure.

Dillon hung out in the dugout, chatted with players and delivered the starting line-ups to umpires before throwing the first pitch of the game to Baysox catcher **Ryan Hubele**, his mother, **Darrile Papier**, said. Hubele presented a bat signed by all of the players to Dillon, who still has the glove from the catcher he received last year.

The annual benefit event, which doubles as a birthday celebration for Dillon, who will turn 5 in August, drew 260 family and friends last year, including Dillon's father, **Mark**, a baseball coach at Gov. Thomas Johnson High School.

"We are still overwhelmed with the generosity and support we continue to receive toward Dillon's fight for a cure," Darrile Papier said in an e-mail. "It truly gives us the strength and encouragement knowing we are not alone in our struggle."

In February, the youngster and his parents enjoyed another day in the baseball spotlight as they joined the Baltimore Orioles in Florida for spring training. Several Urbana Highlands neighbors organized and funded the trip and surprised the family with the mini-vacation at a Christmas community gathering.

In Florida, Dillon spent time with Orioles player **Brian Roberts**, who gave him a signed bat and met Orioles Florida operations manager **Laura**



Four-year-old baseball fan Dillon Papier, an Urbana boy suffering from Niemann-Pick, walks around the Bowie Baysox stadium with catcher Ryan Hubele during a benefit event to raise money for the disease.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PAPIER FAMILY

Williams and received a hug, baseball hat and a bag of Orioles mementos from her. The baseball fan continues to remember his excitement through videos and photos of the day, his mother said.

"Within several hours Dillon knew most of the group. ... He also became fast friends with the women that ran the fresh fruit smoothie and pizza concession stands," Darrile Papier said. "It is difficult to properly express our gratitude to our neighbors for sending Dillon on a dream vacation."

A golf tournament to benefit the Niemann-Pick Disease Foundation will be held Sept. 17 at Hollow Creek Golf Course in

Middletown. To register, call **Michael Hayden** at 240-463-0928.



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