

Community

Men's soccer team appoints 6-year-old as honorary captain

By **MINA HOLLAND**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The La Roche men's soccer team elected an honorary captain. Leo Zambori, a 6-year-old fighting leukemia, received the chance to be the captain on Oct. 7. Having served as captain once before, Leo is a proud Redhawks fan with a heartwarming smile through his treatments and on the field.

La Roche has given generous donations toward Leo as he continues to inspire many, including Conner Hagins, member of the men's soccer team and the founder of Cuddles for Kids, a non-profit charity for children in need.

How exactly has Leo inspired you and changed your life?

CH: Since meeting Leo, he has definitely inspired me. He makes you look at things in life differently. He's always smiling even when he's going through all he is with treatments and appointments. I try to always have a smile on my face through thick and thin. He's changed my life in the way that you don't realize how big a moment is or how much something small can go a long way. When we walked into his room at Children's Hospital he was just diagnosed with

leukemia. It was hard time for him and his family, yet we took his mind off of things when he saw I had a soccer ball and played soccer. And that's what we, Cuddles for Kids, are all about.

Have your perspectives changed since you've met Leo and how have they changed?

CH: I kind of answered some of this in the question above. But you appreciate all the blessings you have in life. There are always others who are going through things that myself and others probably couldn't imagine going through. I never take my life and health for granted and I try to make the best out of each and every day.

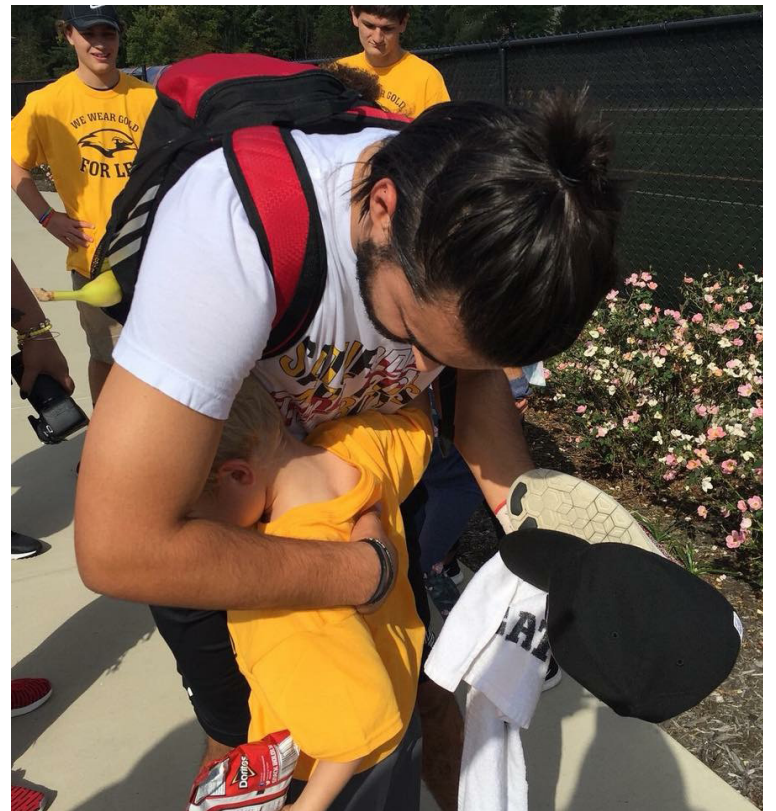
Aside from the t-shirt fundraiser, are there any other possible donations people can contribute toward Leo and the Children's Hospital Oncology Department?

CH: I would say if people would like to support, their tax deductible donation may be made to my charity Cuddles for Kids. We support a variety of initiatives benefiting children and hold several events per year at Children's Hospital and Ronald McDon-

ald House. Or they can donate to Children's Hospital directly. Every dollar goes a long way in helping brighten the day of others.

How was the La Roche soccer team able to make Leo the honorary captain twice? Did they have to get permission from the school?

CH: Coach (David) Day has been very supportive and encourages the team to do things in the community. From the moment he heard about Leo and his story and how much Leo loves soccer, Coach



Conner Hagins, a member of the men's soccer team and founder of Cuddles for Kids, hugs Leo Zambori, who served as the team's honorary captain

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Day contacted our opponent and spoke with the referees and every-

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Global engagement inspired sister to be a missionary

By **JULIA FELTON**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Sister Hillary Hooks (above) opened La Posada Providencia, a home in Texas that aids refugees

© **JULIA FELTON**

When she was a child, Saint Frances Cabrini enjoyed making little boats and setting them afloat in a stream in her backyard, pretending to send the word of God to foreign lands with imaginary missionaries.

Sister Hillary Hooks, a member of the Sisters of Divine Providence congregation, smiled as she narrated Cabrini's story. Inspired by Cabrini's miniature boats and make-believe missionaries, Hooks dedicated her life to God by becoming a religious sister at age 18. Since then, Hooks has become a genuine missionary herself.

Becoming a nun was not always her plan, though. She wasn't baptized until she was 10 years old and she did not come from an entirely Christian family. Hooks recalled that one of her earliest memories of learning about Christian faith occurred when, at age 7, she began attending a church where teachers gave the children ribbons when they learned to memorize psalms. Hooks said she vividly remembered learning Psalm 23, which she said God used to begin guiding her to the path she would ultimately take.

Hooks also shared the childhood memories of family. She and her

sister spent their summers with their father, who, though he was not Catholic, would take them to Mass and Reconciliation. She praised him for being a good man, respecting the religion that his daughters practiced.

Her father's second wife also influenced young Hooks. Her step-mother would take Hooks to the United Nations headquarters, where Hooks was in awe of "all of those people from different countries, cultures, all colors and languages." She said she remembered them being friendly to one another. Hooks said she enjoyed attending programs about the diverse cultures of the world. Particularly, Hooks reflected on a plain, simple chapel there that she said was "one of the holiest places."

After many years of finding subtle inspiration, Hooks knew she wanted to become a religious sister by the end of her senior year of high school. Once she became a sister, it became apparent that she would serve God by serving the global community, she added.

In the 1980s, Hooks said she heard stories about the plight of South American refugees, who were forced to flee their countries amid violence

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she enjoys the varied opportunities residence life offers, including student conduct, housing operations and construction projects.

"You get to do a multitude of things," Testa said. "There are so many different things you're doing just in residence life and housing. It really makes you a well-rounded professional."

Testa credited her undergraduate degree in helping her to augment several skills integral to the student affairs field. In particular, she said, public speaking and writing classes provided valuable preparation.

"I was an English major in college, so I did a lot of writing," Testa said. "I wrote for my college newspaper. I've always been a strong communicator and I think that's a critical element of working with college students. You need to know how to help them with issues or problems and talk to them about different things they're concerned about."

Testa said she appreciates the friendliness and close-knit quality of the La Roche community.

"It's cool to be able to walk down the hall and know everyone and they know me," Testa said. "We all sort of need each other in different ways. I'm really big on relationships, so I think I can definitely tell just from being here that everyone here strives to have

good relationships with students and I think that's so important."

Testa also noted the care and personable attributes of the housing and residence life staff.

"I'm always amazed when a student walks in the office and they're not necessarily an RA, they're not necessarily a highly involved student leader, but our staff knows their name and knows where they live and knows their story," Testa said. "I think that's really cool and that's unique, and I'm sure from a student's perspective it makes them feel comfortable."

The interactional opportunities her position provides are enjoyable, Testa said.

"I'm a people person, so I enjoy any time I get to communicate with student leaders," Testa said. "I really enjoy training season in the summer. You get to really know your staff and you get to go through specialized training with them and teach them skills and it's educational-based, too, which I really enjoy."

In her new role, Testa said, she strives to emphasize student support and comfort.

"My goal is to make the residence hall a destination place that students really want to be," Testa said. "I really want the residence halls to be a place where students are excited to be and are interested in living on campus."

Testa added she hopes to revitalize campus living through staff training, renovation projects and other events. Housing and residence life, Testa noted, has completed one phase of the Peters Hall renovation, which is ongoing. The renovation included installing kitchenettes into some of the dorms.

"We hope to be able to reach out to students and get some feedback and incorporate that into future renovations," Testa said.

Renovation is important to a college campus, she added, in order to stay up-to-date with evolving trends.

"I think it's (renovation) important to keep with the times and to keep up with what students are looking for," Testa said. "The whole reason we have residence halls on campus are to cater to the students. I think it's important we take into account what they're looking for in their college experience."

La Roche buildings are older, Testa noted, and require renovations periodically.

"We want to make sure that we're meeting the needs of our present-day students with those renovations," Testa said. "And I think the kitchenette is a testament to that. We really took the feedback students were giving to us to make that renovation happen."

Testa said she also strives to in-



© COURTESY OF ASHLEY TESTA

Ashley Testa (above) is La Roche's new director of housing and residence life

crease housing and residence life's social media presence in order to stay current with students.

"Our presence as a department is important to me, and we've talked about exploring and enhancing our social media presence," Testa said. "I would love to utilize social media a bit more. I think it's important for us to meet students where they are, and our students are using Twitter and they're using Snapchat, so I want to make sure that we have a presence on those platforms."

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and civil unrest. Hooks, who describes herself as a "very inclusive" person, pitied those who did not feel safe in their homelands. Using cassette tapes to teach herself Spanish, Hooks prepared herself to help these refugees. After traveling to South America to submerge herself in the culture, Hooks opened a home in Texas that was dedicated to welcoming and aiding these refugees.

This home, called La Posada Providencia, has since helped over 9,000 refugees from over 70 countries.

Hooks said La Posada Providencia offers support during the legal processes required to gain refuge in the U.S., while also providing transportation, English language lessons, and life skills classes.

Hooks' global experiences reach beyond the refuge she founded in Texas. She also shared the experiences she had in El Salvador, where she said she witnessed the nation's first democratic elections. She was humbled to watch "the yearning for people to be free," which was preva-

lent among those eager citizens who were proud to take part in the milestone election.

When Hooks reminisced on the good she has done for the global community, she said she feels grateful. Upon further reflection, she added that she feels humbled "to see how good people are no matter where they are."

As someone who dedicated most of her adult life to bettering the global community, Hooks emphasized the importance of being an active global

citizen. According to Hooks, "Each one of us is part of a mosaic." This makes it imperative that we help those in need, she added.

Even now, years after she left her post at La Posada Providencia, Hooks cannot seem to stop doing good for the world. She now teaches English as a Second Language at La Roche College, where she exemplifies the school's motto by embracing the world.

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