



**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** Mary Ann Sabo  
Sabo Public Relations, 616.485.1432  
[maryann@sabo-pr.com](mailto:maryann@sabo-pr.com)

## **Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan Establishes Grand Rapids Office, Announces First West Michigan Fundraiser**

**Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 7, 2013** – In order to better address the growing needs of West Michigan families, Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan is opening a regional office in Grand Rapids on April 1.

The new office will serve as a West Michigan base for the non-profit, which provides information, financial assistance and emotional support to Michigan families affected by leukemia, lymphoma and related blood cancers. Each year, CLF provides programs and services to more than 4,400 families throughout the state, approximately 20 percent of them from West Michigan – the organization's highest concentration of patients and families outside of Southeast Michigan.

CLF will host CRUSH Grand Rapids Wine and Food Classic, its first West Michigan fundraiser, on Saturday, March 9 at Reserve Wine & Food in downtown Grand Rapids. The event, which is made possible by Dick and Betsy DeVos, will feature nine culinary masters from leading Chicago, West and Northern Michigan restaurants and honorary winemakers Celani Family Vineyards who will create an elegant and extraordinary evening for guests.

CRUSH Grand Rapids begins with a private patron reception at 6:30 p.m., followed by wine-food pairing stations and dessert. The event concludes at 10 p.m. after the awards ceremony, which will honor Dr. James B. Fahner, the director of pediatric hematology and oncology at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital with its 2013 Pioneers in Medicine Award, and Varnum LLP with its Corporate Leadership Award.

"For the past 60 years, CLF has worked to serve the practical and emotional needs of West Michigan families as they navigate their cancer journey – from diagnosis through treatment and beyond," said William Seklar, president and CEO. "Our new office underscores the commitment of CLF to have a stronger presence in West Michigan to support our works with nearly 800 families in the region.

"We are also very excited to host our first CRUSH event in Grand Rapids. Since the series was launched in 2008, CRUSH has focused on creating world-class regional fundraising events that benefit CLF. CRUSH Grand Rapids joins very successful annual events in Birmingham and Northern Michigan that will showcase some of the leading chefs and sommeliers across Michigan. All funds raised at CRUSH Grand Rapids will stay in West Michigan to benefit patients and their families."

A grassroots organization to its core, CLF was founded in Detroit in 1952 by a group of families who had each lost a child to leukemia. They were determined no other Michigan family should have to face such a diagnosis alone.

CLF programs and services fall into three categories:

- Casework support, which connects a social worker with the family to provide access to emotional support, information and referral sources. The CLF resource room provides print, audio, video and electronic information to help families learn more about cancer, the treatments available and the issues surrounding the disease.
- Financial assistance, which provides travel assistance, prescription drugs, treatment-related expenses and more, to ensure clients have access to the best medical care.
- Respite and recreational programs, which offer patients and families a peer support network, therapeutic arts, holiday toys and tickets to entertainment and sporting events to underscore patients and families are not alone.

“A cancer diagnosis affects the whole family,” Seklar explains. “More than half the clients CLF serves are at or below the poverty level, requiring them to make tough decisions about how to allocate already-stretched financial resources. At CLF, all our programs and services are free – and no patient is ever turned away.

“That makes our fundraising efforts like CRUSH and our other events extremely important. We strive to be good stewards with the donations we receive. For every \$1 donated, approximately 83 cents goes directly to patient and family programs and services.”

### **CRUSH Grand Rapids**

CRUSH Grand Rapids joins the CLF series featuring world-renowned wine experts and culinary masters who create unparalleled of degustation events for their guests. Culinary masters for the event will include the following executive chefs:

- Paul Virant, Vie and Perennial, Chicago who will serve at the 2013 Honorary Executive Chef and Restaurateur
- Matt Millar, Reserve Wine & Food, who will serve as the 2013 Honorary Culinary Director
- Myles Anton, Trattoria Stella in Traverse City
- Mathew Green, Reserve Wine & Food in Grand Rapids
- Guillaume Hazaël-Massieux, La Bécasse in Maple City
- Josef Huber, Amway Hotel Corp. in Grand Rapids
- John Korycki, Zazio’s in Kalamazoo
- Colin McPhee, Bar Divani in Grand Rapids
- Matt Peitsch, Salt of the Earth in Fennville
- Joel Wabeke, Trillium Haven in Grand Rapids

Tom and Vicki Celani, proprietors of Celani Family Vineyards in Napa, Calif., will serve as the 2013 Honorary Winemaking Family.

Ron Edwards, a master sommelier, consultant and educator, will serve as the 2013 Honorary Wine Director for CRUSH Grand Rapids. He will be joined by Peter Marantette, a certified sommelier and general manager of Reserve Wine & Food.

The event is sponsored by Celani Family Vineyards, Dom Perignon, Piper-Heidsieck Champagne, Remy Cointreau USA, Reserve Wine & Food, Scott Shuptrine Interiors and Soaring Eagle Casino.

Since its inception, CRUSH has raised more than \$1 million to benefit CLF. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [www.crushmichigan.com](http://www.crushmichigan.com).

**About Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan**

Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan is a non-profit organization that provides information, financial assistance and emotional support to Michigan families affected by leukemia, lymphoma and related blood cancers. Each year, CLF provides programs and services to more than 4,400 families throughout the state, approximately 20 percent of them from West Michigan – our highest concentration of patients and families outside of Southeast Michigan. For more information, visit [www.leukemiamichigan.org](http://www.leukemiamichigan.org).

###