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Portraits of Courage

BY LENA HUANG

When their 18-month-old son was undergoing treatment for cancer, Allison and Kip Clarke wanted to create a visual way to uplift the children and families they met at the Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio.

With encouragement and sponsorship from the hospital, the Clarkes founded a nonprofit organization called Flashes of Hope, which is dedicated to creating inspirational portraits of children with cancer and other illnesses. Since 2001, more than 30 hospitals across the country have participated in the program.

The photo sessions are scheduled at the hospitals, where volunteers transform areas into temporary photography studios, complete with background and lighting. Makeup artists help patients and their loved ones look their best for the photos.

Professional photographers, many of whom are members of the American Society of Media Photographers, take individual pictures, as well as group shots with the child's parents, siblings, and favorite nurses. After the session, the child's family receives framed photographs, proofs, and a CD with images to make additional prints. All services are provided free of charge and are covered by donations.

Flashes of Hope is supported by the Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation and many other sponsors. To find a program in your area, visit www.flashesofhope.org