

Ill girl inspires Cresskill's support

Community rallying to raise funds

By S. Roy Graham
Record Staff Writer

Eleven-year-old Kimberly Anne Carbone has galvanized the community of Cresskill behind a special project, and it all began with a letter.

"I don't want people to like me because I am ill," she wrote in 1990. "I want people to like me because I am me."

That was how Kimberly told classmates at the Merritt Memorial School that she has Hodgkin's disease, a form of cancer that is 90 percent curable with chemotherapy and radiation treatment.

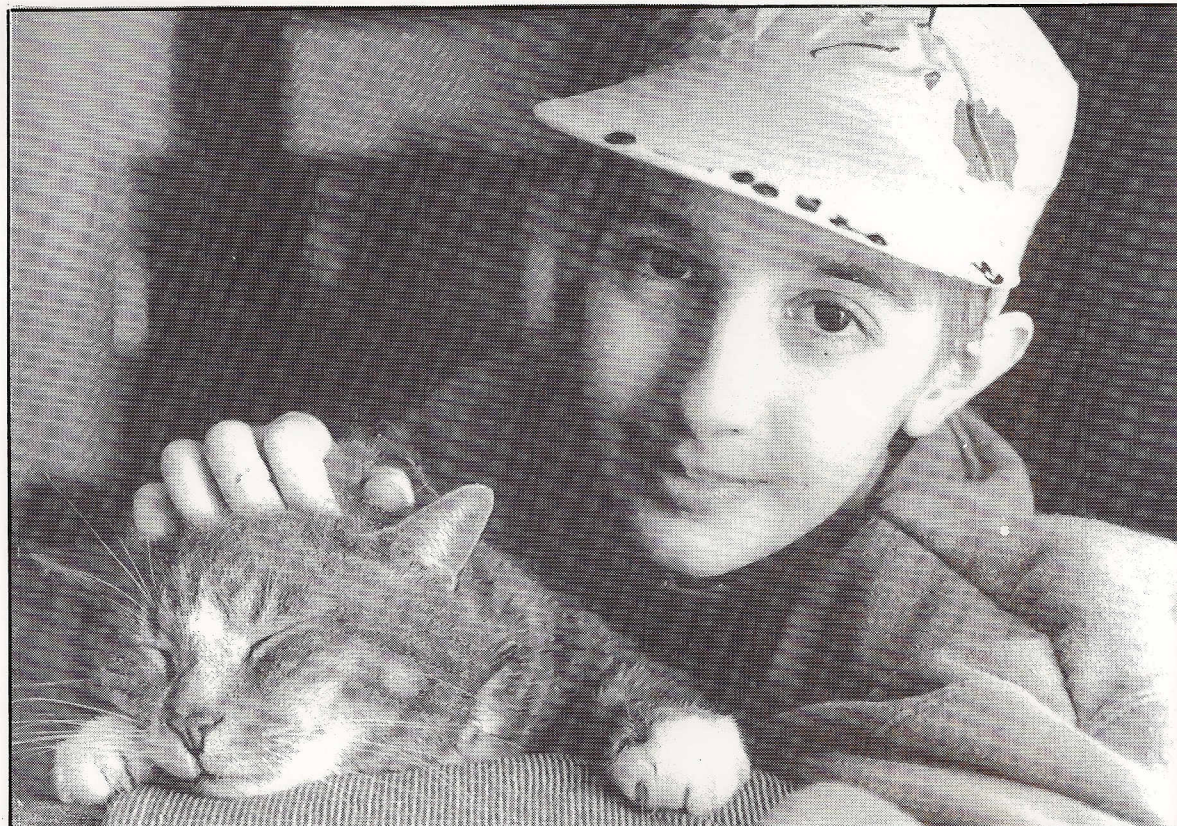
In Kimberly's case, therapy has not been successful, and she leaves today for a bone-marrow transplant in Omaha, Neb.

"Hers seems to be one of the tough ones," said Maureen Carbone, her mother and a longtime borough resident. "When it's treated in one area, it crops up in another. Right now, it's in her bone marrow."

Kimberly's 1990 letter captured the hearts of students and staff at the school, and during the last 18 months of therapy, her courage won the love and support of the Home and School Association and the community.

Students at the Bryan and Merritt schools plan to donate proceeds from the annual Festival of Stars on April 3 to the Kim Carbone Fund being set up by the Tomorrows Children's Fund of Hackensack Medical Center. The festival will be held at the Cresskill High School.

Mayor John Bergamini wants to make the fund-raising a community effort and plans to pro-



Kimberly Anne Carbone, 11, petting her cat, Sly. Her letter to a friend inspired Cresskill's support. PETER MONSEES/THE RECORD

claim April 3 as Kim Carbone Day, said spokeswoman Melissa Goldsmith.

Maureen Carbone said that last year, Kimberly's treatment cost more than \$75,000. "Luckily, the insurance company has approved Kim's bone-marrow transplant, but it will mean our staying in Omaha for more than 100 days," she said.

School nurse Janet Tessaro said that when the Home and School Association was told about Kimberly, "the outpouring of support was amazing."

"The community has been really fantastic," added Maureen Carbone. "Neighbors take turns to prepare dinner and do our food shopping because with Kimberly's treatment, we have

to spend so much time in the hospital."

Principal Joe Donnelly said an anonymous donor has offered to cover Kimberly and Maureen Carbone's air fare to Omaha. He said the community's response has a lot to do with Kimberly's attitude.

"She has maintained her sense of humor, her self-esteem, and her desire to succeed throughout her illness," he said. "One of the hardest things we had to do was convince her that she doesn't have to do some of the work her classmates get."

"She doesn't want to be treated differently."

Kimberly, playing with her cat, Sly, has a positive attitude. She has had three operations

and she says the chemotherapy and radiation treatment "makes me feel sick." But she is looking forward to returning to class and her friends.

Kimberly loves animals — she also has five hamsters — and enjoys painting and drawing. Last year, she designed the program cover for the school's Festival of Stars and also designed it this year, Donnelly said.

She knows what she'd like to do when she grows up.

"I'd like to be a florist half of the week and the other half of the time I'd like to practice oil painting," Kimberly said.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Kim Carbone Fund can send donations to P.O. Box 1499, Ridgewood, N.J. 07450.