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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Staff Sgt. Edward Eagerton

Country Cares for Kids, so do Alaska Air Guardsmen

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – Approximately 34 Airmen with the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing participated in the annual Country Cares for St. Jude Kids radio fundraising event at a local radio station in Anchorage, Feb. 5-6.

The Airmen worked during off-hours on a voluntary basis at the KBEAR 104.1 FM radio station in shifts ranging from two to 12 hours in duration, according to Senior Master Sgt. Kaprice Zuke, a financial advisor with the 176th Operations Group.

The program began in 1989 and is hosted nationwide each year by country music stations to raise funds for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

"St. Jude specializes in the research of childhood diseases," Zuke said. "Their motto is 'finding cures, saving children.'"

Zuke started volunteering for the radiothon to answer phones and take donations. Her supervisor at the time organized 176th Wing member participation until she retired and passed the reigns of organizing Guardsmen participation over to Zuke.

"I do still answer phones too, though," she said.

During the event, the station's disc jockeys switched from music tracks to recordings of patient profiles. All the while, Airmen and other volunteers manned the phones as the listeners called in.

"A lot of people are supporting the cause because they're touched by the stories," said Zuke. "The DJs also tell their personal stories. A lot of them get to go to the hospital in Memphis and then tell the stories of what they experienced during their visits there."

Zuke said the event coordinators were impressed with the Airmen who participated.

"They were very grateful to us for volunteering, answering the phones, and for being professional and enthusiastic," she said.

According to Zuke, this year's event generated 234 donors, including 11 Airmen from the 176th Wing, who became "Partners in Hope" that pledge a \$19 monthly donation. As well, two Airmen made one-time contributions, adding to the total amount of approximately \$78,000 raised for the program.

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"It just stands out how willing people are to give," she said.

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Photo Outline:

"176th Volunteers"

Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing stand for a photo at KBEAR 104.1 FM radio station in Anchorage, Feb. 5. The Airmen were there as volunteers during the annual Country Cares for St. Jude Kids radiothon, a fundraising event for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. (photo courtesy Jill Witsoe)