

## **Anthony Rizzo – Heller Center Visit**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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Ten years ago, Chicago Cubs All-Star first baseman Anthony Rizzo heard the words no family wants to hear: You have cancer. He was just 18 when he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma and underwent six months of chemotherapy, just as his professional baseball career was taking off.

Rizzo says he realized that no matter how difficult fighting cancer was for him, it was even more difficult for his family. In 2012 he established The Anthony Rizzo Family Foundation to help cancer patients and their families.

That work brought him to Peoria on Thursday, May 24, to support the Heller Center for Kids with Cancer at OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois, which was created to help kids and families with programs designed to provide critical, non-medical tools to support them through and beyond the cancer journey.

### **SOT Anthony Rizzo**

(That's the biggest group of people I've talked to regarding cancer, actual patients. So it was special for me though because I play baseball, I have this high platform playing with the Cubs with such a big following and give back and be able to show that like I said that just because you have cancer now doesn't mean you still can't accomplish your goals and dreams :25)

After visiting cancer patients at OSF Children's Hospital, Rizzo met with former and current patients, talking about his cancer journey and answering questions from the audience. He also attended a private reception with John and Annette Heller who established the Heller Center for Kids with Cancer in 2016. The program is run completely off donations and grants, with no family ever charged for the services provided.

### **SOT John Heller**

(When Anthony opened his comments by saying I'm really impressed by what y'all have here in Peoria, in this community and the kids that you're serving. To have that validation from a cancer survivor who himself has started a foundation to deal with these very same issues, that validation was just incredible :21)

### **SOT Anthony Rizzo**

(There's so much that goes into someone getting diagnosed with cancer and when they do get diagnosed their life is changed for a long time. This Heller Center is amazing for them to be able to connect all those dots and make everyone work in sync together :18)

There are 60 children diagnosed with cancer every year at OSF Children's Hospital. Medical care is provided for more than 600 patients with cancer and blood disorders from throughout Illinois and neighboring states.

The Heller Center for Kids with Cancer offers a variety of non-medical support services for patients and families:

- **Mental and Emotional Health Services** to provide help with effective coping and decision-making.
- **Neuropsychological and Neurodevelopmental Services** to help patients maximize cognitive functioning after treatments like brain surgery and radiation.
- **Adolescent and Young Adult Program** to address the different treatment challenges faced by those transitioning to the independence of adult life
- **Survivor (After Completion of Therapy) Clinic** offering health screenings for late effects of cancer treatment and appropriate referrals for additional care and wellness education.
- **School and Career Support** to assist in the return to school as soon as possible, and help with plans for a future academic career and employment during cancer treatment and beyond.
- **Patient and Family Education** to guide the entire family through the stress of learning the details of a cancer diagnosis and treatment, in addition to learning to deal with a complex and stressful medical care environment.

- **Nutrition and Wellness** expertise to assist families in establishing healthy eating and other habits that have an effect on quality of life, treatment-related side effects, and long-term survival.

Hundreds of families throughout Illinois are facing the most difficult journey of their lives. You can make a gift to the Heller Center for Kids with Cancer [here](#).