

# A sick child, a father's love, and LazyTown

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Image

2005: Iceland – It was another long day of production on the LazyTown sound stage. In fact, it was the start of the next day, as we continued our creative brainstorming session past midnight. Everyone was packing up their belongings and heading home for a few hours' sleep. There would be yet another early call for the crew and cast to assemble for that days' shoot.

The phone rang. Usually, the answering machine would pick up the call, but for some reason, this time it didn't. A colleague, Dean Koocher, picked up the phone.

On the other line was a gentleman named Rob Stock, calling from Belleville, Illinois. Rob didn't know it was the middle of the night in Iceland. He had tracked down the office number and simply called, hoping to connect with someone. He said that his young daughter, Jenny, was a big fan of LazyTown. He had scoured the local stores, and had checked online, but was having a hard time finding any merchandise for sale. In particular, he was trying to find a "Stephanie" costume for Jenny to wear.

Dean knew that my home in the US wasn't far from Belleville, and he put me on the phone with Rob, thinking I might be able to help.

But LazyTown had only debuted on Nickelodeon a few months earlier, and there was simply no merchandise available at the retail level just yet. Rob asked if there was anything else we might have – photos, or possibly even autographs.

Rob explained that Jenny had been diagnosed with leukemia. She was in the middle of long months of chemotherapy sessions. They were prolonged and brutal, and young Jenny's energetic, normally upbeat personality was being drained.

One of the few things that made her smile – a bright spot on chemo days – was watching episodes of LazyTown. She was charmed by the stories, the silly humor, its can-do spirit. Most importantly, it gave her something to look forward to. Instead of dreading the hours spent having toxic medicines course through her body, she could find some relief by focusing her attention on the antics of Sportacus, Stephanie and the LazyTown gang.

As it happened, I was due to make a trip home, which was fairly close to where Rob and his wife Greta took Jenny for chemo treatment. I gathered autographs from the cast members, took tons of photos, and found some props that the production graciously allowed me to have. And I took the whole package to Jenny.

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**She greeted me with a tremendous hug that belied her fragile physical state. The smile on her face lit up the room as her parents and nurses watched her unwrap one-of-a-kind mementos from her favorite show. She thrilled at the personal notes from the cast, and she seemed to gain energy not from the gifts themselves, but from the kindness of those who had given them.**

**Rob and Greta beamed, filled with joy at seeing their daughter so happy. They had been through grueling months, and there would be many more to come. But in that moment, their weight seemed lifted.**

**Eventually, Jenny's strong will and her unbreakable spirit – along with top-notch medical care and the loving support of her family – beat back the leukemia. Jenny grew healthy and was even able to travel to Iceland where she met her heroes on the very sound stage where the episodes were produced. Jenny returned to school and, last year, she graduated from high school with top honors, well on her way to what will surely be an amazing life.**

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**Because of the persistence and dedication of Rob Stock and her whole family, Jenny found the strength to survive her illness. And LazyTown played a small part in her recovery, thanks to a Dad who wouldn't give up until he found a way to make his daughter smile.**

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No doubt there are many stories of children connecting to their favorite shows during times of crisis. But this one feels special; it's almost unbelievable the good that came from what might otherwise be considered a run-of-the-mill kids' TV show. A production shot in the middle of a lava field somewhere in Iceland went halfway around the world, into the heart of a little girl with a desperate illness. That, combined with a very determined and loving father, produced something that feels an awful lot like a miracle.