



## VIPER DAY at Children's Hospital

story and photos by maurice q. liang

Cancer. Leukemia. Broken arms. Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). Just some of the really crappy reasons these children are spending their summer inside, stuck in a hospital. So imagine their excitement when ten colorful Vipers rumble into the parking lot on August 23rd for the second "Viper Day" at Children's Hospital in Oakland. Club members and the hospital enjoyed the first event (Snake Eyes, Jan 2009) so much that we decided to do it again. In addition to a Viper car show in the parking lot, every patient is given their own RidemakerZ™ Viper toy to customize and keep, thanks to sponsors from the Viper Club of America (VCA) and the Brian Angen Memorial Foundation (BAMF).

### COME SEE THE VIPERS!

Anticipation is in the air, since the hospital has been advertising Viper Day for weeks on their bulletin boards. "Come see the Vipers in the parking lot and every patient gets a free Viper toy," announces a voice over the PA system. Patients who are well enough come out to choose their Viper toy. The RidemakerZ™ Vipers are about a foot long, and at the press of a button, flash their lights and make car sounds.

To make it easier for the hospital staff and the kids this time, we preassembled the Viper toys at our monthly dinner meeting so the kids can just choose their favorite color and add accessories and stickers to personalize their Vipers. Green seems to be the favorite color, both in life-size and model form, followed by red, and then black. We laugh as two year-old Xavier proudly holds up his new Viper toy and waves it at us. One parent says to me, "When they announced there were free Viper toys for the kids, we expected some small little toy. Not something like this. These are amazing!"

Kids, parents, grandparents, doctors, and the hospital staff come out to see the cars. "This is such a nice distraction," says one grandparent. "Our grandchild was suddenly diagnosed with a huge mass in his chest. It was pressing on all his organs. He couldn't breathe. We just had to drop everything and bring him here, and we've been here for 2 weeks."

### LIVING IN A BUBBLE

Not all the patients can come out to see us. Because of their treatments, some of the patients' immune systems have been compromised, so they can't be exposed to any germs. We can't pre-build the Viper toys for these kids because anything that goes into this unit has to be almost sterile – including us. So we leave the parts in their packages, and Viper club members Janis and Glen McAdon, and Robert and Donita Granado scrub up, suit up, and head into the sealed ward to help them build their RidemakerZ™ Vipers.

Janis tells us, "5-South. It sounds like a prison ward. And to a lot of these kids, it has been. This is the oncology ward for the immuno-compromised kids. Some of them



LEFT: Xavier [2] proudly holds up his RidemakerZ™ Viper toy as Rob, Fred, and Norma watch.  
ABOVE: Norma and Diana help Giovanni choose a Viper. • Amir chooses a black Viper. • Barbara talks with Alicia. • Nauntsen checks out the Vipers in his wheel chair. • Kids, relatives, and staff check out the Vipers.





HANA KRULOVA



ELMER GONZALEZ



TOP TO BOTTOM: Robert and Donita with Myra in the immuno ward. • The late Brian Angen, the inspiration behind this event. • Kelli Nakayama from Children's. • Emma is an SBS victim. • Maurice gives Nauntsen a Viper poster. • Terence picks green as his favorite color.

have spent much of their lives here, as their treatment can last for years, so you can imagine the looks on their faces when we rolled in the cart with Viper parts all over it. Chassis and tires and wheels, oh my! They all knew exactly which colors they wanted and each car drew an 'ohhhh' when they finished and hit the sound button."

### KIDS 'R US

As the name suggests, Children's Hospital in Oakland specializes in children. At first, that may not seem significant, but once you tour the facility and see how they specialize in kids, you see why going to a facility that specializes in kids is important when you're a kid. "Their survival rate is double if they come to Children's Hospital first," says Kelli Nakayama, as she gives a tour to our club members. Something as simple as a blood pressure cuff can make a huge difference. "You can't use an adult-sized cuff on a baby," she explains. "And most hospitals don't even know where their infant-sized cuffs are. Here, we have an entire selection of different sizes."

Children's Hospital also specializes in diseases that affect kids as well. They nurse preemies to life. "The babies that come here typically have a foot about this size," she says, holding up a paper clip. It's both heartwarming and heartbreaking to see a tiny baby hooked up to so many tubes and wires that you can barely see the infant.

Children's Hospital takes in any patient, regardless of their ability to pay, and Insurance only pays 35 cents to the dollar in reimbursement, so they depend heavily on donations like those from the Viper club and Brian Angen Memorial Foundation.

Rob Wellington hands 9 month-old Emma a Venom Red Viper toy. She doesn't seem as excited as the other kids. Her grandmother tears up as she explains, "Emma is a victim of SBS – Shaken Baby Syndrome. Her father just lost it one day and shook her too hard. Her brain was damaged as it was smashed against the inside of her skull. They didn't think she'd live, and if she did, she'd be a vegetable. But little by little, the doctors and nurses have been working with her, and she can stand again, and she's responding. It's a miracle!"

Back in the immuno ward, Myra is smiling as she assembles her RidemakerZ™ Viper toy. Myra is here for a bone marrow transplant. Donita tells us Myra's story, "She just turned 19 last Saturday. She had been working with a hospital in Las Vegas, where she lives, to put together a Bone Marrow Registry drive which was to take place the weekend of her birthday. She was transferred to Oakland before her birthday, so the hospital held the drive for her and received 152 new bone marrow donors on the registry in her honor. She said it was the best present ever! Her Dad then joked that he promised her a car for her birthday, and it was a few days late. She loves her new Viper!"



### SIBLINGS HAVE IT TOUGH

Out in the parking lot, seven year-old Carlee checks out the cars and clasps her Viper toy. I notice her sister Noah nearby, quietly watching. She's being a good sister, even though Carlee is getting all the attention. Up in the immuno ward, a cousin of one of the sick children asks if he can have a Viper toy. It breaks our club members' hearts to tell him that the toys are only for the patients. "It's sad, but often the siblings are neglected because the sick children are the center of attention," explains Kelli. "It's really sad when the siblings say, 'I wish I were sick.'" Fortunately, at the end of the build-session, there's one Viper toy left over, so Glen gives it to the cousin. His face lights up as bright as an HID headlight. Meanwhile, one of the nurses escorts me to Carlee's room, where I present her sister Noah with one of the extra Viper toys. The surprised and happy look on her face is priceless.

### A HEARTWARMING DAY

"This was the best day for us in a long, long time," says Janis McAdon. Barbara Drummer adds, "This was the highlight of my year!" Hana Krulova observes, "I

loved seeing the smiles on the children's faces, and was amazed to see how well-spirited the kids were, considering their health and the treatment they have to go through ... what a great example for us adults!"

Robyn Pass, from RidemakerZ™ says, "This is the neatest thing ever done with RidemakerZ™. You and your club should be very proud of how happy you make SO many kids. Big and little!" Feeling inspired, Shahab Moradian adds, "This event really touched my heart, and since we had a new healthy baby boy just last month, it really motivates me to do anything I can to give back and help others who are not as fortunate. This type of giving is contagious, so thank you for the initial exposure."

Thanks to several generous last-minute donors, we not only met our goal of sponsoring 75 Viper toys, but also raised an additional \$2500 for the Brian Angen Memorial Foundation. We are blessed to live the Viper experience. My thanks to all of you who sponsored a toy and took time from your busy schedule to share Viper joy. 🏆





HANA KRULOVA

## BAMF DONATIONS REACH \$150,000

At the event, Terri, Rocky, and Kurt Angen presented the Craniofacial department at Children's Hospital, Oakland, with a donation check of \$10,000 on behalf of BAMF. "With this check, BAMF has contributed over \$150,000 to Children's Hospital in Oakland. We greatly appreciate your support!" said Dr. Bryan Toth, Pediatric Surgeon and Director, Craniofacial Program.

In 2001, VCA Northern California Region members established BAMF in memory of Brian Angen, who was killed in a tragic boating accident. Both VCA and BAMF are 100% volunteer organizations, so 100% of the proceeds are donated to charities, with the Children's Hospital in Oakland being the primary recipient.

## THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for making the second Viper Day a great success! Patients, families, and staff loved seeing, sitting in, and posing with all of your Vipers. Kelli and I are very appreciative that you took the time to come up to Children's Hospital, bring your amazing cars, and volunteer your time to warm our patients' day. Kelli says that on the tours she led on Monday, every child she passed in the hospital had a toy Viper, bear, or Beanie Baby animal. That's amazing how your efforts resulted in so many children receiving something fun to take home with them! No one likes being at the hospital but a new toy and playing in real Vipers definitely brightens a child's mood.

Thank you all for being sensitive and considerate of the patients' needs. Our staff had only positive things to say about everyone, especially the Viper Club members who helped out in 5 South, our immuno-compromised unit.

And as you saw, even our surgeons and staff loved the car show! The Viper is a hard car to not drool over :)

Thank you, and "Race ya later!"

*Jen Ripley and Kelli Nakayama  
Children's Hospital, Oakland*

I can't thank you all enough for coming to Children's Hospital, we all really appreciate it. We feel so proud to be part of such a great group of people. Your generosity and continued support is unbelievable. I know it was hot today, especially for those of you under the tents giving out toys, but you made a lot of kids very happy.

*Terri Angen, President, BAMF*

## OUR SPONSOR HEROES

A big thank you to all of you who sponsored Viper toys for the kids, especially those whom we normally don't see at club events. This event was a success because of your generosity! You brightened the lives of a lot of kids.

Rocky, Terri, and Kurt Angen  
Jennifer Baker  
Rich Bontempi  
Jim Bray  
Diana H and Robert Broucaret  
Tom Callero and Tammy Floyd  
Sanjar and Sheri Chakamian  
Barb and Doug Drummer  
**Barry Erickson\***  
Richard and Ann Forward  
Toddy and Sonja Gomez  
Elmer and Amy Gonzalez  
**Robert and Donita Granado\***

Gary and Diana Graves  
**Karen Hallstein\***  
Jay and Elaine Herbert  
Loyde Inlow  
Franklin Isaac  
Dennis and Tracy Kimball  
**Fred Kinder\***  
Hana Krulova  
**Steve Lenzner\***  
Maurice Liang  
Chi-Chan Liang  
Gary Linefelter  
Jack and Diane Loverde

Glen and Janis McAdon  
John and Nikki McDonald  
Shahab and Afi Moradian  
Jessica Neufeld  
Paul Normandin  
**George and Connie Nunes\***  
**Rich and Celia Oas\***  
Russ Oasis  
Victor Preisler  
Ken and Helen Ratica  
Tyson Weekley  
Rob and Norma Wellington  
\*Extra thanks to our **SUPER heroes!**

## viperabilia — Maurice Liang takes a look at the latest Viper collectibles



1) 1/64 HOT WHEELS ACR: #R09390B910L Hot Wheels ACR in new black w/red stripe. \$1 at Walmart. Ken Ratica.

2) 1/64 JOHNNY LIGHTNING ACR: New yellow w/black stripes. \$3 at Toys 'R Us.

3) 1/64 HOT WHEELS 2006 VIPER COUPE: #V1421-0910 Gold with black & red stripes in 4th of July series. Ken Ratica.



4) 1/64 MAISTO 2008 VIPER COUPE: #15055. All-stars Elite Transport set with 2008 Viper coupe in yellow with blue stripes. \$8 at Toys 'R Us

5) 1/64 HIGHWAY 68 2008 COUPE: #35354-1002. Cheap diecast of the 2008 Viper SRT-10 coupe in blue with white stripes or red with white stripes. Found on eBay.

6) 1/18 ROADRIPPERS 2008 VIPER COUPE R/C CAR: #37040 2008 Viper coupe remote control car with lights and sounds. Comes in blue with white stripes or silver and black with green stripes. \$25 at Walmart.

7) 1/24 ROADRIPPERS 2008 VIPER COUPE: #33505 Plastic lights and sounds car that does burnouts! Red, white and blue paint scheme. \$11 at Walmart

8) 1/18 RIDEMAKERZ VIPERS: Custom painted in ACR colors by Maurice.

9) 1/24 REVELL 2008 ACR PLASTIC MODEL KIT: #85-4243 \$23 at D&J Hobby.

10) 1/43 NOREV 2008 ACR: #950027. Nicely detailed diecast of the 2008 Viper ACR in red with black hood and red driver's stripe. \$40 on eBay.

11) 1/43 NOREV 2008 COUPE: Nicely detailed diecast of the 2008 Viper SRT10 coupe in Snakeskin Green. \$40 on eBay.

