

FOR RELEASE

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**Suburban Mom Pens Children's Book Series and Establishes Foundation as  
Tribute to Her Late Son**

Second Book in Ben's Adventures Children's Book Series publishes this summer, Book  
Donation to Easterseals

*Ben's Adventures: Circus Day* is in the works and new children's author Elizabeth Gerlach could not be more excited. The book series is a tribute to her young triplet son Benjamin who passed away in May 2016 at Ann & Robert H Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago. The book concept centers on Ben who has special needs but simply shows he's a little boy first – with friends, an imagination and a joy for life. The first Ben's Adventures picture book released at Book Expo in NYC in May 2018 and now the second book in the series will release this coming summer.

Gerlach wants the primary message in the book to be that kids are still kids, despite medical or physical differences. She says, "it's important for ALL kids to see themselves in books. They should be in the story also." Gerlach hopes to show disability in children's literature and begin to normalize a visible difference such as a wheelchair.

Gerlach also hopes the book will introduce the concept of special needs to young kids and begin to make it a more familiar and less scary concept. "My goal was to show the character in a wheelchair – kids like Ben may see him and be able to relate," Gerlach says. "But the message can also benefit typical families who may not have much experience with special needs in their daily life."

*Ben's Adventures: Circus Day* will be available for pre-order beginning May 2<sup>nd</sup> at [Kickstarter.com](https://www.kickstarter.com). Gerlach is aiming to raise funds through Kickstarter to help with printing and production of the new book. The Ben's Adventures books are available on Amazon as well as at [www.Bens-Adventures.com](http://www.Bens-Adventures.com). And for every 10 books pre-ordered, Gerlach will donate a signed book to EasterSeals Dupage & Fox Valley to be shared with their young clients.

Gerlach has a history with Easterseals and she wanted to find a way to give back and promote their mission. Her son Benjamin received services there for two years. Easterseals DuPage & Fox Valley serves more than 1,000 children each week. They believe in their abilities, help

them achieve their goals and celebrate their progress every step of the way. With leading experts across specialties and diagnoses, Easterseals is where families find clear answers and a community of support, so their children can realize their full potential.

Gerlach and her husband previously established the Ben Smiles Memorial Foundation, a local fund dedicated to purchasing switch-adapted toys, switches and other devices for kids with special needs. Gerlach says many items are not covered by insurance but kids with motor disability cannot easily access typical toys. These adapted toys enable them to play by the press of a switch.

“My son Benjamin had cerebral palsy and significant difficulty playing independently. He had several adapted toys and communication tools that gave him a sense of independence. I hope we can spread Ben’s smile through our gifts and impact kids and their families,” Gerlach says.

Gerlach’s son Benjamin died at just three years old after a long battle with respiratory illness – she believes this was the life they were meant to lead and this was meant to be their story. Her goal is to simply bring smiles to families’ faces and spread the joy to others that Benjamin brought to their lives.

*Ben’s Adventures: Circus Day* will be available for pre-order beginning May 2<sup>nd</sup> at [Kickstarter.com](https://www.kickstarter.com). The first book “Day at the Beach” is currently available at [www.Bens-Adventures.com](http://www.Bens-Adventures.com) and [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

Gerlach lives in west suburbs with Ben’s triplet siblings Colin and Ava. Gerlach’s husband is currently deployed to the Middle East.

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## Ben Smiles Memorial Foundation

*Ben Smiles Memorial Foundation* was established by Rob and Elizabeth Gerlach after their three-year-old son Benjamin passed away in May 2016 after a long battle with various respiratory illnesses. Ben was a happy, smart little boy who had severe physical limitations. He was diagnosed with quadriplegia cerebral palsy and epilepsy, was nonverbal and required a feeding tube. Despite his challenges, he smiled every single day.

**Ben's Toy Closet** is a program where children with *different abilities* can receive toys, switches or other devices that would give them some independence and make it easier to play and learn. Kids of all ages and abilities need access to their environment. They learn, grow and develop through play, but unfortunately not all children have the typical motor movement (ability to grasp and free movement of arms/legs) that allows them to easily access standard toys and their environment. Special equipment, adapted toys and other tools are out there but they can be expensive, hard to find, and many times, are not covered by insurance or come with large copays.

The Gerlach's mission is to gift as many toys and other important devices as possible to special kids and their families.

To learn more or to request a toy  
please visit [www.BenSmiles.org/Bens-Toy-Closet](http://www.BenSmiles.org/Bens-Toy-Closet)



[www.BenSmiles.org](http://www.BenSmiles.org) | [info@BenSmiles.org](mailto:info@BenSmiles.org)

*Ben Smiles Memorial Foundation was created in partner with the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley, a 501c3 organization.*

# Ben's Adventures

Ben is a young triplet brother who loves the sun on his face and the wind in his hair. He loves his friends. He loves his family. He loves to use his imagination to create wonderful Adventures. And he has Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy ... but that doesn't define him.

The Ben's Adventures books series follows Ben as he dreams up fun adventures with his friends and family. In the first book, Ben took us to the beach. In the second book due out Summer 2019, we follow Ben from his classroom to the circus! The books are written in rhyme and meter, making for a fun read.

The books are uplifting and inspiring and will warm your heart. Ben smiles, and you will too.

About the Author: Elizabeth Gerlach is a triplet mom who was inspired to develop *Ben's Adventures* as a tribute to her young son Benjamin who passed away in 2016. Ben had cerebral palsy and other significant needs. It was important to show that despite medical & physical differences, all kids can play and dream. Ben's triplet brother & sister are currently first graders in St Charles.



Ben can't walk. Ben can't talk.  
But that's okay.  
**ALL Kids Can Play & Dream.**

Available Now at  
[www.Bens-Adventures.com](http://www.Bens-Adventures.com)



## Elizabeth Gerlach | Triplet Mom. Children's Book Author. Fundraiser.



Elizabeth Gerlach is a mom to triplets, advocate for special needs, fundraiser and first-time children's book author. She and her husband Rob established the *Ben Smiles Memorial Foundation* after their young triplet son Benjamin passed away from respiratory failure in 2016. Ben had significant needs including cerebral palsy and epilepsy, and he required a feeding tube. Even though Benjamin had challenges in his short life, he smiled every single day. Through Ben Smiles, the Gerlachs hope to share his joy by purchasing gifts of switch-adapted toys, switches and other necessary devices for kids like Ben and through other gifts and various

community service projects.

Elizabeth was inspired to develop her first book *Ben's Adventures: A Day at the Beach* to show that kids are kids first, and all can play and dream. Despite medical and/or physical differences, all kids learn and grow through play. This moving message is important not only for kids with a disability but also for typical kids, making a wheelchair or any other disability less scary. These special kids can be friends, they can play, they can interact and have relationships. In this first book, Ben imagines a fun visit to the beach where he runs with crabs, flies with kites and does all things that a young boy wants to do. A portion of the proceeds from book sales will support Ben Smiles' mission.

Originally from Virginia, Elizabeth is a southerner at heart but currently lives with her husband and Ben's brother and sister in Chicago's western suburbs. She has an MBA in Marketing and was previously held many marketing and advertising positions over a 15-year corporate career. She and her family attend Chapelstreet Church in Geneva, IL, and believes that things happen for a reason, and this was meant to be their story.