



BY REBECCA CHRISTIAN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY  
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# classic woman awards

**It is our privilege** to introduce the honorees of our sixth annual Classic Woman Awards. What struck us about these phenomenal women is that they didn't set out to become philanthropists. Instead, life threw down a gauntlet they couldn't ignore.

These champions put body and soul into their causes: pediatric cancer research, prevention of sudden death from hidden heart disease, care for terminally ill children, safe recreational trails, education in Cambodia, and medical care for the uninsured. The bell rang. Here's how they answered the challenge.

HAIR: JANE ROBERTS; MAKEUP: ANNO BRAND



## Gretchen Holt Witt

### Cookies for Kids' Cancer Califon, New Jersey

Gretchen Holt Witt is one smart cookie.

In February of 2007, when her 2-year-old son, Liam Witt, was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, an aggressive form of cancer, Gretchen was outraged to learn how little money is spent on research for pediatric cancer. She wanted a cure for Liam and others like him, and she wanted it fast. "The topic of children's cancer is such a monster in the closet that nobody wants to talk about it. I had to come up with something nobody could resist. And who can resist a cookie?" asks Gretchen, who loves to bake.

"It's so innocent and pure."

So in 2008, as she juggled her job in public relations with rounds of chemo, surgery, and tests for valiant "Prince Liam"—while trying to keep life normal for him and his little sister, Ella—she masterminded a plan to bake 96,000 cookies over the holidays. She rented a commercial kitchen in New York City, sent out calls for volunteers, and watched in amazement as they trooped in, including an entire shift of firefighters from a nearby station. Cookies for Kids' Cancer has raised \$2 million from what has become a 365-day online national project, with bake sales also held all over the country.

Start-to-finish steps for hosting a local bake sale—from planning and staffing to downloadable signs, brochures, and press releases—are available on the Web site of the organization.

As for 6-year-old Liam, he loves his namesake "Liam's Lemon Sugar Cookies" and doesn't know he has cancer—just ouchies. "It's our job to worry," Gretchen says of herself and husband Larry. "It's Liam's job to be a little boy."  
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