'Heated Rivalry' fans raise $63K for children's hospital for Hudson Williams' birthday

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Hudson Williams, one of the breakout stars of the Canadian LGBTQ+ hockey drama "Heated Rivalry," just celebrated his 25th birthday on February 13.

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And fans of the show wanted to do something special to commemorate the actor's special day.

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In a fundraiser created by Threads user Gianna Christine, or @plat_champagne, fans came together to raise over $63,000 for BC Children's Hospital Foundation, a charity that funds research and programs for the BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver, British Columbia.

It's a cause close to Williams' heart.

On the red carpet of this year's Golden Globes, he toasted to the charity.

"The BC Children's Hospital kind of saved my life when I was a little baby," the actor said at the awards show. "So, selfishly, if we could save some more babies over there, that'd be cool."

HUDSON WILLIAMS BY DIANE VILLANUEVA IN "HEATED RIVALRY." PHOTO BY ZABRINA LAWTON/HBO MAX

For Gigi, it was a challenge easily accepted.

In late January, she posted to Threads saying she got a fundraising page approved by the hospital and had a meager goal of just $5,000. She shared that the donation link would be live until Williams' birthday on February 13.

"No amount is too small," she wrote on the social media platform. "The money goes directly to the hospital foundation, this is not a third party platform so they'll receive the maximum benefit of your generosity."

In less than 18 hours, the community had raised over $3,000. In just a day, $4,000.

"I need a new phone," Gigi wrote within the first day of fundraising. "I'm blown away' no longer tho."

Some fans began donating in $24 increments in honor of Williams' character, Shane Hollander. In "Heated Rivalry," 24 is Hollander's hockey jersey number.

After reaching a $10,000 milestone, Gigi told followers, "y'all are the most generous fandom on the internet."

At $11,000, she shared some more details.

"As a parent whose child has needed such a facility, I couldn't be more grateful and proud of this community of weirdos," Gigi wrote.

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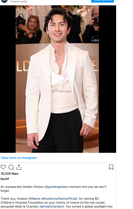

"When Hudson said the BCCH saved his life, my heart stopped for a moment. I was transported back to when our doctor said the words 'pediatric neurosurgeon,'" she added later in the fundraiser. "I immediately identified with how terrified his mother must have been, because I was in the same position once."

Gigi's own daughter celebrated her birthday just two days before Williams'.

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"In a half hour, it will be Feb. 11, my baby's birthday," Gigi wrote on Threads after the fundraiser reached $25,000 in donations.

"The one who needed brain surgery at six months old. The reason Hudson's comment touched my heart so deeply. It feels right to reach this incredible milestone just before the birthdate of my beautiful girl. This means more to me than I can say."

By Williams' birthday, the fundraiser had reached over $32,000, which he shared on his Instagram story with the caption, "best bday present ever."

And still, the fans continued donating. Coordinators at the foundation encouraged organizers to have the link up until February 16 to catch any other donations from fans following Williams' birthday.

After Williams shared on his social media, the fundraiser saw an additional 760 donors, according to Gigi.

HOCKEY CELEBRATES THE CHAMPIONSHIP ON ICE OVER PLATFORM FOR HEX BIRTHDAY. PHOTO COURTESY OF @HOCKEYGIRLS/@PLAT_CHAMPAGNE

And as of the morning of February 17, the total had surpassed $63,415.

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"You all are continuing to demonstrate kindness and generosity on a scale I couldn't have ever expected. There have been multiple donations of over $100. but the ones that really grab my heart when I see them come through are the $5, the $10," Gigi wrote.

"People say 'it's not much but...' No buts. Don't do that. Every penny raised will be put to work saving children's lives. Who knows what research breakthrough might be possible because people watched 'Heated Rivalry'?"

While it's unclear how long this specific fundraiser will be live, Gigi has also plugged similar efforts cropping up in honor of Williams' "Heated Rivalry" co-star, Connor Storrie, whose birthday is on February 23.

So far, a fundraiser in Storrie's name supporting the National Center for LGBTQ+ Rights has raised over $10,000. Another, made for both actors' birthdays, has raised over $4,000 for Rainbow Railroad, an organization that supports LGTBQ+ refugees.

"If you're new to fandoms, this is what it can be," Gigi summarized.

"It can be fun; it can be a community — it doesn't have to become toxic ... Be freaks, but respectful freaks."

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