



# Bat Boy Helps Newsletter

June 3, 2009  
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As Seen in Newsday, Photos Courtesy of Project Sunshine

## What a reward for Gardner: His little fan gets new heart

BY RODERICK BOONE

Brett Gardner went hitless yesterday, but he probably felt as if he were the one who hit the walk-off home run.

Gardner may have gone 0-for-4 in the Yankees' 6-4 victory over the Twins, but after the game, he learned that the young girl who gave him a good-luck charm Friday had picked up an even bigger win: the chance to live a long, healthy life.

The little girl - family members did not want her name divulged - had been in need of a transplant and spent 107 days waiting for a heart. Yesterday, capping a seemingly incredible turn of events, a replacement heart was found for her and she had successful surgery.



The roughly six-hour procedure took place at New York Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital, where Gardner had paid her and others a visit Friday to read baseball-themed books. He took part in an event for the non-profit group Project Sunshine, which assists children and their families dealing with medical issues.

"I'm just very thankful, very thankful, that the good Lord is watching out after her," Gardner told Newsday. "And hopefully she continues to improve and keeps fighting and overcomes everything she's going through."



In his typical low-key manner, Gardner believes what transpired in the 24 hours since he spent a moment with the little girl was merely happenstance.

But consider this: She gave him a yellow Project Sunshine bracelet Friday and said if he wore it, he would hit a home run. And he did.

Now this is not Alex Rodriguez we're talking about here. The 5-10 Gardner, anything but a power hitter, entered Friday's game having hit one home run in 202 major-league at-bats, and that was a drive just inside the rightfield foul pole Wednesday against Toronto.

But after replacing Johnny Damon, who was ejected in the third inning Friday night for arguing a called third strike, Gardner indeed hit a

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seventh-inning home run - an inside-the-parker, making the situation even more improbable. His looper down the leftfield line got past Denard Span and rolled to the warning track, and Gardner, one of the fastest players in the major leagues, scored well ahead of the throw with a headfirst dive.

"I just think it's a coincidence as far as me going there and seeing her," said Gardner, who also tripled and singled Friday night. "I'm very excited for her and happy for her. And hopefully I'll get to see her again."

Gardner had no idea what was happening across the Harlem River in Manhattan during yesterday's game. Yankees special adviser Ray Negrón, who accompanied Gardner and the rest of the players who ventured to the hospital, kept it a secret on purpose. "I didn't want to tell Gardner about the heart before the game," Negrón said, "because I didn't want him to be distracted."

Have the ghosts from the former Yankee Stadium moved across the street? Negrón thinks this proves it.

"If anything, Lou Gehrig took a walk out of that ballpark to help," Negrón said, motioning in the direction of the old Yankee Stadium. "I could see him and Babe Ruth doing that. They were the first Yankees to hit home runs for children after visiting them in a hospital."

Once the little girl is ready to be released, the plan is to bring her to the Yankees' \$1.5-billion playhouse so she can attend a game, meet some of the players and take a little tour. "I know she's a huge Yankees fan," Gardner said. "So hopefully we can keep playing some games for her and put a smile on her face."

Now that she's received another shot at life, Gardner hopes the smiles won't be few and far between. Said Negrón: "Miracles do happen."



## Angel in the Outfield

New York Yankee center fielder Brett Gardner, Linda Ruth Tosetti, the granddaughter of baseball legend Babe Ruth, Ray Negrón, author of *One Last Time: Good-Bye to Yankee Stadium* along with Project Sunshine members visited the children at Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital. Award winning Storyboard Artist, Robert Castillo entertained the children with his drawings while Sally Cook, author of *Hey Batta Batta Swing* read to the children.



Project Sunshine is a nonprofit organization consisting of volunteers who bring programming – recreational, educational and social services to over 60,000 children facing medical challenges and their families. Their website can be found at <http://www.projectsunshine.org>.

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