Alex's Lemonade

When life gave her lemons, she made a lemonade stand

In 2000, a four-year-old cancer patient named Alexandra “Alex” Scott came up with a seemingly simple idea: she would hold a lemonade stand to raise money to help “her doctors” find a cure for childhood cancer. Alex and her older brother Patrick put the idea into action when they set up the first Alex’s Lemonade Stand for pediatric cancer on their front lawn in July 2000.

For the next four years, despite her deteriorating health, Alex held an annual lemonade stand to raise money for childhood cancer research. Following her inspirational example, thousands of lemonade stands have been held across the country by children, schools, businesses and organizations, all to benefit Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation for pediatric cancer. As of this year, the national campaign has raised more than $6 million for pediatric cancer research.

On Aug. 1,2004, Alex died at the age of eight after battling cancer for most of her life. Alex’s determination to raise awareness and money was passed along to her family, including her parents Jay and Liz Scott, and supporters, who are committed to continuing her legacy through the foundation. Now in the spirit of all the charitable lemonade stands still supporting this effort, Alex’s Lemonade and Alex’s Pink Lemonade have been introduced to further promote the foundation’s cause in the marketplace.

The ready-to-drink lemonades were launched in May by USA Beverage Inc., Huntingdon Valley, Pa. The brewer of Pennsylvania Dutch Birch Beer entered into an exclusive licensing agreement to create the drinks.

“USA Beverage worked closely for more than a year with Jay and Liz Scott to develop the lemonade and label,” says Dwayne Schwarz, vice president of USA Beverage. “We felt that it was something extremely important to the brand that we wanted Alex to be as much a part of it as possible. We worked along with the family so the color of the packaging and taste were right.”

USA Beverage’s relationship with Liz and Jay Scott and the foundation began with a suggestion of Michael Zuckerman of Zuckerman Honickman Inc., King of Prussia, Pa., a company that continues to support the foundation. The Scotts let Zuckerman know that they were looking for a product to carry on their daughter’s legacy, and obviously the natural step for them was an RTD lemonade.

For more than a year and a half, USA Beverage and numerous suppliers donated their time and services to bring Alex’s Lemonade to the marketplace. Zuckerman Honickman, a bottle supplier, provides all the bottles for the product, and contacted Ball Corp. to develop a proprietary bottle. USA Beverage and Ball, which donated the mold for the proprietary bottle, plan to have the new bottle launched by the end of the year.

The Alex’s Lemonade label was created to communicate the foundation’s support of childhood cancer research and Alex’s influence on the product. “The actual image that you see on the label of the little girl came from a children’s book from the foundation that is being sold throughout the country in various bookstores,” Schwarz says.

The back of the label features the story of Alex Scott and her crusade to raise money for childhood cancer. BC Design, Warwick, R.I., designed the creative artwork for the label, and Hammer Packaging, Rochester, N.Y., donated the plate charges for the development of the label. For the formulation, Whittle & Mutch, Mt. Laurel, N.J., dedicated time to work with USA Beverage and the Scotts to develop the lemonade flavors.

Since launching in May, Alex’s Lemonade has sold 59,000 cases. The 20-ounce drinks retail from $1 to $1.29, with 23 percent of the proceeds benefiting the Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation. Currently, the product is distributed through the Honickman organization, and can be found in supermarkets, convenience stores and independent retailers from Philadelphia to the Carolinas. This month, the lemonades will be kicking off in the New York marketplace. Some supermarket locations have been progressively promoting the product as well, which is contributing to sales, Schwarz says.

Because the foundation awards grants to hospitals throughout the country, USA Beverage plans to distribute the product to hospitals as well. The RTD lemonades also are available for lemonade stand locations. “We’ve made arrangements to have products shipped to Macy’s department stores,” Schwarz says. “They hold lemonade stands in some of their locations. We sent product out to their regional headquarters, and they sent it out to their stores to do the lemonade stands.”

This leads to the possible launch of gallon-sized jugs to distribute to the lemonade stands and to club stores and mass merchandisers in the near future, Schwarz says. For now, USA Beverage is working on expanding distribution of the two lemonades, although there have already been thoughts about expanding the line with more flavor options. The company also is developing a marketing plan to carry the products through the winter months. “Obviously, lemonade is a summertime drink, but in warmer markets, we want to develop a unique marketing plan to keep the lemonade category open and growing all year round,” Schwarz says.

Although the target audience for the lemonades is kids ages four and up, USA Beverage is receiving feedback from consumers much older, who read the back of the label and are moved by the story. Both the Scotts and Schwarz know Alex’s struggle is a very sad story. But the Scotts have told Schwarz, “The positive thing, at the end of the day, is the difference that the foundation is making to other children throughout the United States.”

For more information on the Alex’s Lemonade Stand Foundation go to alexlemonade.org.