



There Is: **Defiance.**

Life Within The Journey

Beyond The Diagnosis, A Portrait Of What Endures.



Circle of Care
for families of children with cancer

Photography by Jeanna Shepard

2015
Annual Report

Co-Founders Liz Salguero & Dawn Ladenheim



Dear Friends,

In 2015, we were proud to launch “Life Within the Journey,” a photojournalistic exhibit that traveled throughout Connecticut to honor and celebrate the children and families who we serve. “Life Within the Journey” was our way of sharing with you what motivates us every day, and what truly defines the mission of Circle of Care. For those of us who have experienced a pediatric cancer journey, it’s the unexpected reality that life continues to move forward, even as you face the unimaginable. And within that journey, there is more than IV poles and

hospital beds. There is hope and laughter, optimism and gratitude. There is fortitude and perseverance. Love and peace.

We are so pleased that so many of you in our Circle of Care family had the opportunity to experience one of our eight travelling exhibits this year, and were able to share in the stories of the 22 children we featured. Each portrait reveals the universal story of a child with cancer and the life that they each embrace despite their treatment. “Life Within the Journey” has been a permanent installation since September at Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital with the goal of providing hope to newly diagnosed children and their families and, just as importantly, to let them know that they are not alone. With your help, we continue to support children and families through programs that create hope, inspire dreams, relieve financial burdens, and make lasting connections. Thank you for all you do to make the small moments possible for so many children. Until no parent has to hear the words, “Your child has cancer,” we will be here.

Most Sincerely,

Executive Director Jeff Kimball

Read this Annual Report and you can learn about the kind of impact we are having on a personal level, right here in our community.

We are serving more children in treatment for cancer with more volunteers through more substantial investments in our programs. Fundraising is up **50%**, and we are exceeding our goal of growing our circle of friends **30%** year-over-year. Operationally we're in fantastic shape and our program is stronger and more vibrant than ever.

For that, I simply want to say: THANK YOU.

Giving locally has never been so powerful, and as an investor, it's important that you understand why for every **\$1** you invest, we return **\$5.66** in services to our community. Read through this and learn about how our emergency financial support helps families weather a crisis and focus on what's important: their child's health and their family's well-being. Learn how communities rally through our Art from the Heart program, giving children something to look forward to during a difficult treatment. Understand why our hospital volunteers, like Board Member Annie McHugh, play such an important role in providing moments of relief.

My favorite poet, Cavafy, eloquently wrote about the mythical quest for Ithika, reminding us that everything valuable we obtain in life can be found in the process, not the destination. At Circle of Care, we exist to honor the moments, the life that is so present in this journey, and through that providing the support that is so badly needed. That's why every effort you make, no matter how big or small, has a meaningful impact on a child in treatment and their family.

Yes, our program is solid, but we will continue to innovate. Yes, we're in great shape, but we're on our way to raising **\$400,000** next year, because the demand for the personal services we provide has never been greater.

So, thank you for being there for us, so that we can continue to be there for children in treatment.

Take Care,



Beyond the Diagnosis, a Portrait of What Endures...

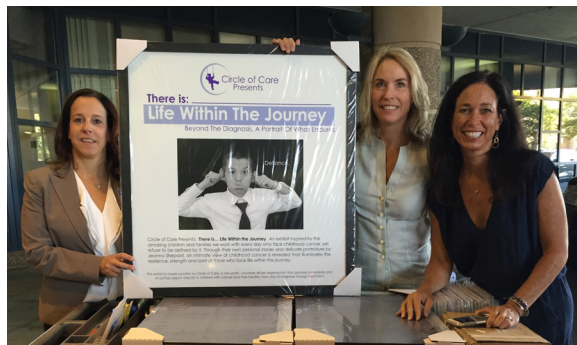


life” look at children who are in treatment on any given day. In any town, anywhere across the nation. And through these candid photos and stories, we were able to begin to grasp the pediatric cancer journey in America.

This year, Circle of Care launched the **“Life Within the Journey”** series, and what a tremendous impact it made throughout the state of Connecticut. This breathtakingly emotional photojournalistic series featured real children, with real cancer, who were undergoing treatment when they were photographed on the hospital floor, just steps from their rooms.

These children and their stories offer a glimpse into Connecticut's own pediatric cancer journey. But they represent so much more.

The **Life Within the Journey** series is a true “day-in-the-



Michelle D'Amore, YNHCH, Liz Salguero, and photographer Jeanna Shepard,



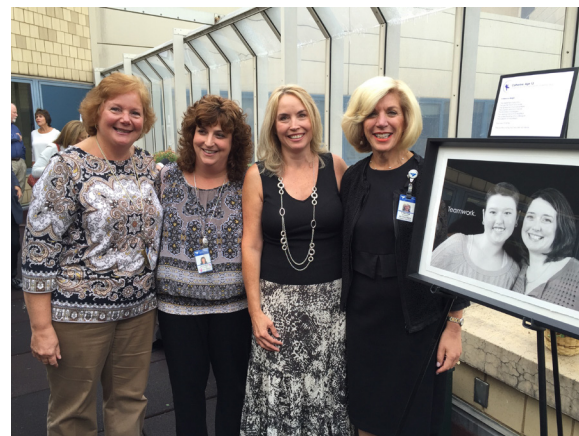
Life Within The Journey

Travelling from New Canaan to Hartford, New Haven to Greenwich, Westport to Wilton, the **Life Within the Journey** series made its way across Connecticut, leaving its mark on each town it visited. Many of the families featured in the series were in attendance. Barbara Alter, mother of Catherine who is featured in the series, said, "Even though it's not an easy journey, there are these moments that you get that are good. I honestly think it's sometimes harder on the parents to watch your kids go through it. But, somehow, we got through it, and I think it was from opportunities like this." Speaking further about Circle of Care, she said, "Groups like this, that work with families while they go through this, you realize that even during horrible times, they're such blessings."

Sumbul Naqvi spoke about her daughter, Sumera, also featured in the series. "I knew they were taking her picture at a time when she was vulnerable, but I told myself that if I do this, I could look back and see how things have changed." And, as we watched Sumera and her sister enjoy being the center of attention at Wilton's opening night of the exhibit at the Wilton Library, it was clear that things have changed, and for the better.

Pediatric cancer can be complicated. It is diverse, random, and unkind. It does not discriminate. And like any journey, the road is full of unknowns. In the case of these families, some are still in treatment, others are in remission, some have relapsed, and sadly, some have passed on. Yet, through their own personal stories and portraiture, an intimate and inspiring view of childhood cancer was revealed. And it unveiled the resilience, strength and spirit of those who face childhood cancer, but refuse to be defined by it. It reminded us all that there is life within the journey.

We thank our photographer, Jeanna Shepard, for her vision, time and expertise. And we thank our creative team and writers, including Christine Baer, Jeff Salguero and Lisa Schneider.



Connie Nicolosi MSW, Jennifer Cohen, MSW, Liz Salguero, Cynthia Sparer, Executive Director Yale New Haven Children's Hospital

Circle of Care Inaugural 5K

In October, nearly 200 runners hit the streets and trails of Wilton to support children and families who are facing cancer in Connecticut. Circle of Care's first 5K was a great success, raising **\$17,000** thanks to the support of 18 local businesses. Dedicated volunteers checked in runners, manned water stations, and cheered on participants. We are looking forward to next year's 5K!



Supporting Children With Cancer

Fun With Our Families!

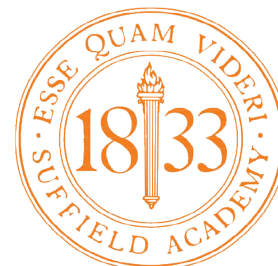
In June, Circle of Care was proud to participate in the annual Survivor's Day, sponsored by Yale New Haven Health's Smilow Cancer Center and The Tommy Fund, at Edgerton Park in New Haven. More than 100 children, along with their families, participate in activities that focus on fun, not cancer. Circle of Care was there to do what we do best – provide a little relief and support along this journey. Offering massages and reflexology, as well as an opportunity for kids to create their own customized aromatherapy sachet, Circle of Care was proud to be a part of this special event. Frannie Faith was also there to teach children and caregivers about the healing benefits of meditation and to share her CD, especially created for our families, to guide them in their meditation. Survivor's Day is an event that allows kids to put everything else aside for a few hours and focus on just being a kid again.



Color For A Cause...



On Saturday, November 7, Suffield Academy's student council held its first major fundraiser to support Circle of Care. The activity was part of three school-wide events that focus on raising money and awareness for an organization outside of Suffield Academy – Circle of Care was thrilled to be Suffield's selected charity this year. More than 300 students ran the course, throwing paint at each other under the lights, with honored guest and Circle of Care kid Marion in the lead! The Color Run was a great start to the school's year-long campaign to raise **\$50,000** for Circle of Care.



Meriden Police Officers Support Circle of Care

In November, Meriden police officers put away their razors for a good cause. Typically, police officers in Meriden are not permitted to have facial hair, other than trimmed goatees and mustaches. But Police Chief Jeffrey Cossette made an exception in November, allowing the officers an opportunity to skip the shave for a donation to a charity. Luckily, Circle of Care was the chosen charity, and after many officers made a \$25 donation, \$2,645 was raised for our cause. Circle of Care is grateful to Meriden's police department for selecting our organization.





Moore Fitness shows their support in creative ways during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.



Annual Dance Competition raises \$2,500 for Circle of Care.



Art From The Heart shows their community spirit for Circle of Care's #I'mNOTmycancer.



WTNH-TV's Ann Nyberg interviews Board member Tina Garrity and Liz Salguero for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Our Junior Fundraisers

Over the years, some very generous young people have made a big difference in the Circle of Care family. They've hosted fundraisers, written letters to organizations, given their time and their energy to help children with cancer. Here are just a few.

As a seventh grader at Wilton's Middlebrook School, Vignesh Subramanian chose Circle of Care as his beneficiary for the school's Power of One project. He wrote ten compelling letters to pharmaceutical companies in the state asking for product and cash donations to benefit CoC. His efforts to collect supplies and donations at both Middlebrook School and at the Village Market in Wilton were a great success and when all was said and done, Circle of Care received over \$1,000 worth of products for our Bags of Love.



Last year, then fifth grader Catie Baer organized a bake sale with friends to benefit Circle of Care. After holding several meetings to plan the event, making posters and baking some delicious treats, the girls set up a table at the Village Market in Wilton. They spoke passionately with passersby about Circle of Care and how the organization helps children with cancer. People in town were impressed with these young volunteers and they donated accordingly! After just five hours, the girls had raised \$1,200 for Circle of Care.



This year, sixth grade Wilton student Meghan Wood decided that giving is better than receiving. Rather than accepting presents from her friends for her 11th birthday, she requested gift card donations that she would donate to Circle of Care. Meghan collected \$1,000 in gift cards! The cards will be used as a gift for teens and young adults who need a pick-me-up during treatment.



Thank You
To All Our
Fundraisers!

Connecticut Childhood Cancer Alliance Formed



In October 2015, we launched the first Leadership Forum of the Childhood Cancer Alliance of Connecticut. Our first meeting featured expert speakers in the field – Dr. Gary Kupfer, Section Chief at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital spoke about the current state of medical treatments for children – Deanna Phillips of Connecticut Children's Medical Center spoke about the importance of the psychosocial aspect of treatment and Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. shared his personal story of childhood cancer and

the importance of emotional and financial support.

The formation of this Alliance creates opportunities for organizations to meet face-to-face and share experiences and resources to better serve children with cancer. What a relief it is for a CT parent hearing the dreaded words "Your child has cancer," to now be able to turn to one group, with one united voice, to guide them during the 2- to 3-year treatment plan with financial resources, access to the latest research, and a connection to families that have been through similar experiences.



Gary Kupfer, State Senator Ted Kennedy Jr, Liz Salguero, Deanna Phillips



Programs & Services

Bags of Love

Day of Diagnosis Support

At diagnosis, children are often immediately sent to the hospital to begin lengthy treatment procedures. Parents don't even have time to grab a toothbrush, let alone their child's favorite thing to comfort them. Our Bag of Love is a canvas tote filled with day-to-day necessities, comfort items and vital resources to let each child and family know that they are not alone. Items may include a hand-made blanket, toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant, hand sanitizer, phone charger, a child's toy, a journal and pen and our resource directory, **The Purple Pages**, which provides critical resource information to families.



In 2015, dreams came true for 12 lucky children - our Dream Room Makeover Art from the Heart program encompassed everything from outer space to under the sea adventures to bohemian dreams and a movie screening room! Our Art from the Heart program turns 10 this year, and we are celebrating over 85 Dream Rooms completed!

Brady age 8 – Ewings Sarcoma

Brady, is a brave boy who is battling Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare cancer that accounts for only one percent of pediatric cancers. Ewing's Sarcoma is the second most common bone cancer in children. A tumor was found in Brady's left tibia and was removed immediately. Once the tumor was taken out, a 10-month chemotherapy treatment was in order. And that's in addition to having Salvage Lymph Node Dissection surgery.



Mom said "The fantasy room idea sounds super cool, especially for Brady as he currently cannot walk so spends most of the time on his bed or on a couch. Brady also is not currently attending school so he spends 1/2 of his time at our house and the rest at the hospital. And, Brady really thrives on the attention he receives, it helps take his mind off all the not so pleasant aspects of cancer."

"It was awesome and one of the coolest things ever," Brady said. "I love the lava lamp, the Coca-Cola bottles and the blankets and pillows. Those pillows are so soft. I can't wait to sleep in them tonight. I can't choose. Everything was my favorite." "The room was livable 48 hours ago and now its phenomenal," said Colleen, Brady's mother. "It's mind-blowing how much the kids came together and how much work they did in the final 24 hours."





It was obvious Brady couldn't be happier. Pointing to all the cool details of his new room, it was the jaw-dropping moment of seeing a lava lamp on a nightstand between the two beds that made Brady's day.

"This is exciting for us and exciting for Brady," Colleen, Brady's mother, said. "I think it's exciting for the community as well. The kids from the high school have been amazing. Karen and her crew have been great and it's an uplifting and awesome project."

"They did a wonderful job," said Brian, Brady's father. "They are a great group of people with great energy. It's great to see people from the community and people that have gone to the same school as the kids kind of come out and give back. Having all the people here provides a welcome distraction in terms of something

going on around the house for Brady to think about."

As a special surprise, Liam, Brady's older brother, had his room redone. Liam's room was transformed into a surfer's paradise, complete with a painted shark on a wall, a massive painted wave on a wall with two red crabs hiding out in it, and a surf board decorated with pictures. "It's good," Liam said.

"It's awesome. The shark in the water and the crab were cool. And I like my covers because it looks like I could surf."

"It's great," Colleen said. "We spend a lot of time in the house because of what is going on with Brady and this is the perfect thing for a kid going through something like this. We couldn't be happier. The smile on his face makes it all worthwhile."



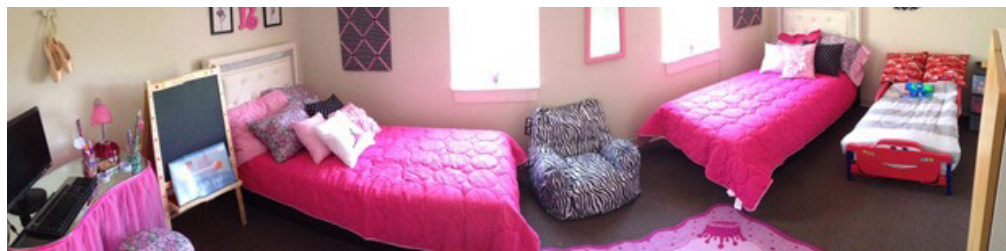
Kemonnie 7 years old: Anaplastic Astrocytoma

Kemonnie was diagnosed a year ago with a brain tumor, at age 6. She has a 9yr. old sister, Montanae, and 2yr. old brother BJ. Since Kemonnie shares her room with her two siblings, **Art From The Heart** volunteers from two local high schools set out to make a room that would be special for all the children. Kemonnie loves princesses and ballerinas, glitter, and bright pink. Her sister loves gymnastics, and her little baby brother, BJ, loves cars.

The girls really needed new beds, as they had a trundle bed which was falling apart and mattresses that were very old. Her little brother was in a crib and mom wanted a toddler bed for him. The team got to work... first up, the girls got new mattresses, headboards with glitter, and new bedding with lots of pink. BJ's crib was replaced with a toddler bed from the movie "Car's." Other special touches include a volunteer from Morgan High School in Clinton, who painted pictures of ballerinas and gymnasts to decorate the walls. Another group from Daniel Hand High School made a frilly skirt out of pink tulle for a dressing table, and princess crowns for over their beds. The transformation was complete!



Kemonnie and her siblings love their new room are extremely appreciative of everything and anything that is done for them. Mom said "what has been most helpful during this journey is Kemonnie's positive attitude. She is never down or upset". And you can really tell that. She is a very happy sweet child.



Lifeline Emergency Funds

In 2015, we provided critical financial relief to more than 50 families facing unpaid bills due to the high cost of childhood cancer treatment. 175 more families received assistance with gas, parking and groceries to get them through the numerous chemo and clinic visits. 60 families also received year-end gifts from us to make their holidays brighter. Because of you, we were able to do more, give more and exceeded our annual grants this year, bringing us to a total of over \$1 million in 8 years.



Thank-you for
sending gift cards
and your support
of us during Connor's
fight!

The Armstrongs



Circle of Care,
I would like to express my
never ending thank you for the
financial assistance your organization
has provided for my family during
this difficult time. We will never forget.
I have enclosed a photo of our
son Campbell who is under-going
treatment for Brain Cancer.
Thank you from the bottom
of our hearts.
Love, Emily A. Campbell Taft



Spotlight On... **ANNIE McHUGH**



When board member Annie McHugh moved to Madison, CT in 2008, she had never heard of Circle of Care. A friend introduced McHugh to the organization as a way to meet people in her new town. Annie jumped right in, not knowing then the impact that Circle of Care would quickly have on her life – the friends she would meet, the children and families who would become so important to her, the satisfaction it would bring.

Since then, McHugh has worked as a volunteer and co-chair for several CoC fundraisers, on our marketing and public relations efforts, and as a tireless hospital volunteer. Annie has worn many hats, contributing in so many valuable ways to the Circle of Care team and to the families we serve.

"I know I make a difference," she says. "I see the relief that I provide to the child life staff and nurses when I can spend time with a child who needs a distraction at the hospital." Legos, crafts, coloring...whatever is needed, Annie is happy to do it. Though every child holds a special place in her heart, she has a tender spot for one particular shy boy she met while volunteering.

The pair sat together and created cards and crafts for hours. At the end of the day, after unveiling their many projects, a nurse commented that it was the first time that anyone had ever gotten a response from that little boy. "The hospital volunteer program is one of our most important programs," says McHugh.

Helping children makes Annie happy. "I am always impressed with how heroic the kids are. They just put one leg in front of the other and do what they have to do." We feel the same about Annie McHugh. Annie is a hero to us, giving of her time and energy in so many ways, so that children and families dealing with pediatric cancer can have some relief.

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Christine Baer, Kendra Frederick (not shown), Tina Garrity (not shown), Carole Kelleher, Susan Kobylinski, Annie McHugh, Adele Merenstein, Jeff Salguero, Liz Vega, Zellie Pforzheimer

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering for Circle of Care, please contact us at:

www.thecircleofcare.org

Did you know?

70% of families experience a financial crisis during treatment, regardless of income.

The average family comes out of pocket nearly **\$35,000**.

50% of the families we serve live below the poverty level.

The average family drives **50** miles per day for treatment.

Fundraising Facts: How We've Grown...

We're an established community-based non-profit that is making a real impact at the local level.

We have grown our major gifts seven-fold over the last 3 years.

We have doubled the number of gifts below \$100.

98% of our donors give more than once.

38% of our donors last year were new.

Our Annual Appeal smashed records, raising over \$90,000.

Our Donors

Foundations:

American Savings Foundation
The "B" Foundation
Bank of America
Carey Family Foundation
County Assemblies
Yvette & Arthur Eder Foundation
Expect Miracles Foundation
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Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
Swindells Charitable Foundation Trust
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Young Women's League of New Canaan

Corporations & Community Organizations:

B Chic
Bankwell
Barteca Restaurants, LLC
Blue Buffalo
Bravelets
Chase Bank
Chou Chou
Chief Jeffrey Cossette & the Meriden Police Department
Donahue's Madison Beach Grille
E.C. Scranton Memorial Library
Fairfield Public Library
First County Bank
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Fortune Brands Home Security
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Gault, Inc.
Give Back Foundation
Good Morning Nail & Spa
Good Morning Wilton
Gregory & Adams
Greens Farms Academy
Greens Farms Academy Middle School
Jerry Hay, Inc.
IBM
Katzke & Morgenbesser
Office of Sen. Ted Kennedy
Madison Public Library
McCarter & English
Middlebrook School – The Power of One
Moore & Partners Architects
Moore Physical Therapy
Morgan Stanley
National Charity League, Inc - Westport
New Canaan Community Preschool
Northwestern Mutual
Northwestern Mutual Russo Financial Group

Open House
Outdoor Sports
Paradigm Properties & CitiPlace
C. Parker Gallery
People's Bank
Pepsi
Platt Technical High School
Price Financial Group
Priceline
Scoops
Snappy Gator/ Rerat
Sorelle Gallery
Stanley Black and Decker
Sweet Pierre's
Suffield Academy
Sal Tinari Biddy Basketball Inc.
The Center for Advanced Pediatrics
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Village Market
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Pfizer
Jeanna Shepard Photography
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Mrs. Karen Sackowitz
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Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Salguero
Ms. Julianna Salguero
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Mr. and Mrs. Ken Smith
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Ms. Pat Sorgenti
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Ms. Ellen Spear
Ms. Denise Spitzer
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Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Stabile
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Mr. and Mrs. Phil Steinberg

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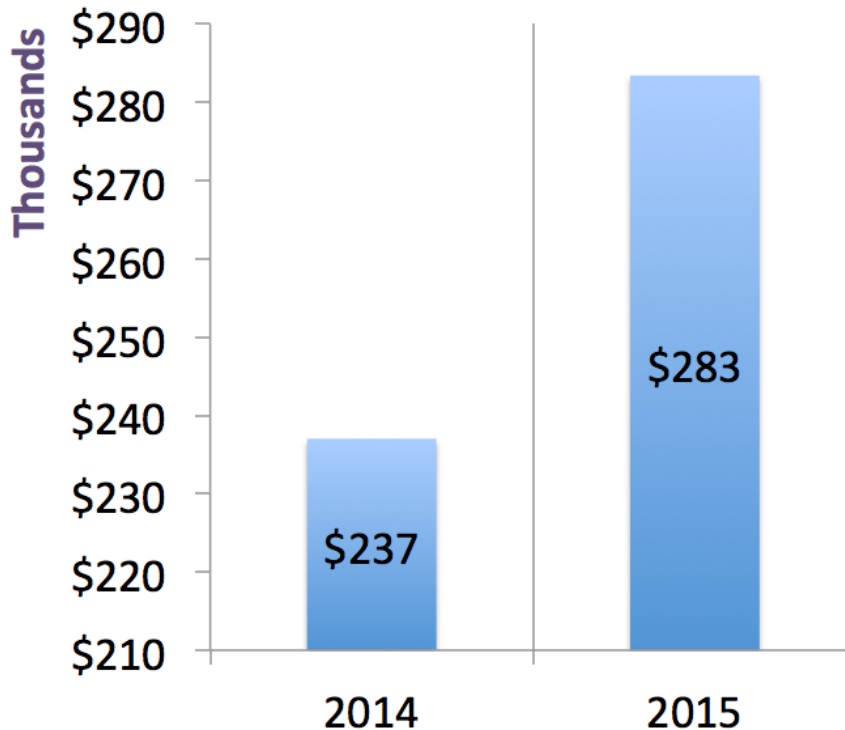
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Ms. Denise Williams
Dr. and Mrs. Ivan Wong
Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Wood

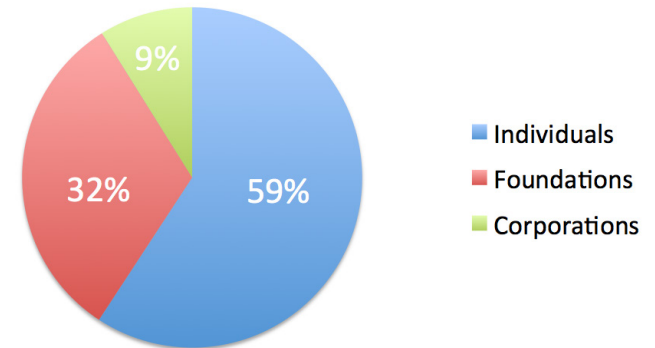
Financials

Overall in our fundraising, we are in the midst of a strategic shift to balance the sources of revenue. The growth of our Annual Appeal and the shift to a more diverse source of revenue in all of our fundraising reflects our determination to build a sustainable program for years to come. In just one year, we're seeing remarkable results:

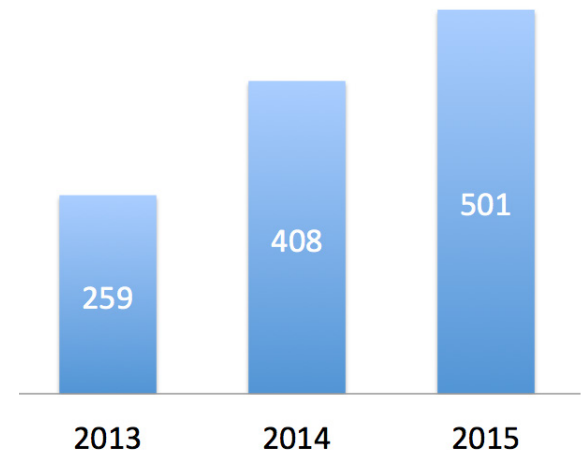
Fundraising Growth Up +19%



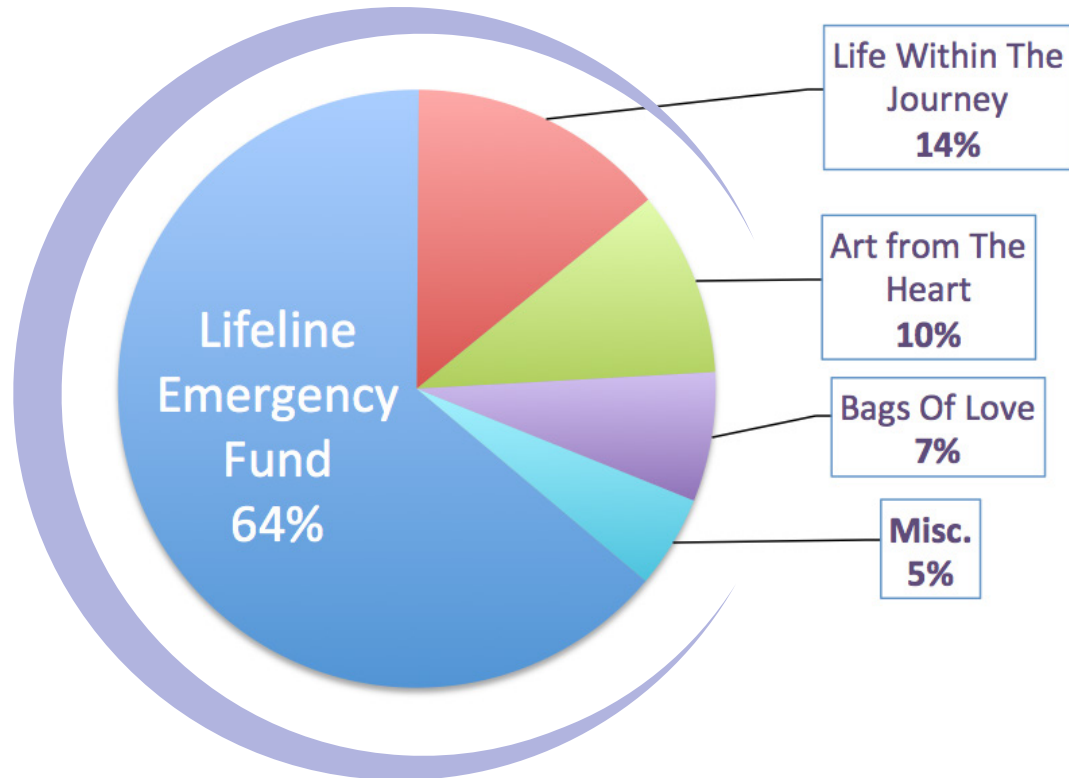
Sources of Revenue 2015



Number of Donors Up +23%



Allocation Of Funds



89% of our donations directly support our programs and services!

