



Strength, Resilience, **Healing.**



**Circle of Care**  
*for families of children with cancer*

**Impact Report**

January 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022



“There’s a crack in everything... That’s where the light comes in.”- Leonard Cohen

Cover: Scarlet revealing her port scar painted gold.  
Kintsugi Gala 2022



# Our Gratitude...

***Liz Salguero and Liz Vega***  
*Co-executive Directors*

Dear Friends,

The past 18 months have been filled with uncertainty and challenges for us all, especially for those who are facing a childhood cancer diagnosis. The strength and resilience we see in the families in our Circle and their ability to heal continues to inspire us each day. In 2021, we made the decision to change our fiscal year. This report covers our activities and impact over the last 18 months and we are excited to share with you all that we have accomplished with your help. We've added new programs, enriched existing services, and dramatically expanded the number of families we serve.

The emotional and financial burden of a cancer diagnosis knows no bounds. Circle of Care exists to be there for families from the first day they are diagnosed, throughout the entire journey, and for one full year after treatment is completed. Our Financial Assistance program is critical for keeping families in a stable home environment - with food on their tables and gas in their cars - so they can focus on what matters most... their child's healing. Thanks to you, we have been able to grow this program by over 200% to meet the need for housing, utility, transportation, and food assistance to a greater number of families each year - as well as the amount of assistance available to each family. With your support we've also been able to expand our Financial Assistance program to our neighboring communities of Westchester and Southwest Massachusetts, providing critical relief to those in treatment for pediatric cancer in our region.

Your support has allowed us to provide over \$400,000 in direct financial relief during this period to children and families in need.

Until no parent has to hear the words, "Your child has cancer," we will be here. Thank you for being there to support the families in our Circle.

With heartfelt gratitude,

# Our Mission...



Our mission is to provide practical, emotional, and financial support from day of diagnosis, through treatment, and beyond. Our programs and services address the unique and challenging non-medical needs of childhood cancer, because it takes more than medicine to heal.

*"As someone who experienced firsthand the emotional and financial rollercoaster of having a toddler diagnosed with a brain tumor, I can speak personally to how essential organizations like Circle of Care are." - a mom*

Our focus is being a consistent source of support. We are the only pediatric cancer support organization in Connecticut that has a variety of services to last through - and for a full year beyond - a child's cancer treatment. This includes offering financial assistance and other services to young adults being treated for pediatric cancer, up to age 26, filling a critical service gap in the state.



Milo and his mom

Until no parent has to hear the words, "Your child has cancer," we'll be here.

We know it takes more than medicine for families to heal.



## Practical

*"The parade of doctors, nurses, and others continued... Yesterday, when I thought I could not take another person coming through our door - in came our social worker with a huge bag full of things from Circle of Care that I hadn't had time to pick up from home. It was exactly the touch of humanity I needed at exactly the moment I needed it."*

- Julie, Guilford CT

## Emotional

*"We feel so thankful and lucky. Cam woke up yesterday with mouth sores from the chemo... he's having a really hard time eating or drinking. Having a new bedroom to distract him has been such a blessing. I won't ever be able to put into words just how thankful we are."*

- Jessica, Wallingford CT

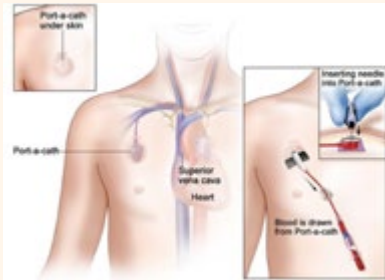
## Financial

*"We are so grateful for the financial assistance we received. Being able to worry less about one thing while focusing on our son's treatment was a blessing. Thank you so much."*

- Lindsay, Middlesex CT

# A pathway to healing...

## An emergency procedure...



A feature among most childhood cancer patients is the ubiquitous Port-A-Cath incision scar on the chest. Children's cells reproduce quickly, and chemotherapy treatment must begin immediately for it to be effective. The subcutaneous implantation of the "port" is required to allow the frequent access needed for delivery of chemo- up to three years or more.

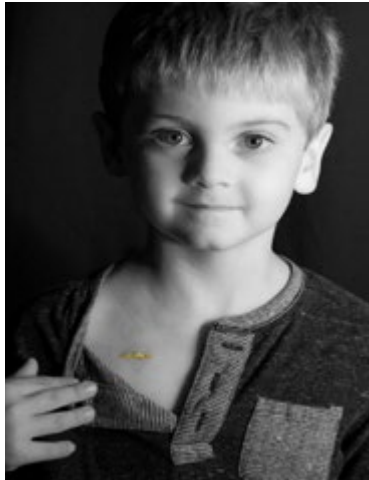


## ...a lifelong reminder...

The port leaves behind a scar... a permanent and constant reminder of their cancer journey and the invasiveness of treatment.

# ...and inspiration from the art of Kintsugi

---



Milo



Adalia



Zabdiel



Amelia

At our June 2022 Kintsugi Gala, we surrounded our guests with larger-than-life portraits of 14 children and young adults in our Circle revealing their port scars painted in gold. In these pages you'll read about how we were inspired by the ancient Japanese art of Kintsugi, which celebrates flaws and imperfections as part of one's journey.

*Portrait photography by Jeffrey Salguero*



# Kintsugi

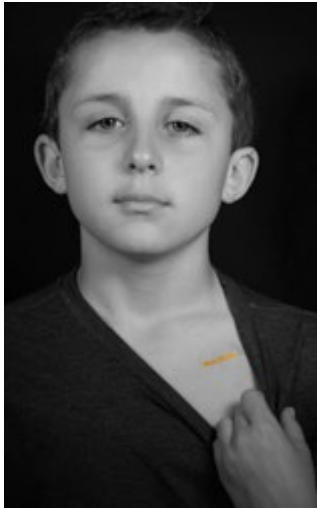
The ancient Japanese masters of Kintsugi used a mixture of lacquer and gold to repair broken ceramic pottery. Rather than repairing to hide the cracks and broken pieces, these flaws and imperfections were highlighted by the artisans. The belief being that the cracks were part of the object's journey, and that in the process of healing one can create something that is stronger and more beautiful than before.



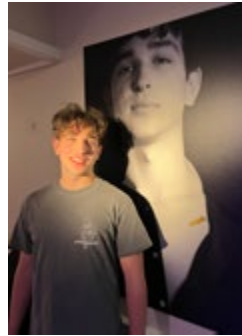
Parents painted their children's scars in gold for our portrait series.



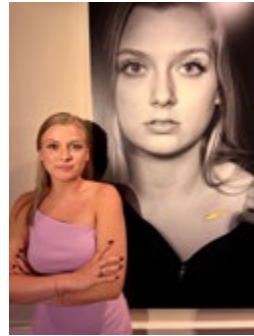
# Gala 2022



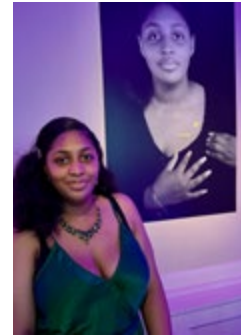
Hunter



Oliver



Heather



Adalia



Milo



The 14 portraits at our gala in June 2022 honored the solidarity and unity of our children's fights, their strength and courage, and their refusal to let cancer define them.





# Bags of Love



**134** Bags of Love delivered in the past 18 months



## Day of diagnosis care.

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, hospitalization is often immediate. Childhood cancers are fast-growing and must be treated as soon as possible. This leaves parents unprepared... no toothbrushes, no phone charger, no comfort items...

Our Bag of Love is delivered to families upon their first admission to the hospital, providing comfort and security at a time of such uncertainty and isolation. From a warm and cozy blanket for comfort to a lighted pen and

journal for late-night note taking without waking a child... the Bag of Love contains all the necessary items for a hospital stay.

After the onset of the COVID pandemic, the hospitals we support restricted delivery of outside items. We made the decision to temporarily shift to a method of distributing our resources that was able to be disinfected before it was given to a family.

We created a plastic, zippered folder that contains information about our programs and services to be delivered to newly diagnosed families. Bags of Love deliveries have since resumed at Yale New Haven Hospital and bags are being delivered to homes directly for families being treated at Connecticut Children's Medical Center.







# Adolescents & Young Adults (AYA)



New in December 2021 was the addition of our Adolescent/Young Adult program. Being a teenager comes with its own set of unique challenges... so being a teenager with cancer requires a special kind of support. Teens and young adults with cancer are too youthful for adult treatment clinics – yet too mature for the alternative of pediatrics with waiting rooms filled with building blocks.

We created a program just for this unique and often isolated group to help them foster connections with others like them and provide unique opportunities for them to experience together. 25 teens and young adults have been able to benefit from this program.





# Art from the Heart

## 10 rooms completed!

Blood draws. Doctor appointments. Infusion and radiation days. Long trips to and from the hospital... Children with cancer often feel that the things happening in their lives are out of their control.

Our Art from the Heart dream-room makeover program is designed to give these children something they can be in charge of and look forward to. Makeovers are completed by a volunteer team that works in conjunction with the child to determine and execute their “dream” vision – providing an uplifting, comfortable space to retreat from their emotionally and physically draining cancer treatments.



**SOPHIE**  
**KAIRO**  
**AMANDA**  
**IVY**  
**MORGAN**  
**ELIJAH**  
**HUNTER**  
**JOSHUA**  
**KEYLIN**  
**MADDIE**





*"It's like I never had cancer in this room." - Ivy*



# Financial Assistance



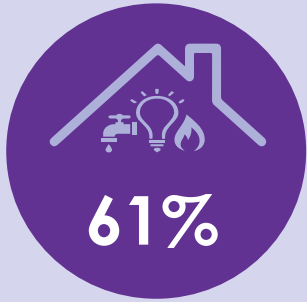
Cancer is the one of the most expensive illnesses to be diagnosed with – even more so for children. The average length of treatment for childhood cancer is 1,000 days... the average cost totaling over \$800,000.

Even with good insurance, there are costs a childhood cancer diagnosis brings that cannot be covered – additional transportation to and from the treatment center, specific food needs for a child whose appetite or nutritional needs have been altered by their treatment, childcare for siblings while parents tend to their sick child... all coupled with the loss of income that comes from one parent typically leaving their job to be their child's primary caretaker.

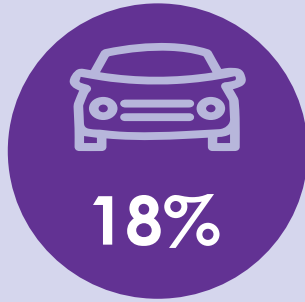
*“We do not know what would have happened to our family, home, and lives had Circle of Care not reached out to us.” - Joseph’s dad, Frank*



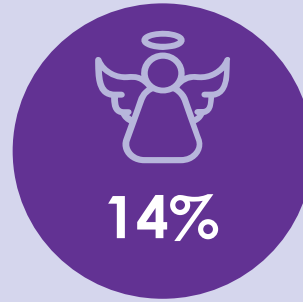
**A roof over their heads...  
reliable transportation...  
and food on their tables.**



Mortgage, Rent  
& Utilities



Transportation



Respite &  
Bereavement



Food

We ensure families can focus on their child's needs, rather than how to pay their bills.

# Here for the journey...

Every family's childhood cancer experience is different. The many interactions we have with the families in our Circle inform how we can best support them based on what they need. We have many touchpoints with our families outside of our better-known programs. These additional services work hand-in hand with our primary programs to ensure we are providing comprehensive support for every family we touch, wherever their journey leads - from surprise moments of joy to careful support while a family deals with the unimaginable.

## Birthday Boxes



For children battling cancer and their families, milestones like birthdays are even more important. Starting in 2022, we now send monthly birthday well-wishes with a specially curated gift.

Each month, the children in our Circle celebrating a birthday receive a Birthday Box to let them know that Circle of Care is celebrating right along with them. Each box contains a sweet treat, party-blower, "Happy Birthday" candle, and more... completed with a hand-signed birthday card from all of us at Circle of Care.

***"I have not seen Bella smile like this in weeks. You think of everything. Your support and care have helped us more than you'll ever know. From the bottom of my heart, thank you!" - Amy, Bella's mom***

# Respite & Bereavement

Through an ongoing partnership with a generous supporter, we are able to offer families who need a bit of respite a weekend retreat at a farmhouse in the Berkshire mountains. This opportunity can provide an escape from the buzz of everyday life for our families who need a break from it all.



*“This is something we could never imagine ourselves doing if it wasn’t for Circle of Care offering us the opportunity. The experience provided us an escape from the world around us and allowed us to focus on our family.” - Frank*

## Bereavement Support



For families who have lost a child, we provide financial support for funeral expenses and send a gentle card with a forget-me-not pin to recognize that their child will always be remembered.

# Holiday Gift Drive

All the things we love about the holidays – family, friends, food, gifts, festivities – they’re not the same for a child with cancer. These kids are often isolated from friends and family, may have no appetite due to chemo, and might be too exhausted to celebrate anything... the endless medical and unforeseen expenses can make it difficult for parents to afford gifts for them.



Our volunteers have the meaningful experience of curating and hand delivering holiday gift packages right to the children in our Circle in December. These gifts are filled with items that give special attention to the unique needs of a cancer diagnosis, like warmable stuffed animals to provide comfort and relief from treatment side effects and jewelry with symbols for strength and bravery.





Scarlet, featured on our cover, possesses an indomitable strength and spirit for a person of any age... let alone a nine-year-old. At her young age, Scarlet has faced the unimaginable – not only with herself but with her younger sister, Sophie, too.

## Meet Scarlet.

Scarlet was diagnosed with leukemia in 2015. She and her family braved years of treatment to ensure she would remain healthy. But what no family should have to endure even once in their life returned to them when Scarlet's sister, Sophie, was diagnosed with leukemia five years later in 2020. Sadly, Sophie passed away in 2022, just months after we took the sisters' portraits.

While photographing both sisters for our Portraits of Hope series, the idea behind the portraits did not take much explanation – Scarlet understood.

The portraits are inspired by Kintsugi and the idea that the cracks in us make us unique and more beautiful, and increase our strength rather than contribute to weakness. When we asked Scarlet what she thinks of her scar – a constant and permanent reminder of what she and her sister have been through – she told us “I wouldn’t change it. It’s what makes me, me!”

We can all learn from Scarlet’s maturity, grace, and strength in the face of such hardship. All of us at Circle of Care are incredibly grateful to know her and her family and to have witnessed the strength they exude even as they have faced more and more hardship. We were all impacted by the girls’ maturity and their desire to embrace their scars through our portrait series.



Scarlet’s scar being painted gold



The sisters’ portraits



Scarlet and her sister Sophie

***“I wouldn’t change [my scar]... It’s what makes me, me.”***

**- Scarlet, May 2022**



CARE to Swing Golf Committee



Holiday Gift Drive Volunteers

# Volunteers

***“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” - Helen Keller***

Circle of Care is a volunteer-driven organization. Over 200 dedicated volunteers help us carry out our mission every year by supporting our important services for families and fundraising events that ensure we can continue being here for those who need us.



CARE to Run 5K Volunteers



Kintsugi Gala Committee



Hartford Marathon Volunteers



# Spotlight: Angela Nolan

Angela has brought an undeniable spark to Circle of Care since she first ran in our CARE to Run 5K in 2017. Being a health & wellness coach, running in races was second-nature for her... But when she realized everything we do to support families facing childhood cancer, she wanted to do more than just run.

***“Working with Circle of Care and seeing the impact their work has on families is indescribable. It gives me such a warm feeling knowing I am doing something good.”***

The next year, Angela returned to our 5K... and this time she brought friends! When she won a cash prize for finishing in the top three, she immediately donated it back to us. She has since sought out more ways to help with our events, increasing her involvement each time. She was instrumental in helping us organize our first CARE to Swing golf outing in 2020 - using her unique energy to bring in sponsors and participants. Angela is a prime example of how much fun working for a good cause can be. Each year she tops her record, recruiting new volunteers and sponsors and brightening each event with her infectious spirit. It was no surprise to us when she came in as our top CARE to Run fundraiser in 2022. Angela is a vibrant and passionate ambassador for Circle of Care, connecting us with new friends and spreading her enthusiasm far and wide.



# Making Tracks... in Hartford!

## 46% of the families we support receive treatment in Hartford, CT

Thanks to our Hartford advisory group, the Epsilon Alpha fraternity at Trinity College, and our partnership with Consigli Construction, we have been deepening our relationships in the Hartford community to be able to better support the families in our Circle who live in this area.

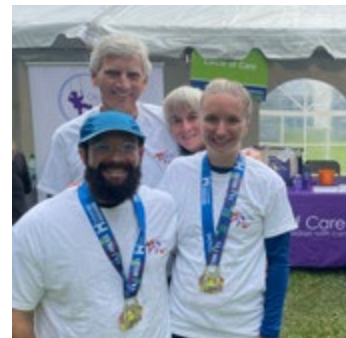
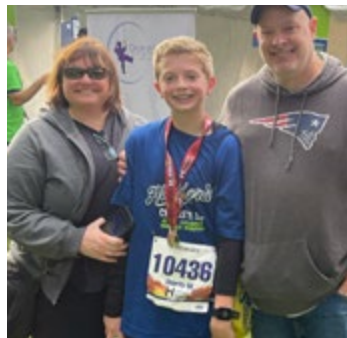
In 2021 we were invited for the first time to participate as an official charity for the Eversource Hartford Marathon – providing us with a fun and engaging way to gain more traction in the Hartford area from supporters including fundraisers and volunteers.



Carlos Vega & Tracy Cramer



City of Hartford  
Circle of Care proclamation



Official Charity





Our Wilton Thanksgathering...

...now in Hartford, too!



For the first time, we were able to host our annual Thanksgathering event in two locations in Connecticut – making it easier for the families in our Circle to receive their Thanksgiving care baskets and allowing us to support double the number of families from previous years.

# OUR IMPACT

18-Month (1/1/21-6/30/22)

**We've been there.** We know kids need more than medicine to heal. Circle of Care provides practical, emotional, and financial support to let families know they are not alone.

**232** Families supported by our programs and services

**134** Day of diagnosis Bags of Love delivered

**52** Custom holiday gifts given

**17** Funeral services paid

**10** Art from the Heart dream rooms transformed

**3** Events held for members of our new AYA program

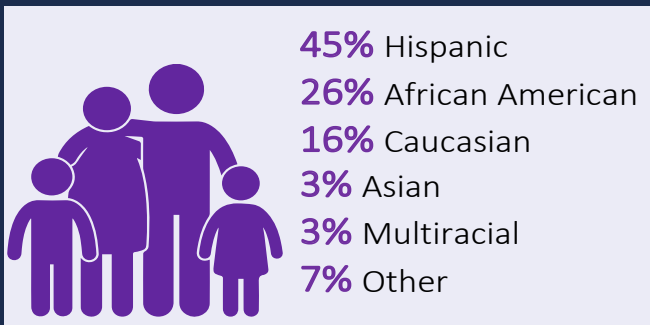
**1,415** Number of services provided

# FINANCIAL...

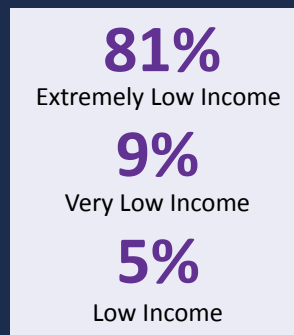
# \$408K

distributed in direct financial assistance

## Ethnic Diversity



## Income Level



---

# 70%

Percent of diagnosed families that will experience a financial emergency during their cancer journey

---

to families in our Circle.

# FINANCIALS

Short Year\* (1/1/21 - 6/30/21)

REVENUE – Source of Funds	
Contributions	91,645
Special Events Net	99,256
Grants	95,200
Other	23,242
Investment Income	13,633
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$322,976</b>

EXPENSE – Use of Funds	
Program	226,870
Management & General	22,549
Fund Development	76,967
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$326,386</b>

Net Assets	
End of year	694,640
Beginning of Year	698,050
<b>CHANGE NET ASSETS</b>	<b>(3,410)</b>

Direct Costs	
Financial Assistance	63,662
Community Support	13,493
In-Patient Support	3,788
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$80,943</b>



Revenue: **\$322,976**



Expense: **\$326,386**

\* This short year is due to a change in our fiscal year from calendar year to a mid-year start date

# Fiscal Year (7/1/21 - 6/30/22)

REVENUE – Source of Funds	
Contributions	421,097
Special Events Net	570,525
Grants	202,400
Other	2,487
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,196,509</b>
Investment Loss	-\$59,594
<b>NET REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,136,915</b>

## 5 Year Compound Growth: 24%



\*Excludes investment loss of \$59,594



Revenue: **\$1,196,509**

EXPENSE – Use of Funds	
Program	780,258
Management & General	98,626
Fund Development	218,851
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$1,097,735</b>

Direct Costs	
Financial Assistance	344,429
Community Support	52,353
In-Patient Support	8,956
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$405,738</b>



Expense: **\$1,097,735**

Net Assets	
End of year	733,820
Beginning of Year	694,640
<b>CHANGE NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$39,180</b>

# Our Hospital Partners

**Our thanks and gratitude to our collaborative partners who are instrumental in helping ensure our programs and services reach families in need.**

**Connecticut Children's Medical Center**

**Yale New Haven Health - Smilow Cancer Hospital**

**Boston Children's Hospital**

**Maria Fareri Children's Hospital**

**Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center**

**NY Presbyterian Kids - Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital**

# Leadership

## Board of Directors

### Officers

#### Ray Eckert

Board Chairman

#### Liz Salguero

Founder & President

#### Dawn Ladenheim

Founder & Treasurer

#### Liz Vega

Vice President

#### Jeffrey Salguero

Vice President

#### Stacey Savas

Secretary

### Directors

#### April Book

#### Missy Dorsey

#### Amy Gonch

#### Susan Kobylinski

#### Zelie Pforzheimer

#### Alex Ramos

#### Katarina Tchakarov

#### John Weidner

#### George Whang

#### Bob Hinckley

Board Chairman Emeritus

#### Liz Salguero & Liz Vega

Co-executive Directors

### Staff

#### Tammi Small

Director of Family Programs

#### Brooks Tomb

Deputy Director

#### Jill Tucker

Director of Development

#### Maria DiPierro

Operations Manager

#### Heather Stabinsky

Digital Media Specialist

#### Lisa Williams

Development and Outreach Associate

### Advisory Board

#### Dr. Mary Jane Hogan

Pediatric Oncology, Yale School of Medicine

#### Jeff Kimball

CEO, United Way of Coastal Fairfield County

#### Ceci Maher

Past Executive Director, Person to Person

#### Liz Marconi

MSW, Connecticut Children's Medical Center

#### Maurice Segall

Attorney, Maurice Segall LLC



[www.thecircleofcare.org](http://www.thecircleofcare.org)  
E: [info@thecircleofcare.org](mailto:info@thecircleofcare.org)

**Join Our Cause**



144 Danbury Rd. Wilton, CT 06897 Phone: 203-663-6893