




Circle of Care  
*for families of children with cancer*

**Annual Report - FY 2023**  
July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023





*A moment's help is a spark.  
Enduring aid is a guiding light -  
illuminating paths through time,  
long after the night.*

- Anonymous





# Dear Friends...

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

As we reflect upon the last fiscal year, we are immensely grateful for your support of Circle of Care. Your commitment and generosity have allowed us to make a significant impact on the lives of hundreds of children and families facing childhood cancer. These families face enormous challenges: practical, emotional, and financial. What gives us hope is that there are supporters like you who stand up to this crisis. This year, you helped us raise \$1.5 million and reach more families than ever before with the critical resources that Circle of Care provides.

We are proud to present our Annual Report, which serves as a testament to the achievements we have accomplished together. Within its pages, you will discover the profound impact of our collective efforts and the transformative work we have undertaken. During the past year, we've worked to reimagine every aspect of our work - embarking on a seven-month rigorous strategic planning process that will guide our work as we move into our second decade. None of this is possible without you. Because of your support, we are more confident than ever that we can achieve our goal of ensuring that no family has to face their child's cancer diagnosis alone.

We are grateful for your support and invite you to continue to partner with us.



Bags of Love



Financial Assistance



Hospital Volunteers

Peer Support



Adolescent & Young Adult



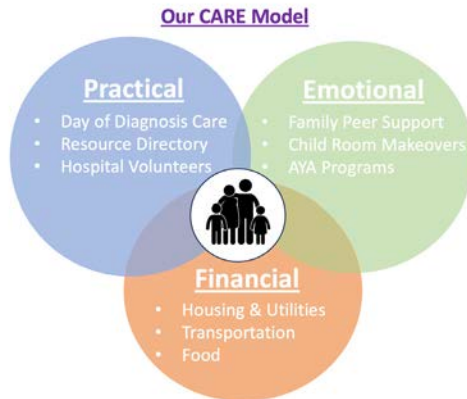
Art From The Heart

From diagnosis... through treatment... and beyond.

# A path to healing.

Our programs are designed to meet families where they are in their childhood cancer journey, addressing not only their financial needs but also their emotional and practical ones.

From the day a child is diagnosed and throughout every step of their journey, we provide comprehensive support that extends beyond our programs. The relationships we form with the families in our Circle allow us to understand their needs and provide them with thoughtful and impactful non-medical care. It's these relationships, and the many touchpoints we have with families, that define our commitment to walking alongside those who have heard the words “Your child has cancer,” every step of the way.



*Circle of Care's CARE Model of Support is crafted on three core pillars of support: emotional, practical, and financial. These serve as the cornerstone of our dedication to being a companion for families, not just during the treatment phase, but throughout their entire journey—from the moment of diagnosis and beyond.*



*“Circle of Care paid our rent, utilities, and gave us gift cards and holiday gifts on several occasions over the course of my daughter's chemo treatment. Because of this assistance, I was able to focus on my daughter and not worry about eviction, utility disconnection, gas, or feeding her. The weight they lifted by removing these financial stressors was the single deciding factor between failure and success for us.”*

*- A grateful mom*



**FACT** · Up to **70%** of families with childhood cancer experience a financial crisis during treatment.

**IMPACT: \$406K** Distributed in Financial Assistance

This year, we provided financial assistance to **more** families and **increased our financial distribution** by **15%** in response to the families in our Circle needing deeper support. Our financial assistance program helps alleviate non-medical financial needs... necessities such as housing and groceries. When a child is diagnosed with cancer, most parents must stop working to keep up with their child's care. Our assistance helps families to better focus on their sick child and rest assured that their bills are taken care of.



Housing  
**58%**



Transportation  
**17%**



Utilities  
**12%**



Groceries  
**8%**



Funeral  
**5%**



*Graduation Award recipients at our graduation celebration in June 2023*

# Adolescent & Young Adult (AYA) Activities

## August Beach Bash



Teen and young adult cancer patients are a unique group. Often treated in pediatric hospitals, they're too mature for building blocks and finger painting, yet too youthful for the alternative of adult clinics. It's difficult enough being a healthy teen today - let alone being one facing a childhood cancer diagnosis.

**30% of the patients we support are adolescents/young adults**

From July 2022 - June 2023 we provided three fun outings, one scholarship opportunity, and piloted our mentoring program for this group.

## February NYC Adventure





*Our 2023 CARE to Run 5K Champion Daniel (right) and his brother Caleb (left)*

# Daniel Burr: 2023 CARE to Run 5K Champion

Since Daniel and his family first joined our Circle in 2021, their cancer journey has been far from “typical.” Daniel was born with Down syndrome, which puts him at higher risk than his peers in treatment and brings its own set of medical complications. Despite all that he’s been through, he radiates magnetic energy and an unmatched sense of humor – spreading his unique charm to those around him.

His family of eight is a close-knit bunch. He is very connected to his twin brother Caleb, and the two struggle being apart when Daniel spends time at the hospital. We surprised Daniel in October as he returned home from an extended hospital stay with a complete makeover of his and Caleb’s rooms – creating their own personal oasis of snack machines and funky artwork and providing the boys with a space to spend quality time together when Daniel is home. Daniel’s mom stays by his side as his primary caretaker, while his dad works hard to support their family’s increased financial needs. A childhood cancer diagnosis is expensive, especially one that has had as many roadblocks as theirs.



***“We will forever be grateful for your support during the worst year of our lives.”***

-Tracy, Daniel’s mom

We have been honored to get to know Daniel’s family over the past years – showcasing his remarkable spirit as our 5K Champion, spending time with them at our annual Thanksgathering events, and curating special holiday gifts for both boys. As Daniel progresses on his journey, we feel fortunate that his mom updates us like family.

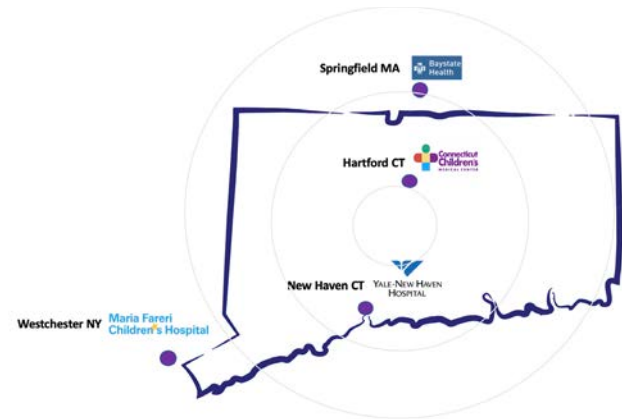


# Expanding our service area to meet the need

For the past 19 years we have focused on providing services to two groups of families of children with cancer: Connecticut residents regardless of their treatment hospital, and families treated at the two pediatric cancer centers in Connecticut regardless of where they live.

*“After witnessing the migration of families from one treatment center to another over the years, we decided to take a closer look at our neighboring pediatric cancer centers to see if there were gaps in services we could provide.”*

**- Liz Salguero**



## Baystate Children's Hospital | Springfield, MA

In the fall of 2022, we began a six-month pilot program providing financial assistance to families facing pediatric cancer at Baystate Children's Hospital in Springfield, MA. Just over the border of Connecticut, this community faces poverty levels three times the rest of the state. One of the first families to receive our support through this pilot clearly illustrated the need to expand our service area. The family began their journey at Baystate Children's Hospital and within a year was transferred to Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford - one of our longstanding hospital partners. The ability to have our services travel with the family was a great relief to them and the integration of our CARE Model across hospital systems allowed us to respond quickly to their needs.

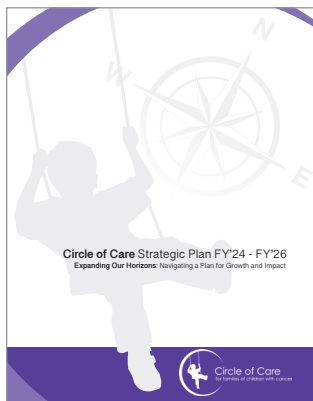
**In June of 2023 our Board of Directors voted to make Baystate Children's Hospital a permanent hospital partner.**

## Maria Fareri | Westchester, NY

**Just six months after she was born,** Scarlett was diagnosed with cancer. After a round of chemo her cancer went into remission – but Scarlett’s journey was just beginning. She has a gene mutation that affects her prognosis, and her treatment protocol has caused lasting effects that continue today. Scarlett is now two years old and still needs to visit Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital four days a week to receive medication. Because her family lives three hours away from the hospital, Scarlett and her mom need to stay at a nearby Ronald McDonald House - away from their home - during the week. While hard to believe, Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital is the closest pediatric cancer hospital for their family. Many families face the same reality – traveling long distances to receive treatment. Expanding our services to all Maria Fareri childhood cancer patients allows us to support more families like Scarlett’s who are regularly traveling long distances to save their child’s life.



*“Your help means the world to me. This takes a lot of pressure off me so I can focus on caring for Scarlett.”*  
- Brianna, Scarlett’s mom



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In 2023 we initiated and adopted a three-year comprehensive strategic plan guiding our growth and impact to expand the depth and breadth of our support services.

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# FUNdraising Events

Our fundraising events play a crucial role in supporting our mission – providing one third of our annual funding. This year’s events netted nearly \$500,000 to support the families in our Circle through our programs and services. Our 5K, golf outing, and CARE to Laugh event were powerful platforms for raising awareness of how we help while engaging with our community – allowing us to share our mission with supporters new and old.



## May CARE to Run 5K



*Survivor families cheer on our 2023 CARE to Run participants*



# June CARE to Laugh: Mike Birbiglia



Cancer survivor Mike Birbiglia took the stage at our comedy night fundraiser in Fairfield to support Circle of Care.

*Event Champion, Sam, with emcee Anna Zap of Star99*

# October CARE to Swing Golf Outing



## **A big thank you to all!**

Thanks to our event champions Daniel, Tommy, and Sam, we were able to showcase the impact our supporters have on real families who need their help; and special thanks to our event presenters Inspira Marketing Group, Northwestern Mutual Tri-Harbor Financial Group, and Lenox Advisors for ensuring our fundraisers were a success.





*Wilton High School 2022 Homecoming Gold Out*



# September

## Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Each September, Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is recognized nationally, shining a spotlight on the prevalence of childhood cancer and the need for a cure. We use this heightened attention as an opportunity to spread awareness of our mission, because regardless of a cure, 100% of families will still need support like ours to carry them through.

This year, we raised awareness locally with a “gold out” football game at Wilton High School and New Canaan High School. We also furthered our partnership with Wilton and Westport by tying gold ribbons around the trees lining their downtown centers.

***FACT: 1 in 285 children will be diagnosed with cancer before their 18th birthday.***



### Survivorship Day

### Urban Air Adventure Park

We celebrated the families in our Circle with a day out at the adventure park. This was a welcomed distraction from the hustle and bustle of everyday caretaking to let the kids in our Circle just be kids.



# Volunteer Spotlight on...

## Amy Gonch | Board Member, AFTH Team Leader



Amy Gonch is an invaluable volunteer - and has been for over 10 years. She blends her professional attention to detail with creativity, positive attitude, and boundless energy.

As the Team Leader of our dream-room makeover program, Art From the Heart, she transforms children's bedrooms into their own personal oases - providing an escape from their emotionally and physically draining cancer treatment and giving them a fresh, uplifting place to spend their time.

*Over the past **10** years, Amy has helped raise more than **\$150,000** which has gone directly to the costs of completing Art From the Heart dream rooms.*

Amy leads a loyal core team of volunteers for her room makeovers. Their desire to return

room after room, dedicating a large amount of time to these projects, is a testament to Amy's incredible leadership and motivational abilities. Her team is made up of coworkers past and present who believe in her ability to successfully carry out these projects based on both her effective professional management style and endless creativity.





*Scarlet's room, created by Amy's team*



*Amy with Scarlet's family*

Amy emits the perfect combination of task management ability and motivation for her team and her warm personality makes her a joy to work with. Amy increased her involvement in 2020 by joining our Board of Directors and has been a valuable addition to the team. She is also a mentor in our Adolescent/Young Adult program - furthering her immense impact on the lives of those with childhood cancer.

## April Volunteer Appreciation Month

In April of 2023, we celebrated our volunteers with a goodie bag full of items to recognize their value and impact. As a volunteer-driven organization, we rely on the commitment of those who are dedicated to our cause and help us fulfill our mission.

We are so grateful for our volunteers... from those who spend time in the hospital to those who help with our fundraising events... all our volunteers help to make the work we do possible.

***We have on average 250 active volunteers in our Circle!***





# December Holiday Gift Drive

Our annual Holiday Gift Drive takes dozens of volunteer “elves” to execute. In December 2022, our elves helped us pull off our most successful Holiday Gift Drive yet – making spirits bright for 125 families of children with cancer in Connecticut – more than six times the number of gifts we provided in our pilot year, 2020.

***“It has been such a rough year financially and I was not able to gift Bella as I would have liked, so your timing was perfect. As always. I will never be able to thank you enough for all you have done for my family.”***

*- Amy, Bella’s mom*

Interacting with children who have cancer comes with many restrictions. Because of this, the opportunities available for our volunteers to engage with families is limited. Our Holiday Gift Drive offers our volunteers the chance to interact with them directly – coordinating with their assigned families and hand delivering holiday cheer.



# Tammi Small - Celebrating a Milestone!



**FIVE** years

Tammi Small has been a familiar face, and voice, at Circle of Care over the past five years. She directs all family programs – delivering support to those who need it most.

She is often the first point of contact for the families in our Circle... and the one to receive updates from the families we support – both good and bad.



Tammi and 2023 Circle of Care  
5K Champion Daniel

*“85% of our families are going to be okay... But nothing prepares you for the ones who aren’t - or the bumps along the way. This job is unique... it’s the first job I’ve had where it’s okay to cry and to talk with parents about their sadness.”* - **Tammi**



Tammi started at Circle of Care shortly after the organization moved out of our founder's dining room and into its own home – a beautiful historic barn in Wilton. As one of Circle of Care's first employees, she has watched the organization grow before her eyes. "I've enjoyed being part of this growth. Especially watching the children we've helped grow up – how far they've come... cancer in their rear view. It's truly something special."

## If a hug was a person...

Our greatest thanks to Tammi for all she does to help the families in our Circle, we are so fortunate to have had her dedication and loyalty as part of our team for five years.

***"Tammi - Thank you for caring and endlessly supporting."***

- A mom in our Circle

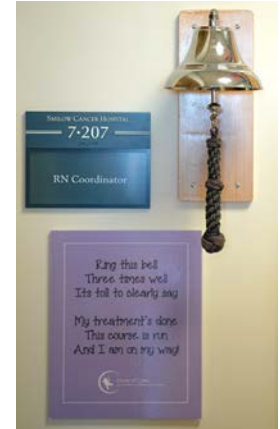


# July Eden's End of Chemo



*Eden, ringing the bell*

In July we were invited to attend and speak at an end of chemo celebration for Eden, who has been in our Circle since February of 2019. For Eden's celebration, we created a portable version of our "End of Chemo" bell that has been rung by countless families at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital over the past ten years.



*Our bell at YNHCH*

***The families in our Circle stay with us and qualify for our services for an average of three years, including one year after treatment ends.***



*We send our boxes out monthly to all of the children in our Circle who have upcoming birthdays!*

## Did you know...

*This year, we celebrated **104** birthdays with the families in our Circle through our Birthday Boxes.*

# November Thanksgathering



Our annual Thanksgathering event now occurs in two locations – Wilton and Hartford CT – allowing us to meet families where they are, increasing the accessibility of our programs for families in the Hartford area.



Thank you to our longtime Wilton Thanksgathering sponsor, Equitable Advisors, and its branches and affiliates, for their continued support.

Thanksgathering allows the families in our Circle to meet, gather, and enjoy a holiday outing while also picking up the essentials for their Thanksgiving dinner.

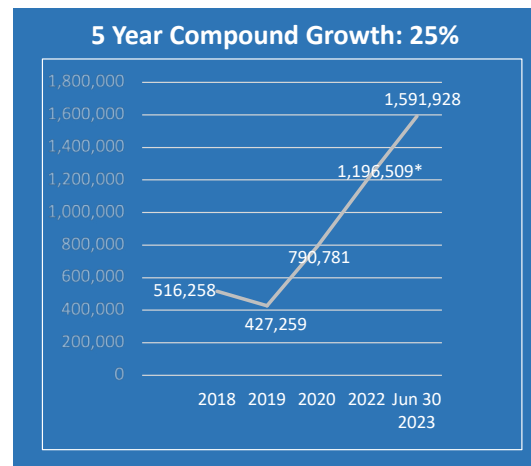


## Bereavement

This year, 5% of our financial assistance distributed went toward alleviating the financial burden of families having to pay for their child's funeral. To meet this need, we raised our allowance for this assistance to **\$3,500** per family – providing deeper support during an unimaginable time in a family's life.

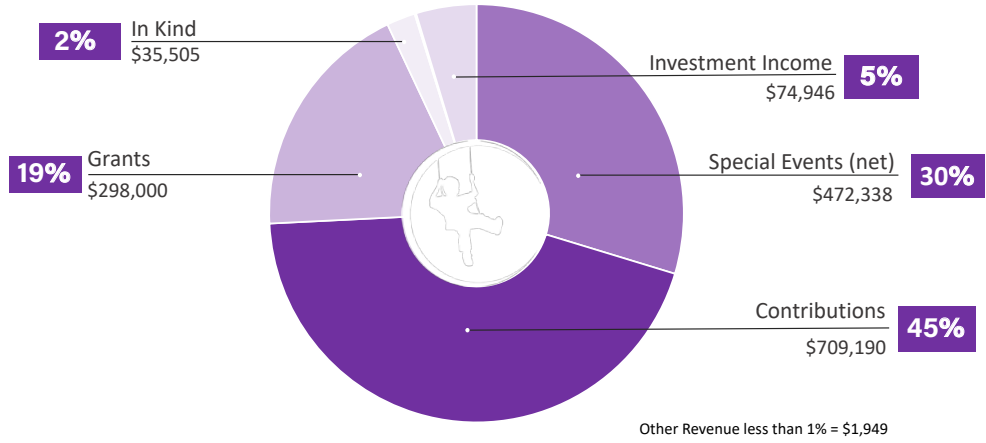
# Financials

<b>REVENUE – Source of Funds</b>	
Contributions	709,190
Special Events Net	472,338
Grants	298,000
In Kind	35,505
Other	1,949
<i>Investment Income</i>	74,946
<b>TOTAL REVENUE &amp; SUPPORT</b>	<b>\$1,591,928</b>
<b>EXPENSE – Use of Funds</b>	
Program	1,006,546
Management & General	140,634
Fund Development	257,525
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$1,404,705</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
End of year	921,043
Beginning of Year	733,820
<b>CHANGE NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$187,223</b>

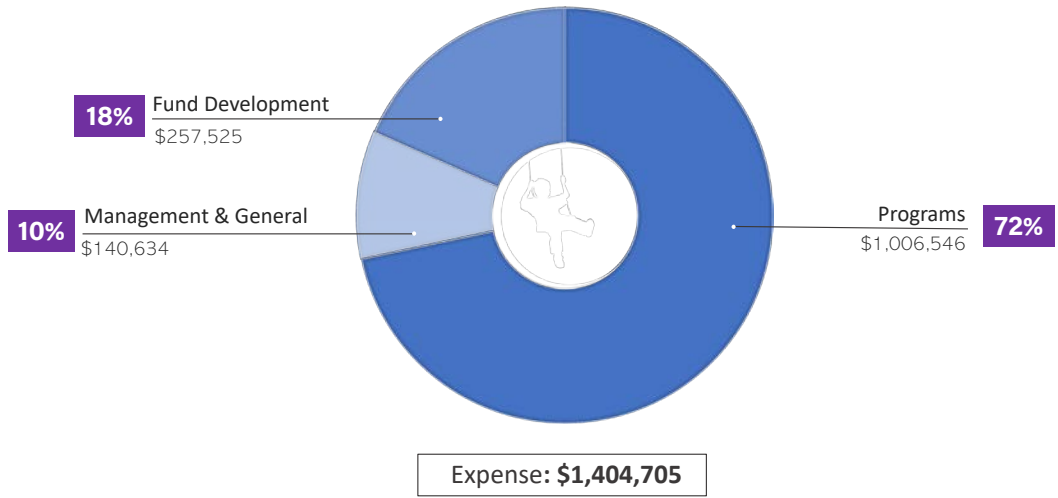


<b>Direct Costs</b>	
Financial Assistance	404,148
Community Support	77,513
In-Patient Support	13,369
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$495,030</b>

*“We are able to focus on Drew's treatment and we feel a weight has been lifted off our shoulders, which has been the most wonderful gift.” - Drew's Mom*



**Revenues: \$1,591,928**



**Expense: \$1,404,705**

# Leadership

## Board of Directors

### Officers

**Ray Eckert**

Board Chair

**Liz Salguero**

Founder & President

**Dawn Ladenheim**

Founder & Treasurer

**Stacey Savas**

Secretary

**Jeffrey Salguero**

Liz Vega

### Directors

**April Book**

**Missy Dorsey**

**Amy Gonch**

**Christina Hanna**

**Susan Kobylinski**

**Zelie Pforzheimer**

**Fred Podolsky**

**Alex Ramos**

**Katarina Tchakarov**

**George Whang**

**Bob Hinckley**

Board Chair Emeritus

**Liz Salguero & Liz Vega**

Co-Executive Directors

### Staff

**Tracy Cramer**

Director of Development

**Jeff Salguero**

Director of Marketing

**Tammi Small**

Director of Family Programs

**Heather Stabinsky**

Digital Media Specialist

**Brooks Tomb**

Deputy Director

**Maria Wilcox**

Accounting & Finance Specialist

**Lisa Williams**

Development and Outreach Associate

### Advisory Board

**Mary Jane Hogan, MD**

Pediatric Oncology, Yale School of Medicine

**Jeff Kimball**

CEO, Elizabeth's Smile

**Ceci Maher, LMSW**

CT State Senator

**Liz Marconi, MSW**

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

**Maurice Segall**

Attorney, Pro Bono Partnership

# Our Hospital Partners

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

## **Partner Hospitals**

Baystate Children's Hospital

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

Maria Fareri Children's Hospital

Yale New Haven Health - Smilow Cancer Hospital

## **Hospital Affiliates**

Boston Children's Hospital

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

NY Presbyterian Kids - Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital



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**Join Our Cause**



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