



RESILIENCE: Cancer, COVID **COURAGE.**

Circle of Care Annual Report **2020**

Cover Photo:

November 2020: With no visitations permitted, Ana stays in touch with her niece Maria at the hospital via phone.

“We’re here in quarantine...”

I just wanted to say thank you from the bottom of my heart. Ever since my daughter was diagnosed with cancer, Circle of Care has been there for me financially in ways I could never imagine. We love you guys and hope you stay safe and continue to do a great job with other families with kids battling this monster...”

Nevaeh’s mom, March 2020



With Gratitude...

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

If there's one thing that 2020 has taught us, it's the need for resilience when faced with a challenge. And last year certainly had its challenges. While COVID changed our everyday routines and required us to adapt to a new normal, the families in our Circle were hit twice as hard. The unfortunate reality is that cancer doesn't stop for a virus. Treatments must continue, hospital stays are unavoidable, and the daily grind of a pediatric cancer journey continues... even during a pandemic.

To many of us, the trying days of quarantines at home, masks in public, and the unknowns of extended time off from work were hard to fathom. But to our families, sadly this was nothing new. When a child is diagnosed with cancer it comes with no warning. There is uncertainty, anxiety and fear that come with the diagnosis and a complete loss of control. Families quickly adapt to the new normal of protecting their child from invisible germs, washing hands, social distancing, and sheltering in place, because they have been doing this since they first heard those dreaded words, "your child has cancer."

The repercussions of this pandemic have taken their toll on everyone-- especially on families who have a child living with cancer. We are, and always will be, determined to be here for the families in our Circle, and did not let a pandemic stand in the way of our mission.

It took courage, tenacity, and passion for our mission to be there and meet the enormous needs of our families, and we could not have accomplished any of this without the generous support of so many of you. But nowhere near the courage it took the families caring for children with cancer during a pandemic.

As Mr. Rogers said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news my mother would say, 'look for the helpers, you will always find people who are helping.'"

YOU are the helpers. Thank you for being there at this time of crisis for the families in our Circle who need you.

With Gratitude,





Our first and last live event in 2020

an evening with author
Mitch Albom
Tickets on sale now!

January 30th, 7pm
Westport Country Playhouse, Westport CT

January

A New Decade Filled With Promise

Our year began with a strong head start in 2020... then came March, and everything changed. With all of our events canceled and a budget deficit of 50% looming, we redoubled our efforts and focused on providing immediate relief to the families in our Circle while creating new ways to meet their critical needs.

MARCH 13

COVID Impact On Our Mission:

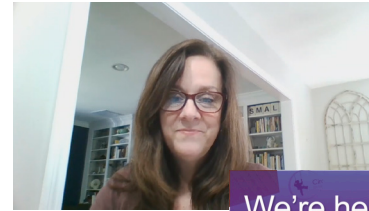
In-person programs canceled

All live events canceled

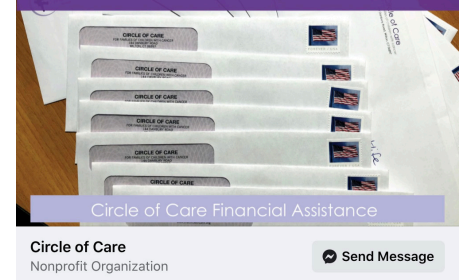
Hospital Volunteers canceled

No direct contact with families

Cancer, COVID CONTINUITY




We're here when you need us.




April

Changing direction without changing purpose...

TONIGHT 7:30pm!



Resilience
in Challenging Times
With Stephanie Dalfonzo



How to overcome **anxiety** and build emotional resilience.

Stephanie Dalfonzo is an Integrative Hypnotist, Coach, Speaker and Author, who has spent more than 20 years researching holistic, natural, and scientifically proven ways to do more than “manage” or “cope with” anxiety. She has helped thousands, from age 8 to 82 break free from the vise-like grip of anxiety.



IDEAS

To keep busy at home!



Cancer doesn't stop for COVID, and neither could we. While our direct contact programs with children were suspended, we quickly adapted to virtual emotional support, along with COVID-related resources for cancer patients on our website. When cleaning supplies and masks were impossible to purchase in local stores, we distributed special care packages – including a medically accurate thermometer, hand sanitizer, masks, and disinfectant wipes to keep our families infection-free.

Cancer, COVID **COMMITMENT**

May



COVID-19 Relief Fund Launch

The collision of cancer and COVID had a huge impact on the vulnerable families in our Circle. Within weeks of the outbreak reaching Connecticut, urgent calls began pouring in from social workers asking for additional emergency funds for our families who are immune-suppressed and at significant risk... and now on an even higher alert. They had to fear not only going to work and seeing friends, but even going to the grocery store to provide meals for their child and family due to risk of exposure to the virus. Applications for financial support quickly doubled.

Your immediate and generous support raised \$244,000 for this campaign ensuring we met the increased need.

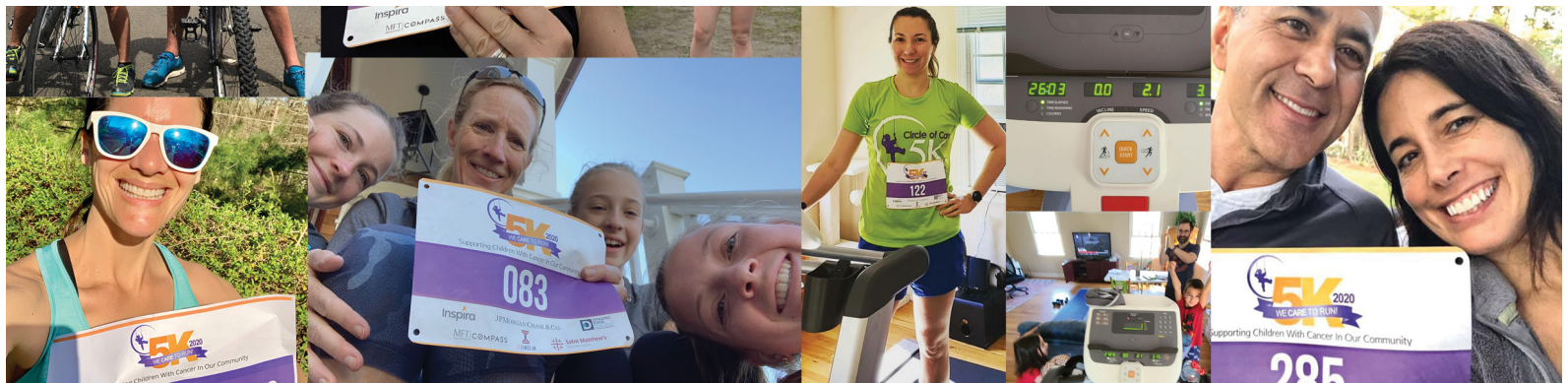
\$244,000 raised

“Thank you Circle of Care, you have helped us tremendously during this difficult process. Since day one you have helped us to the max, making sure our only concern is our daughter’s health. Always thankful.” - A mom, April 24, 2020

Cancer, COVID COMMUNITY



12 Sponsors... **575** Participants... across **17** States



Our First VIRTUAL 5K Crosses State Lines

Our first ever virtual CARE to Run 5K was a major success! We had 575 participants across 17 states who walked, ran, rowed, and pedaled in their neighborhoods, homes, backyards, and local trails. Over \$35,000 was raised in donations alone.

We were overwhelmed by the level of community support generated by this event, from people who live near and far. Especially Kiara, who recently moved back to Wisconsin after completing treatment for a spinal cord tumor. Kiara's tumor has been stable for the last year, but it has affected her walking. So, she rolled along on her bike while the rest of the family jogged.



“We will ALWAYS be grateful to Circle of Care and appreciate more than words can say what they did for us.”

- Kiara's family



Cancer, COVID CONNECTION



June



Our Adventure Circle Presents...

The Trebors
By Caroline Barney

As the pandemic became a “new normal,” our in-person programs were transitioned to virtual events to address families’ isolation and anxiety, including “Art from the Heart at Home,” an Adventure Circle book group for children and siblings, and an online anxiety management webinar for parents.



Can you imagine what a TREBOR looks like?

Circle of Care
 Published by Jeffrey Salguero · April 28, 2020 · ...

The Cat in the Hat and other beloved characters is making a surprise appearance at [Connecticut Children's](#) this morning! Thank you to [LivFree](#) for organizing this event, and to all the members of the Children's Cancer Alliance of Connecticut for their participation! Special bonus question! Can you guess who our cat is?!



Sharing moments of joy - at a distance - with kids in-patient at the hospital.

Cancer, COVID
COURAGE



“It’s not COVID - it’s cancer...”

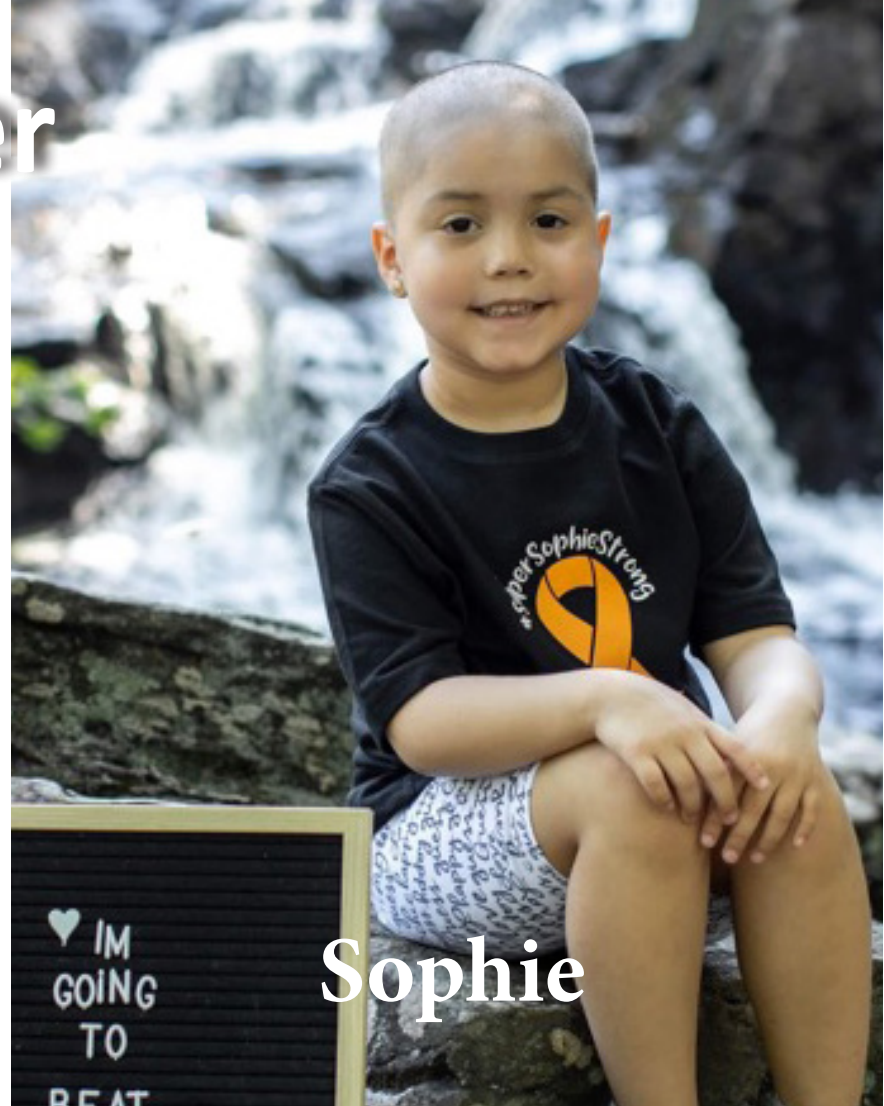
Courage is defined as the strength to persevere in the face of pain, fear, or grief. Courage in the face of cancer and COVID takes resilience. These children and families had no choice but to embrace hope in the face of adversity, adapt to their new norm, find strength in the uncertainty and reach out to seek the support needed to carry them through. Their strength and courage truly inspires us. On the following pages you will meet just a few of the many amazing families in our Circle in 2020.

“When the whole world was focused on just trying not to die, we had to run right into the fire.” - Mara, Luke’s mom

Courage Corner



Logan



Sophie



Chloe



Luke

These are just some of our heroes who were either diagnosed or relapsed in 2020.



Logan January 17th, 2020

Ask any parent whose child has experienced pediatric cancer, and they'll know the exact date and time when they heard the words, "Your child has cancer." For Kristina, it was January 17th at 7 PM. Her son Logan, just 11 years old and an active seventh grader, enjoys acting, sports, and competing nationally in Tae Kwon Do. But on January 17, his passions were put on hold. Logan was diagnosed with leukemia. His first three months of 2020 were spent in the hospital. And in March, things only got harder.

"When everything was collapsing, Circle of Care kept our family together.

- Kristina, Logan's mom

When the pandemic hit, visitors were no longer allowed, adding more isolation to an already lonely situation. Offers of help in the home had to be declined for fear of anyone bringing germs in. With Logan's teenage brother now learning remotely, the internet and phone connection became critical to keeping the family connected, but financial stress presented an added burden to the difficult situation. For a single mother, it felt like everything was falling apart.





Sophie January 28th, 2020

It seems impossible that any family would have to endure hearing the words, “Your child has cancer,” twice. But that’s what this family is facing... the diagnosis of their second child with leukemia. When Sophie and Scarlet’s mom, May, noticed that her younger daughter Sophie looked pale and tired, she got a “mom feeling” inside. Her instinct told her that something wasn’t right. And she should know... after all, she’d been through this before. Just five years earlier, her older daughter Scarlet had been diagnosed with leukemia. Now, she was facing cancer for a second time: Sophie was diagnosed with high-risk leukemia, and another cancer journey for this family began.

“We are so thankful for Circle of Care. The food gift cards have helped in a huge way.”

-May, Sophie and Scarlet’s mom

The pandemic has made this family’s second cancer journey even more difficult. Before COVID restrictions, there were hospital volunteers to provide distractions throughout the day. Now, volunteers are not able to be there in person, and neither are May’s husband or Sophie’s big sister Scarlet. But this resilient family found ways to make the best of their challenging situation. Scarlet and her dad go to a spot below Sophie’s hospital window, call her on the phone and hold up homemade signs of encouragement for her to see. Sophie says their visits make her “heart so happy.” Going through cancer once is hard enough. Going through cancer for the second time during a pandemic is unimaginable.





Chloe September 26th, 2020

After a 2016 diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, Chloe fought her way through more than two years of treatment. She is a determined young girl, and even won a gold medal in the Special Olympics just a year after finishing her last round of chemotherapy. Chloe had just started seventh grade when unusual blood counts found her back in the hospital, waiting for results. And on September 26th, her family learned that she had relapsed, and her pediatric cancer journey started once again.

“We are so grateful for Circle of Care. They were there the first time around, and they are with us now.”

-Amy, Chloe’s mom

This year, Chloe has endured multiple hospital stays, IV chemotherapy, bone marrow aspirations, a spinal tap, and a CAR-T transplant of what her mom, Amy, calls “super ninja warrior cells.” She spent Thanksgiving in a hospital bed during a 17-day-long inpatient stay. And all of this during a pandemic which has restricted visitors and allowed only one parent at a time to be by her hospital bed. To say that 2020 has been a tough year for her and her family is clearly an understatement.





Luke March 26th, 2020

When 8-year-old Luke complained of feeling tired, his parents and doctors thought he might have COVID. They were wrong. In January 2020, Luke's parents noticed he had bruises on his legs and an itchy rash. He was tired and weak, unable to continue ice skating, his favorite hobby. After four visits to the doctor to find out what was wrong with their son, Luke's parents finally got the answer. And it wasn't COVID. It was leukemia.

Luke's mom recalls, "It was like a war zone." Luke's situation was critical, but due to the hospital's COVID restrictions, only one parent was allowed to stay.

While the rest of Connecticut was told to stay home, Luke's family was told to pack a bag and head to the hospital. Since the start of his pediatric cancer journey, Luke has taken at least 14 COVID tests just so he can continue his challenging treatment protocol. He has endured an ICU stay, transfusions, dialysis, ventilators, a spinal tap and more. With remote schooling and no chance for a safe way to visit in person with friends, he is lonely. His parents feel crippled by the isolation of dealing with a cancer diagnosis at a time when social distancing makes getting support even harder. For Luke's family, and many more like his, 2020 has brought an even greater challenge than COVID.





In September we hosted the area's foremost Grateful Dead tribute band, Terrapin, at the Circle of Care barn for a livestream fundraising event and much needed merriment.



September

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





Joseph's Art From The Heart room reveal in September would be our first since putting the program on hold due to COVID, and our 140th room since the inception of the program.





Thank you to all our sponsors!

October



Our fall Care to SWING golf event introduced us to new friends and supporters of Circle of Care, helping us raise over \$100K for the families in our Circle.

Donor Spotlight

4-CT Connecticut COVID-19 Charity Connection



4-CT awards \$150K grant to Circle of Care COVID Relief Fund

"Families of children with cancer are in a difficult situation that the COVID-19 crisis only made more critical. 4-CT is glad to be able to provide aid so that these families can focus on healing their children."

- **Ted Yang**, *Co-Founder of 4-CT*

We are so grateful to 4-CT for their commitment to supporting the most vulnerable among us, children with cancer. This grant directly helped families already struggling with the high cost of cancer treatment and loss of work, ensuring their housing and food needs were met. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating impact on families living with cancer in Connecticut and this grant allowed us to increase our reach to double the number of families receiving financial assistance with nearly triple the funds previously allocated. COVID-19 has pushed working families to the edge. Many face a near-impossible situation: if they go to work outside the home, they risk exposing their immune-suppressed children to a life-threatening virus, but the loss of income places the security and well-being of the entire family at risk.

The Connecticut COVID-19 Charity Connection (4-CT) is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit that unites donors—private philanthropists, community foundations, and individuals—with statewide non-profit programs to quickly and accountably get funds into the hands of those affected by this crisis who need help most.

Amanda's End Of Chemo Celebration



After three and half years in treatment, Amanda's end of chemo was a milestone not to be missed. With the help of the Stamford's police and fire departments we celebrated her in style.

Scan here to see Amanda's end of chemo parade!





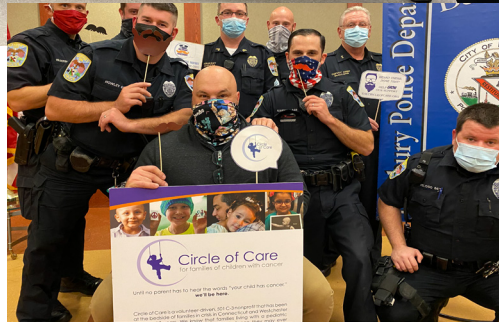
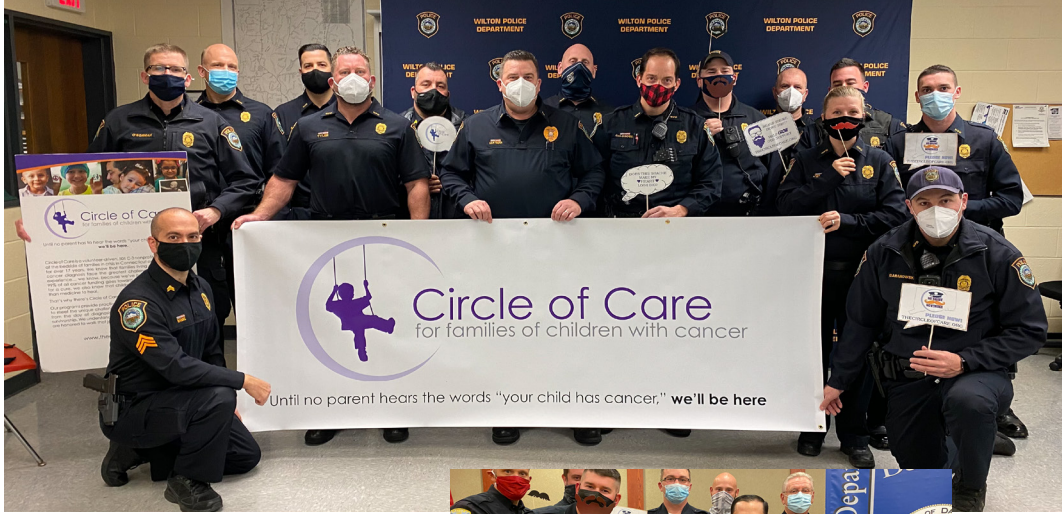
Volunteer Spotlight

Janet Montalbano

As a hair and makeup specialist, Janet began volunteering with us in 2014 to do the hair and makeup for our first Life Within the Journey photoshoot. When she first arrived at the hospital for the shoot she quickly realized she would be working with children that were in active treatment and felt a little unprepared, but her warm smile and big heart put all at ease. At each and every photoshoot she forms immediate bonds with the children and their parents, and over time has developed a strong passion for our cause.

Janet began hosting her Sip & Shop holiday fundraiser in 2016 to benefit the families in our Circle. She brings together unique vendors, a great band, and Santa's elves to make it a special night. In 2020, she transformed her Sip & Shop event to virtual - refusing to give up on her fundraiser for us. It was a remarkable success building on her

network of friends and supporters. Janet's Holiday Sip and Shop is a signature event at the end of the year. We are so fortunate to have her shining personality and huge heart in our Circle of Care family.



November



We felt a true “blue wave” in November with nine police departments across Connecticut supporting our No Shave November event, raising \$50,000 to help our families, making it our most successful No Shave ever.



December

Santa's helpers made a surprise visit to 17 families, bringing some cheer to a difficult holiday season.



Cancer, COVID CARE



\$307,000

Applied to financial relief in 2020
(+ 155%)

Our Financial Assistance fund was needed more than ever in 2020, as families dealt with COVID-related job losses coupled with the unexpected costs associated with a pediatric cancer diagnosis. Because of our donors, we were able to provide over \$300,000 (a 155% increase) in financial assistance and double the number of families we served keeping families in their homes with food on the table and access to transportation to and from treatment. A stable home environment leads to better outcomes, and your support provided that for these families.



62%

Housing



10%

Transportation



10%

Utilities



9%

Funeral



7%

Food



2%

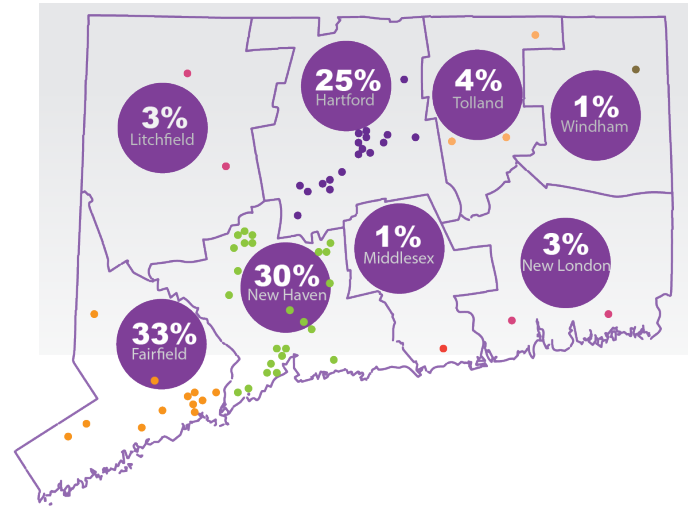
Special Needs

Our donors made an impact on families who needed more than medicine to heal.



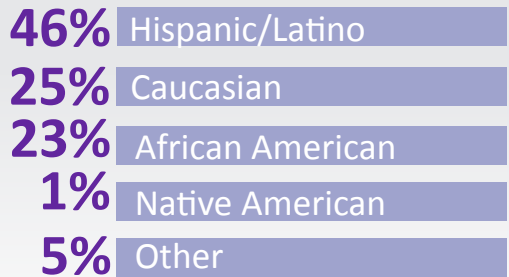
Our first Bags of Love drop off after the pandemic hit, at Yale New Haven Hospital. Cancer doesn't stop for COVID.

Geographic Distribution:



+77% increase in families served

Ethnic Diversity



Income Level





CHILDHOOD
CANCER
ALLIANCE *of*
CONNECTICUT

Berni & Murcer
Camp Rising Sun
Circle of Care
Colin's Crew
Connecticut Children's Medical Center
Friends of Karen
Infinite Love for Kids Fighting Cancer
Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
LIVFREE
Make-A-Wish Connecticut
Ronald McDonald House of Connecticut
Ryan's Rebels
Special Wishes
Sunshine Kids
Team Impact
The Scotty Fund
The Susan Fund
The Tommy Fund
Yale New Haven Children's Hospital

Alliance Highlights

The members of the Childhood Cancer Alliance of Connecticut relied on each other more than ever due to the challenges of the pandemic. During our first emergency "Zoom" meeting in April, we put our heads together to create new ways to continue support these families. In May and December, we hosted hospital parades to bring smiles and joy to those who were in-patient or at clinic at the Connecticut pediatric cancer centers. A special sub-committee was formed to create a common application for all organizations to simplify the process for families applying for help. Throughout the year our partners continued to collaborate with one another to ensure that families received the assistance they needed.

Cancer, COVID CONGRATULATIONS!



Our year ended celebrating a milestone with our very own Heather, Marketing and Development Associate at Circle of Care. Heather is a two-time cancer survivor herself, and in December she marked 5 years of being cancer free. We can't think of a better way for Heather to close the year and for us to close this chapter of our Circle of Care journey in 2020.

Our Programs



Bags of Love The day of diagnosis is overwhelming. Our Bags are filled with thoughtfully selected items that families need in those first overwhelming days and weeks like the Purple Pages resource guide, a warm blanket, and a lighted pen for those late nights in a quiet hospital room. But a Bag of Love doesn't just provide the essentials... it gives you the comfort of knowing that there is someone who has been in your shoes, and who will be there to walk the journey with you.



Lifeline Peer Support Lifeline connects families in treatment to a valuable support network that includes past and present Circle of Care families who have experienced their child's battle with cancer.



Hospital Volunteers Our specially trained hospital volunteers are there to offer a moment of respite for families who endure long, tiring days at the hospital. Whether it's to paint a child's nails, play a competitive game of checkers, or simply to lend an ear, our volunteers provide a much-needed distraction for patients, siblings, and the families who are bearing the weight of a cancer journey.



Financial Assistance No family should ever have to choose between caring for their child and paying the bills. Our Financial Assistance program is there for families who are facing financial distress. We ensure that parents can focus on caring for their child without worrying about the bill collectors... so that they can rest assured there will be a roof over their heads and food on their table as they continue their journey.



Art from the Heart Children in treatment for a cancer diagnosis often spend a lot of time at home, away from school, their friends and their regular routine. Our Art from the Heart dream room makeovers offer something for a child to look forward to and have control over, whether they choose to create a princess wonderland or a room dedicated to their favorite sports team.



Life Within The Journey Our photojournalistic portrait series is an educational and intimate look at the real faces behind pediatric cancer, and into the lives of children and young adults who are living with cancer. The series has been exhibited in twelve different locations across the state.



Bounce Back to Fitness The end of treatment is a milestone. Bounce Back to Fitness helps children and young adults rebuild their strength and stamina. Our partnership with CT Fitness Lab and Dynamic Edge allows us to offer children the opportunity to work with specialists in physical therapy and exercise physiology to regain strength, balance, coordination, agility, and most importantly, confidence.

We are there for our families' journey - from day one of diagnosis, throughout treatment, wherever the journey may lead.

2020 Financials

Financial Statement

Year ending December 31, 2020

Revenue

Source of Funds

Contributions	311,325
Special Events Net	147,075
Grants	295,700
Other	2,341
Investment Income	<u>7,818</u>
	774,259

Expense

Use of Funds

Programs	554,647
Management & General	65,759
Fund Development	<u>41,856</u>
	662,262

Net Assets

End of Year	698,050
Beginning of Year	586,053
Change in Net Assets	111,997

Operating Expense Distribution



Program Distribution %



5-Year Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) **+26%**



We understand that children need more than medicine to heal.

Bags of Love: 2,660 delivered
Hospital Volunteers: 22,590 hours served
Financial Assistance: 1,170 families served
Art from the Heart: 140 room makeovers
Life Within The Journey: 75 family portraits

Our Partners

Circle of Care offers thanks and gratitude to our collaborative partners who are instrumental in helping ensure our programs and services reach those families in need.

Connecticut Children's Medical Center

Yale New Haven Children's Hospital

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**

Circle of Care is especially grateful to the organizations with us at the highest level in support of our critical

4-CT

MBIA Foundation

LeClerc Charity Fund

Bauer Foundation

American Savings Foundation

Chambers Family Foundation

Carrot Seed Foundation

St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

zations who partner
tical programs.

Leadership

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MSW, Connecticut Children's Medical Center

Maurice Segall

Attorney, Maurice Segall LLC



Check out our 2020 Year-In-Review video here with this QR code!



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Join Our Cause



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