
News & Updates

December 2023 | Volume 14 - Number 11

Upcoming Activities

April
Toiletary Drive

May 19
15th Annual
Virtual Walk



Making Our Season Bright

We wish you a happy holiday season and the best of health and happiness in 2024. You play a vital role in our success and help to make the Mattie Miracles possible. We appreciate your continued contributions, your loyalty to the Foundation, and your commitment to our psychosocial mission. Thanks to you we are the only national non-profit, dedicated to psychosocial awareness, advocacy, support, and research of childhood cancer.

Over the last 14 years, together we have:

1. Raised over \$1M to fund our psychosocial programs
2. Supported 38,000 children with cancer
3. Funded 6 [child life specialists](#)
4. Awarded \$165,000 in psychosocial [research grants](#)
5. Published the first evidence based [Psychosocial Standards of Care](#)
6. Sponsored the publication of the [Matrix and Guidelines](#) to help implement the Psychosocial Standards of Care
7. Awarded 14 [M&M Wishes](#)
8. Funded 3 [Therapy Support Grants](#)
9. Delivered 26,000 snacks to in-patient families
10. Donated millions of pieces of candy and toiletry items to families
11. Introduced [House Resolution 262](#)
12. Added Psychosocial Language to the [STAR Act](#) (signed into law June 2018)

Please contribute to our Annual Drive. **Your tax-deductible donations** make the Mattie Miracles possible.

About Us
Spreading Hope
Through
Psychosocial
Support SM

Learn

Support
Help Make The
Miracles Possible

Donate

CFC #59853

Giving

It's not just about
the medicine!SM

Click on the Present to Donate Now!



Spreading Hope Through Psychosocial Support.SM

Child Life Corner with Adina Levitan, CCLS



We welcome Child Life Corner to our newsletters. Each month you will hear from Mattie Miracle's Child Life Specialist, Adina Levitan. Adina will highlight topics, issues, and share stories from a child life professional's lens. Given the vital role child life plays in a child's medical and psychosocial journey, we are proud to feature this standing column.

The Glue of the Healthcare Team

A child life specialist is a healthcare professional you don't know you need until you are in a situation where these services are essential to the well-being of your child. I have always described child life specialists as the glue of the healthcare team. A doctor can order a test or procedure, however, there are many players involved in making that scan happen: the patient, the parents, the staff, and the medical equipment. Most importantly, the patient is the focus of this whole process. What do I mean by this? **As children grow, they develop autonomy, a sense of self, and self-preservation. In the healthcare system, this becomes limited, if not completely taken away by a myriad of tests, procedures, and pokes.** They may fight against sitting still for a scan and they may have a panic attack over the thought of lying down for an MRI or breathing in through an anesthesia mask. So while the doctor has ordered a test or procedure for the health of the child, they may not be taking into account the **mental and emotional impact that test or procedure may have on a child.** They may not be aware of how confusing it can be for parents to navigate the hospital as they try to find the location for the next medical intervention. Let me explain further with a story.

Marcus is a three-year-old boy who was diagnosed with cancer of the liver. He is a twin, however, due to COVID, his twin could not accompany Marcus to the doctor. Furthermore, Marcus' father did not speak English as a first language and relied on his wife to translate the complex medical discussions. Marcus' doctor ordered a series of CT scans to monitor Marcus' cancer. These scans were performed in an area of the hospital that the family was

not familiar with. Furthermore, Marcus was three, so sitting still was not his favorite activity. Marcus' doctor therefore reached out to me, his child life specialist, to help Marcus with this scan.

Having worked in this hospital for several years, I am aware of how certain areas are not always child-friendly: long wait times, staff not trained in pediatrics, and limited child-friendly waiting areas. **I am keenly aware of how a stressed parent can in turn create a stressed child.**

I spoke with Marcus' nurse about how we could make this process as smooth as possible. This meant timing the scan with Marcus receiving calming medication, ensuring the scanner was ready and available for him with the staff understanding the limited window to scan him before the medication wore off, and having his parents as calm as possible. I escorted Marcus and his parents throughout the hospital, and advocated for the scan to happen as soon as possible and for his father to be present. I reassured the family when missing paperwork delayed the scan. I called his nurse to bring more medication when things were taking longer than expected. I was present in the scan as well, providing distraction and support. I escorted the family back to the clinic and provided Marcus with a prize for his cooperation. In the course of what seemed like a simple scan, I communicated with his nurse, his doctor, the radiology tech in one area of the hospital, the CT techs in another area of the hospital, his parents, and of course, Marcus. **These are the puzzle pieces of pediatric care. As a child life specialist, I acted as the glue, by providing the most effective psychosocial care so that Marcus could successfully complete his scan, which helped to guide his medical treatment.**



Highlights of 2023

As 2023 draws to a close, we reflect on this **year's highlights and accomplishments**. Together, with your support, we have made many Mattie Miracles possible:

- Endowed the Mattie Miracle Child Life Program Fund, by committing **\$149,000** to continue the program from 2022 to 2024.
- Funded implementation **research grants**, totaling **\$42,000** to fund research that produces clinical tools and models that enable the implementation of the Psychosocial Standards of Care at treatment sites around the country.
- Launched a non-profit research partnership with **The Andrew McDonough B+ Foundation** and **Momcology**. We are grateful to the B+ Foundation for their **\$115,000 grant** to conduct innovative implementation research with the Psychosocial Standards of Care.
- Operated the Mattie Miracle Free Snack & Item Carts for in-patient pediatric families at the MedStar Georgetown University Hospital (Washington, DC), at Children's Hospital at Sinai (Baltimore, MD), and at The National Institutes of Health's Clinical

- Center (Bethesda, MD). **These carts serviced over 2,500 families this year.**
- Featured speaker at a conference webinar hosted by the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS) entitled, **Legacy Making Across the Lifespan.**
 - Held the virtual **14th Annual Walk**, generating **\$131,249**, with walkers from 36 states.
 - Awarded **5 M&M (Margy & Mattie) Wishes**, ranging from \$1,200 to \$2,500. These grants support a fun family activity, trip, or a wish list item for a child with cancer.
 - Funded **three therapy support grants** for children with cancer. Each \$1,000 grant covered the cost of psychological services within the community.
 - Coordinated **two annual community item drives** (candy, snacks, and toiletries) to help stock our hospital Snack & Item carts.

We Love Our Supporters

Thank you for standing behind our mission to assist children with cancer and their families for 14 years.

Please make a **tax-deductible contribution** today. Your contribution will help us meet the psychosocial needs of children with cancer and their families, as well as implement the Psychosocial Standards of Care, so that every child with cancer has access to optimal psychological and social support.

Best wishes this holiday season and THANK YOU for your continued support!



Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation
is a GuideStar PLATINUM
Participant Charity



Find us on:
BlogSpot®

MATTIE MIRACLE CANCER FOUNDATION | PO Box 6485, Arlington, VA 22206

[Unsubscribe admin@mattiemiracle.com](mailto:admin@mattiemiracle.com)

[Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by admin@mattiemiracle.com powered by



Try email marketing for free today!