

News & Updates

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Miracles Possible

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**It's not just about
the medicine!SM**



Indeed....it is a Standard!

As Mattie Miracle always says, Childhood cancer is NOT just about the medicine. On **April 9**, we are joining a global cancer initiative to **make the invisible visible**, with the launching of **World Psycho-Oncology Day**. This initiative brings worldwide attention to the psychological and social impact of a cancer diagnosis on children and their families. Psychosocial care enhances the effectiveness of the medical treatment and improves the quality of life for children and their families. **Having a day that is dedicated to increasing the awareness of the psychosocial needs of children with cancer and their families signals the importance of integrating evidence-based psychosocial care into policy and practice.**

The selection of the date, April 9, to commemorate World Psycho-Oncology Day was very intentional, as this was the birthday of the late **Dr. Jimmie Holland**. Jimmie was a force, an inspiration, and a visionary. She founded the sub-specialty of psycho-oncology and devoted her life to advocating, researching, and ensuring that the social and emotional needs of patients were integrated into comprehensive cancer care.

Mattie Miracle had the opportunity to meet Jimmie at our Childhood Cancer Psychosocial Symposium on Capitol Hill in 2012 and she recognized our achievements with the American Psychosocial Oncology Society Distinguished Public Service Award in 2013.



16 Years of
Service
Video

Mattie Miracle is honored to have known Jimmie and we invite you to view the poignant video that was created by the World Psycho-Oncology Day Committee. The video astutely points out that.....Psychosocial care is a Standard!



Spreading Hope Through Psychosocial Support.

SM

Making Global Connections

Recently, Mattie Miracle's co-founder had the opportunity to connect with Dr. Rhea Daruvala, a Pediatric Psycho-Oncologist based in India. World Psycho-Oncology Day is April 9, and Mattie Miracle is honored to know the impact the Psychosocial Standards of Care are having globally.



Reflections from Dr. Rhea Daruvala

"Your work with Mattie Miracle has been deeply influential, and it has shaped our work in many ways **as we work towards developing similar psychosocial care standards within our own context here in India.** What you have built in Mattie's memory is incredibly powerful and inspiring.

The way you continue to honor Mattie's story while creating meaningful changes for children with cancer and their families resonates strongly with all of us. **We hope, in our own way, to carry forward that spirit and keep Mattie's legacy alive through our work."**

Child Life Corner
with
Adina Levitan, CCLS



Supporting Children Throughout the Cancer Journey (Part 3: Survivorship)

In the world of oncology, there is one word that is used often, yet carries a different meaning for every child and family: *survivor*. **Survivorship is a complex state of mind for oncology families.** Am I a survivor because I have cancer and continue through treatment? Am I a survivor because I endured a painful biopsy, awful-tasting chemotherapy, or the loss of my hair? Am I a survivor because I rang the end-of-treatment bell? Is my child a survivor even if they didn't survive? **Who can claim this term—and when—carries significant weight and meaning for families.**

The role of child life specialists in survivorship is also understood on an individual level for each child and family. **For this article, we will explore survivorship as it relates to a child completing cancer treatment and ask, “What comes next?”** This period—finishing treatment, removing central lines, and ending chemotherapy—can feel both heavy and freeing for families.

Children with cancer often spend extended time out of school due to the risk of infection while immunocompromised. As treatment comes to an end, families begin to think about returning to school. **Child life specialists facilitate school reintegration through collaboration with teachers, classroom visits, and support during the child's transition back into the classroom.** This may include helping children develop and rehearse a script about their experience and how they would like it to be shared. Child life specialists uniquely understand the impact of hospitalization on a child's development, self-esteem, and stamina. They can **recommend ways to prepare classmates for the child's return and, alongside the medical team, help create a plan that allows the child to ease back into the school routine.**

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, the entire family is suddenly immersed in a new world, quickly embraced by a team of doctors, nurses, social workers, and child life specialists. Many families reflect that, over time, this team becomes like family. Holidays are shared, milestones are celebrated, and deeply personal moments unfold in patient rooms, exam rooms, and hospital hallways. As treatment ends, however, this level of day-to-day support shifts. Child life specialists place strong emphasis on building rapport and meaningful connections with patients and families to foster trust. **These relationships often continue beyond treatment through invitations to special events, birthday cards, and ongoing connections to resources and support.**

While a child may be considered a “cancer survivor,” medical care does not end abruptly. **Survivorship often includes years of follow-up to monitor for recurrence and potential late effects of treatment.** This can involve returning to the hospital for blood work, scans, and appointments. A child who has learned to cope with port access may find new challenges in adjusting to arm or finger sticks for blood draws. **Child life specialists continue to support children through these transitions, helping them develop new coping strategies and plans.**

Survivorship is a complex and evolving experience for oncology patients and their families. **The end of treatment does not erase the months or years of hospitalization and medical interventions. Children may experience anxiety or medical traumatic stress during treatment and in the years that follow.** Child life specialists provide therapeutic interventions, diagnosis education, coping strategies, and emotional support throughout treatment to help mitigate these effects. Even so, challenges can linger or reemerge over time. **Child life specialists play a critical role in survivorship, continuing to support children and families as they navigate life beyond treatment.**

Supporting Innovation

Mattie Miracle is honored to partner with the American Psychosocial Oncology Society, a professional organization committed to advancing the development and delivery of evidence-based psychosocial oncology care through research, practice, education, and advocacy. **For the past four years, Mattie Miracle has awarded over \$100,000 in early career grants.**



Dr. Karen Long-Traynor is a Mattie Miracle grant recipient and recently published the peer-reviewed article entitled, *Feasibility of a peer-to-peer parent mentoring program for parents of children recently diagnosed with cancer*. A childhood cancer diagnosis can be distressing for parents and higher levels of emotional support have been associated with better parent coping. **Dr. Long-Traynor's study evaluated the feasibility of a peer to peer mentoring program, pairing parents of newly diagnosed children with parents of survivors, to assess outcome benefits.**

We are honored to support Dr. Long-Traynor's research and we invite you to read her published article.



Walk with Us on May 17

15th Annual Item Drive



Walk...Snap...Post

Our Virtual Awareness Walk will be held on **Sunday, May 17, from 10am to Noon** (in your time zone). You can participate wherever you are and help us turn your community **ORANGE!** Our Annual Awareness Walk raises **90% of the funds we need to directly support our psychosocial programs and initiatives** which help children with cancer and their families.

Date: Sunday, May 17th

Time: 10am to 12pm (in your time zone)

Where: Mattie Miracle Facebook Page

Goal: Awareness Event -- to raise \$50,000

Great prizes for walkers with the greatest number of steps!

Register, purchase raffle tickets, & donate.



In honor of Mattie's 24th birthday, we will be hosting our **15th annual item drive**. All donated toiletries stock our **Mattie Miracle Snack & Item Carts** for pediatric families at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital (Washington, DC), Samuelson Children's Hospital at Sinai (Baltimore, MD), and the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, MD).

When living in a hospital 24 hours a day, seven days a week and caring for a child with cancer or other life-threatening illness, **receiving these items can feel like a gift**. Families often rush to the hospital when their children are ill and are unable to pack basic items that are needed for their daily care. **The Carts fulfill these basic psychosocial needs and provide items free of charge to families.**

Check out our Amazon wish list below and help us keep our Mattie Miracle Carts stocked to support families caring for children with cancer. Our Carts **support over 2,500 families a year**. We ask that all items be received by **April 6, 2026**.





Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation
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