Mattie Miracle
CANCER FOUNDATION

News & Updates

September 2025 | Volume 16 - Number 7

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CFC #59853

Giving

Making Wishes Come True

Mattie Miracle launched its M&M (Margy & Mattie) Wishes Program three years ago in memory of our board member, Margy Jost. Margy was a fierce childhood cancer advocate who devoted her life to helping children with cancer. Margy was passionate about providing grants to families to help create memories outside of the hospital experience. **M&M Wishes offers a grant of up to $1,000 to support a fun activity, trip, or a wish list item for a child with cancer.**

Shawn's Wish --- A Reflection from his treatment team at Children's Hospital at Sinai (Baltimore, MD)

After Shawn bravely completing his treatment for Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, he received an M&M wish – a brand-new Virtual Reality headset!

Shawn was absolutely thrilled when he opened the box, his eyes lit up with pure excitement. Throughout every step of his treatment, Shawn showed incredible courage and strength, inspiring everyone around him. His family is deeply grateful for Mattie Miracle's generosity, for making this moment possible, and for the joy it brings their amazing son.

Facts about M&M Wishes

- Awarded **$62,446 of Wishes** since 2022.
- Children in **21 States** granted a Wish.
- Granted **48 Wishes.**
- Wishes granted to **children, teens, and young adults** with a childhood cancer diagnosis.
- Wishes are granted during **treatment, survivorship, or end of life**.

Click on the image below to apply for an M&M Wish.

It's not just about the medicine! SM

16 Years of Service Video

Spreading Hope Through Psychosocial Support. SM

Child Life Corner
with
Adina Levitan, CCLS

Mattie Miracle Therapy Grants
Extending Support Beyond Hospital Walls

September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. But for many families, awareness is not confined to a single month; it is a constant reality. Every day. Every hour. Every minute.

Since my last article, I have launched my private child life practice, Illuminate Child Life, where I support children and families both at home and virtually. Child life outside of the hospital setting looks very different. In the hospital, the medical team only sees a small snapshot of what families endure while navigating a cancer diagnosis. **But the anxiety and trauma of hospitalization, procedures, and treatments do not stay behind when a child leaves the clinic. Medical trauma follows families home and weaves into daily life.** Outside of the hospital, the role of child life has to bridge the gap between home and hospital and how to cope with the impact of cancer. G-tube feeds still happen. Central line dressings still need to be changed. Medications still need to be given, again and again. **Although the child is home, surrounded by familiar comforts, they remain a patient, and parents become more than caregivers; they become medical providers for their child.**

Since starting my practice, I have had the privilege of working with **Amelia, an almost four-year-old girl who has been battling a brain tumor since last January**. Amelia is smart, funny, perceptive, and playful. Our sessions often center around her illness. She processes her hospitalizations and medical interventions through play, using both real and pretend medical tools. Her “patients” are usually her stuffed animals and dolls, though sometimes she chooses to be the patient herself, allowing us to process her experiences through play.

Amelia is incredibly articulate and honest. She makes it clear that she is not a fan of the hospital. Yet, over time, I have seen her make remarkable progress in her coping, both at home and during hospital visits. That does not mean her medical trauma has disappeared. It is impossible to imagine the weight of the countless interventions a child with cancer is expected to endure.

What has struck me most in working within the home is how much I did not see while I worked in the hospital. Amelia’s mother keeps detailed calendars and lists to track appointments and medications. She battles with insurance companies and pharmacies to ensure Amelia receives what she needs. She had to step away from her career to care for Amelia, who cannot attend school because of her compromised immune system. Every day, Amelia’s mother is attuned to both her medical and emotional needs. This is why she chose to bring a child life specialist into their home.

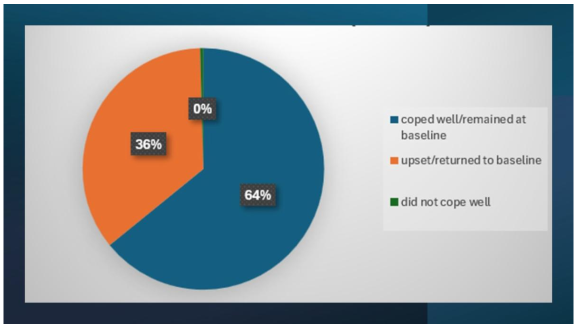
As one might imagine, **the financial burden of caring for a child with cancer is overwhelming, and as I have shared in past newsletters, child life is not a billable service; insurance does not cover it.** This means families must pay out of pocket for essential psychosocial and coping support. With Amelia, it quickly became clear that she needed ongoing, comprehensive child life services, not just a few sessions. Remembering that the Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation provides grants for therapy, I reached out to ask if they would consider funding child life as well. The committee responded quickly. **Through the Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation, Amelia’s family received a grant that now makes it possible for her to continue receiving child life services without the added financial strain.**

This grant means Amelia has the space and support to process her medical journey through play, to strengthen her coping skills, and to find moments of joy in the midst of such a difficult reality. It also means her parents can focus on caring for her without the constant worry of how to afford the psychosocial support she so clearly needs.

Amelia’s story is just one example of how child life in the community can fill a critical gap for families. The hospital is only one piece of the cancer journey. **Life at home is where the weight of caregiving, medical trauma, and ongoing uncertainty truly unfolds. By extending child life beyond hospital walls, we can meet families where they are, providing continuity, compassion, and coping strategies that last well beyond a single hospital visit.**

As we mark Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, I am reminded daily that awareness is not a campaign or a ribbon. It is the lived reality of children like Amelia and the families who walk this path alongside them.

Improving Patient Outcomes



Mattie Miracle has been funding Child Life services since 2011. **Child Life Specialists play a critical role in supporting child health and wellness.** They provide preparation, education, distraction, play, and coping tools. In the process they minimize stress, anxiety, and psychosocial trauma, while empowering children and families.

In the last three months (April to June 2025), **Emily Nosek** (our child life specialist at Children's Hospital at Sinai) has supported **237 children** through various procedures such as IV placement, blood draws, and port access. Thanks to Emily's interventions and support, she has helped **99.5% of her patients successfully cope with and manage these procedures.**

Mattie Miracle is honored to support the amazing work of Child Life Specialists, and to directly meet the psychosocial needs of children with cancer and their families.

Snack & Item Carts

Mattie Miracle learned first-hand the importance of community support and generosity when Mattie was in cancer treatment. We take these lessons learned to guide the operation of our Snack & Item Carts.

Our Carts continue to **make a difference in the lives of families** caring for children with cancer. We are honored that our Carts also serve as an **inspirational role model for other non-profits** who actively help children and their families face medical crises.

Facts about Our Carts:

- Operating **5 Snack & Item Carts** at

SUPPORT US

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital (Washington, DC), Children's Hospital at Sinai (Baltimore, MD), and The NIH Clinical Center (Bethesda, MD).

- Serving **2,500 families** a year.
- Supporting **500 families every three months**.
- Offering **free** candy, nutritional. snacks, drinks, toiletries, and wellness items to families caring for children with cancer and other life threatening illnesses.

Candy & Snack Drive

It is candy and snack season! Please help us stock our **free Snack and Item Carts** at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital (Washington, DC), Children's Hospital at Sinai (Baltimore, MD), and The NIH Clinical Center (Bethesda, MD).

Our five Carts are considered a life saver by families who are caring for a child with cancer or other life-threatening illness. **Our hospital Carts support 2,500 families a year.** Hospitals have requested that candy remain in its original unopened vacuum sealed bags, with its manufacturer's expiration date. Therefore, the safest way to meet these requirements is to use an Amazon Wish List.

Wishlist amazon

You can participate in our 15th annual Candy and Snack Drive from anywhere in the USA. Please view our Amazon Wish List, and we request all items be received by November 10, 2025.

Mattie Miracle Cancer Foundation
is a GuideStar PLATINUM
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