

CONNOR GEORGE
Medulloblastoma Warrior
see page 8

2022
ANNUAL REPORT
...
2023
PROGRESS REPORT

THE "CURE" SADERS FIGHTING AGAINST CANCER



THE CURE STARTS NOW®

www.thecurestartsnow.org

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Each year after we fill our bellies from Thanksgiving and complete our online Black Friday shopping for gifts, most people start thinking about their year-end gifts. For the 6th year in a row, I want to challenge you to put our **KIDS FIRST**. Before you spend any money on gifts this holiday season, please give your **BIGGEST** gift to families who need it the most and give the gift of hope.

On November 13th, hundreds of our The Cure Starts Now families will join together to inspire you with courageous stories of their cancer warriors and remind you why you were first inspired to give to such a worthy cause.



We have done so much because of incredible people like you who care so deeply and are moved by such amazing kids who are fighting for their lives

Co-Founder Brooke Desserich (left) and Director of Family Support Heidi Varns (right) at the 2022 Giving First Telethon with Addison Varns (middle), one of the many warriors who inspired thousands of people to give first.

against a brutal disease. We still have so much to do and we connect with new families each and every day who were served such a heartbreaking diagnosis of brain cancer. They need us. They need YOU.

Don't wait. Donate today or even consider being one of our amazing matching donors. No gift is too small, there are so many sweet girls and boys who need the hope only you can provide. Please **GIVE FIRST**.

With heartfelt gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brooke".

Brooke Desserich
Co-Founder and Mom to
DIPG Angel Elena



Donate now at donate2csn.org/GivingFirst

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: ABSTRACT DISPLAYS

Standing in her kitchen and speaking to a contractor about a remodel, Carla Eng can't help but think that the man in front of her looks familiar. As they move from business to just chatting, the contractor mentions his charity foundation, and recognition strikes her. The man in her kitchen is the same person she saw on TV talking with Chris Cuomo for *Good Morning America*.



Carla Eng and her husband, Mike Eng, founders of Abstract Displays

The Engs take their role with The Cure Starts Now very seriously, planning months in advance and creating works of art highlighting each year's gala theme. Today, their front office shelves boast awards and plaques of service, at least 10 representing a year that Abstract Displays helped make the night a success!

"Carla and Mike Eng bring such energy and veracity to their support. Having such a giving couple offering their talents and dedication is both refreshing and vital to our success."

– Brooke Desserich

As the small business owner of Abstract Displays and a leader in trade show design, Eng understood the struggle of battling cancer while running a business. Having come out the other side of her battle, Eng promised herself that she would support cancer fighters and children specifically, but she didn't know how she would do this or where to start. Now, Keith Desserich is standing in her kitchen inviting her to The Cure Starts Now gala.

When she attended, she knew exactly how she could help:

"I saw their dedication and I made it my personal mission to make their gala even bigger so others could see what they were doing."

– Carla Eng

Learn more about our business partnerships at thecurestartsnow.org/how-to-help/partnerships



Abstract Displays truly set the mood with their backdrops and decor for The Cure Starts Now's medieval-themed Once In A Lifetime Gala in 2019.

A HEAD-TURNING FUNDRAISER



Harleigh is a sweet little girl who loves milkshakes, swimming, and watching Disney. Despite her battle with DIPG, Harleigh is quick to laugh and bring a smile to her parents' faces. Parents Josh and Jill Hines fell into the world of childhood cancer and became deeply concerned with the lack of federal research funding for children like Harleigh, who are facing a terminal diagnosis. In the midst of their battle, they desperately wanted to fight to help fund research. In trying to find time between doctor visits, medications, scans, and providing care, their schedule seemed too full to take on the extra burden of fundraising.

An idea came to Jill as she considered small changes they could make in their life to support the cause.

"Josh was already going to car shows, so I thought we should incorporate fundraising into the hobbies we already had."

– Jill Hines



Harleigh Vanhorn, DIPG Warrior

Now, Josh can't make a trip to the grocery store without heads turning as he drives by. The colorful car, decorated with a DIPG shield and QR codes is hard to miss. So far, they have used the car for parades and car shows. Josh brought the car to a feature with Vanguard Motor Sales to share Harleigh's story. All in the effort to raise awareness and fund pediatric brain cancer research.

"When I'm at the hardware store, I'll get a ping on my phone that someone has just donated and I know they're probably looking at the car in the parking lot."

– Josh Hines

Harleigh has loved riding in the flashy car with the top down for parades and events! The car has become a source of pride and fun for the whole family. By turning a hobby into a source of fundraising, Team Harleigh has raised over \$13,000 for research.

To donate go to donate2csn.org/Harleigh

Jill, Josh, and Harleigh visited Graeter's Ice Cream stores in the Columbus, Ohio area during Cones for the Cure 2023.

Josh's passion for cars and car shows captivated his attention on weekends and all his free time. What better way to garner people's attention than to drive around in a bright purple and yellow car wrapped in The Cure Starts Now logos?



Josh Hines' The Cure Starts Now car in the City of Pickerington's 2023 4th of July Parade.



COLLABORATION: THE SECRET TO SOLVING THE PUZZLE OF PEDIATRIC BRAIN CANCER

Experts agree that the key to finding the cure begins with solving the toughest cancer puzzle; pediatric brain cancers like diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG) and diffuse midline glioma (DMG). The Cure Starts Now Foundation believes we cannot solve this puzzle alone. It will take inspiration, innovation, and, most importantly, collaboration.

On May 19-20, 2023, The Cure Starts Now hosted its 7th international DIPG/DMG and Medulloblastoma Symposium in Lexington, KY. This summit hosted the world's largest international collective of DIPG/DMG and Medulloblastoma doctors, researchers, and foundations from 7 countries with the goal of collaboration through networking and learning from others' research and experience. Every aspect of the three-day event encourages networking and collaboration while presenting new research.

The fact is, the vast majority of federal funding is not allocated toward today's ground-breaking research, but instead toward implementing trials funded from years ago. Researchers lean on foundations, like The Cure Starts Now, to fund exploratory research that could lead to a cure. This research is crucial to create the next set of clinical trials.

"It is not an exaggeration to say that we couldn't do the work we do without funding from foundations like The Cure Starts Now and the DIPG/DMG Collaborative."

– Dr. Ira Dunkel, Chair of the Pediatric Brain Tumor Consortium



From left to right, Dr. Ira Dunkel (Memorial Sloan Kettering), Dr. Roger Packer (Director, Brain Tumor Institute of Children's National Hospital), Dr. David Ziegler (Sydney Children's Hospital)

On the second afternoon of the event, researchers were granted 4 minutes to pitch their research. That evening, only two researchers would be chosen for a \$50,000 Cure Fund Grant. In the end, the Medical Advisory Council chose Dr. Biplab Dasgupta of Cincinnati Children's for "Exploring Novel Targets on DIPG" and Dr. Maria Wiese and Dr. Christof Kramm of the University Medical Center Goettingen for "Starve the Monster: Multi-Metabolic Treatment Strategies for H3.3K27M-Mutant DIPG/DMG".

This event brings together family foundations who work tirelessly to raise money for better research and treatment; researchers who desperately want to see their out-of-the-box ideas come to fruition; and doctors who bear witness to the disease as they treat patients in hospitals.

In this collision of worlds, innovation is born. Together, we hope to solve this complicated puzzle that has been underfunded and under-researched, in hopes that one day we can save the next child who receives a brain cancer diagnosis.

Sign up for 2025 DIPG/DMG & Medulloblastoma Symposium updates or become a sponsor at dipgsymposium.org



The Cure Starts Now Chapter Directors

The symposium brought together researchers with pre-secured funding from family foundations as recommended by the Medical Advisory Council. This proactive approach leads to the goal of promoting research and directly benefits next-step research planning before waiting for conclusions to be published. This funding has ensured the success of many breakthrough trials we see today and makes room for collaborations that ensure future success.



Above: Alyssa Hawranko (left) Brooke Desserich (center) of The Cure Starts Now present a \$50,000 check to Dr. Dasgupta of Cincinnati Children's (right).

Below: Tamara Ekis of Reflections Of Grace (left) and Steve Healey of The Brooke Healey Foundation (right) present \$50,000 to Dr. Kramm of University Medical Center Goettingen (center).





OUR GLOBAL REACH

The Cure Starts Now has had tremendous growth over the past year and has 45 chapters in 3 countries including The United States, Australia, and Canada.



ALABAMA (BIRMINGHAM)

Director: Elizabeth Adams
Inspiration: Madeline



CALIFORNIA (KENLEY STRONG)

Director: Melissa Castro
Inspiration: Kenley



CALIFORNIA (SARAH'S DREAMS)

Director: Shannen Nelson
Inspiration: Sarah



COLORADO (WARRIORS FOR PRINCESS PIPER)

Director: Carrina Waneka
Inspiration: Piper



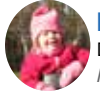
CONNECTICUT

Director: Robyn Staub
Inspiration: Lea



CONNECTICUT (MILFORD)

Director: Stacey Arisian
Inspiration: Serena



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Director: Neely Agin
Inspiration: Alexis



FLORIDA (EAST CENTRAL)

Director: Jamie Franzini
Inspiration: Anthony



ILLINOIS (MAKANDA STRONG)

Director: Sarah Carlton
Inspiration: Makanda



INDIANA (ADALYNN STRONG)

Director: Zach & Kate Jessen
Inspiration: Adalynn



INDIANA (LAUREN HILL)

Director: Lisa Hill
Inspiration: Lauren



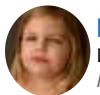
INDIANA (RYLIE STRONG)

Director: Elizabeth Bennett
Inspiration: Rylie



KENTUCKY (LEXINGTON)

Director: Robin Dodd
Inspiration: Bruce



MARYLAND (BRENNA STRONG)

Director: Bonnie Corcoran
Inspiration: Brenna



MASSACHUSETTS

Director: Lisa & John Mackintosh
Inspiration: Nicole



MASSACHUSETTS (CENTRAL)

Director: Abby Arpano
Inspiration: Kate



MASSACHUSETTS (SOMERSET)

Director: Ken & Michelle Oehmen
Inspiration: Selina



MICHIGAN (SAVANNAH SMILES)

Director: Laurel Cash
Inspiration: Savannah



NEBRASKA

Director: Jesse Shumaker
Inspiration: Madelyn



NEW HAMPSHIRE (GILFORD)

Director: Jesse Thompson
Inspiration: John Bradley



NEW YORK (MANDY'S MARK)

Director: Kimberly Kuck
Inspiration: Mandy



NORTH CAROLINA (CHARLOTTE)

Director: Adrena King
Inspiration: CJ



NORTH CAROLINA (RALEIGH)

Director: Mark Newmiller
Inspiration: Ella



NORTH DAKOTA (CONNOR'S CURESADERS)

Director: Brooke George
Inspiration: Connor



NORTH DAKOTA (KARING FOR KEATON)

Director: Jennifer Sundeen
Inspiration: Keaton



OHIO

Director: Brooke & Keith Desserich
Inspiration: Elena



OHIO (JTHF)

Director: Tim Hayden
Inspiration: Jeffrey



OHIO (NORTHEAST)

Director: Jane Midgley
Inspiration: Kasey



PENNSYLVANIA (WESTERN)

Director: Alyssa Hawranko
Inspiration: Alyson



TEXAS (AUSTIN/ROUND ROCK TEAM BROCK)

Directors: Melissa & James Fleming
Inspiration: Brock, Katelyn, Alexis, and Parker



TEXAS (BIG BRAVE BEEBS)

Director: Adam Santos
Inspiration: Belle



TEXAS (CEDAR HILL)

Director: Tanika Pierce
Inspiration: Sarai



TEXAS (CENTRAL)

Director: Vicky Bridier
Inspiration: Jade



TEXAS (ELIANA'S LOVE)

Director: Kariny Flores
Inspiration: Eliana



TEXAS (HEARTS FOR MK)

Directors: Gena & Harrison Keller
Inspiration: Mary Katherine



TEXAS (HOUSTON)

Director: Althea Lee
Inspiration: Nicole



TEXAS (NORTH)

Director: Michelle Bjornberg
Inspiration: Sydney



TEXAS (PARKER COUNTY)

Director: Cassy Ballinger
Inspiration: Robert



VIRGINIA

Director: Ginny Pritchett
Inspiration: Morgan



WASHINGTON

Director: Julie Couture-Caplan
Inspiration: Victor



WISCONSIN (AWESOME ALI SHINES ON)

Director: Tricia Verhaalen
Inspiration: Alison



WISCONSIN (BRAYLEIGHVILLE)

Director: Christi King
Inspiration: Brayleigh

INTERNATIONAL CHAPTERS



AUSTRALIA

Director: Eleni Millios-Hullick
Inspiration: Amy



CANADA (EDMONTON)

Director: Amanda Nevesely
Inspiration: Naomi



CANADA (VICTORIA)

Director: Cari Comboye
Inspiration: Liam

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A CHAPTER? CONTACT US AT FAMILYSUPPORT@THECURESTARTSNOW.ORG

\$30,521,764

**RAISED IN RESEARCH AND SUPPORT SINCE 2007
IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR DIPG/DMG COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS**

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

BALANCE SHEET

For the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2022

ASSETS		LIABILITIES		NET ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$2,462,361	Accounts Payable	\$26,260	Unrestricted	\$2,039,894
Other Assets - Prepaid Expenses	\$712,901	Grants Payable	\$100,000	Temporarily restricted	\$412,105
TOTAL ASSETS:	<u>\$3,175,262</u>	Other Liabilities:		TOTAL NET ASSETS:	<u>\$2,451,999</u>
		Accrued Compensation	\$65,352	TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS:	<u>\$3,175,263</u>
		Deferred Revenue	\$13,125		
		Operated Lease Liability	\$518,527		
		TOTAL LIABILITIES:	<u>\$723,264</u>		

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES & CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

For the Fiscal Year Ended December 31, 2022

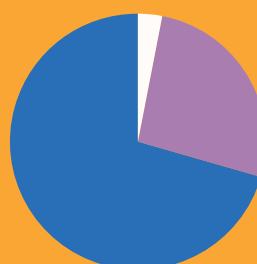
REVENUE, GAINS, & OTHER SUPPORT

Contributions	\$4,151,578
In-Kind Donations	\$93,477
Special Event Revenue	\$2,185,391
Other Support Program Revenue	\$4,165
Investment Return	\$258
TOTAL REVENUE, GAINS, AND OTHER SUPPORT:	<u>\$6,434,868</u>

EXPENSES

Program Services:	
Medical Research	\$4,633,388
Medical Symposium	\$13,512
Family Support Program	\$1,211,134
Fundraising	\$1,139,067
Management and General	\$149,604
TOTAL EXPENSES:	<u>\$7,146,705</u>

Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	(\$711,837)
Net Assets - Beginning of year	\$3,163,836
Net Assets - End of year	<u>\$2,451,999</u>



IN 2022

82.0% PROGRAM EXPENSES & RESEARCH FUNDED

2.1% OVERHEAD

15.9% FUNDRAISING EXPENSES

To learn more about our Board of Directors and Councils, please go to thecurestartsnw.org/who-we-are/councils/

2022 TOP DONORS

\$50,000+

Aubreigh's Army Foundation
Bob and Dawn Litterst
Brooke Healey Foundation
CSN - Australia
CSN - Canada
Facebook
Graeter's Ice Cream Company
Jeffrey Thomas Hayden Foundation
Love4Lucas Foundation
The Melina Michelle Edenfield Foundation
Panhellenic Association
Reflections of Grace
Robert Connor Dawes Foundation
Yuvaan Tiwari Foundation Inc
Zoey Ganesh Charitable Fund

\$25,000-\$49,999

Aidans Avengers
Benevity Causes
Capital Group Co Charitable Foundation
Chick-fil-A
Color Street Foundation Inc
Donald Chidester
Ex Voto LLC
Hyde Park Blast
Keith and Brooke Desserich
Morgan Stanley
Morgan Stanley Global Funding Trust, Inc.
Musella Foundation for Brain Tumor
Research and Information
Texas Children's Hospital

\$10,000-\$24,999

Abby's Corner Inc
Beth Strider
Bruce and Nancy Axmacher
Charles Schwab
Chimerix, Inc
Dale Poledna
Daniel and Oris Weiner
David and Leslie Prothro
Dr. Hal and Brenda Stevenson
Drew and Crystal Wash
Esther and George Jaruga Charitable
Foundation
Fujiyama of Indianapolis, LLC
The Gold Hope Project
Gospel Hill Pentecostal Church of God
Greater Cincinnati Foundation
Jackson Hewitt Tax Service
Jeffrey Bednarek
John and Julie Cohen
Jonathan and Ruth Singer
Lauren's Fight for Cure Foundation
Linea Solutions
Mark and Brittany McKenzie
Marlees Mission Fund
Matthew Rettig
Mecha Management Company
Popp Hutcheson PLLC
Primrose School of Round Rock North
Robert and Susan Arnold
Ryan's Hope
Schwab Charitable
State Street Bank and Trust Co.
Stripe
Thomas and Stephanie Hatfield
Tobias Theland
YourCause, Union Pacific GivePlus Program

\$5,000-\$9,999

Adam Nash
Allstate
Andrew and Jana Cottrill

Ashley Price
Benny's World
Berrada Properites Management Inc
Brandon and Jamie Lorton
Breedon Mechanical Design, Inc
Brent and Jessica Austin
The Business for Good Foundation, Inc
Craig and Kristin Maurer
Credit Suisse Americas Foundation
David and Ginny Pritchett
Deloitte
Dennis and Jody Desserich
DMSI Software
Evin and Mikah Macaluso
Fidelity Brokerage Services, LLC
Fight Like Emilie Foundation
Fountain of Love LLC
Frankie4 Footwear US Limited
Frontstream
GBA Girl's Basketball Assoc Inc
General Electric Credit Union
George Alberici
Glenn and Dayna Osako
Global Payment
Gordon and Erin Daugherty
James and Melissa Fleming
James Steuterman
Jesse and Alison Thompson
Jesse and Corrie Shumaker
Jessica Boeschel
John and Alexandra Gillies
John and Marilyn Redmond
John Perentesis and Stella Davies
Joseph and Karen Dentice
Justin and Shannon Route
Kanga Roof Austin
Karl and Leslie Slivka
Kelly Reash
Kevin and Marie Douglas
Lori Mulvaney
Luke Campbell
Mesbah Saheli
Michael Kempe
National Consumer Cooperative Bank
Nicholas and Pam Moran
Nicholas Usher and Alyssa Hawranko
Nicole Seinen
Ohio Valley Wine Beer Spirits
Patrick Escobar
Perkins-Prothro Foundation
Pioneer Natrual Resources
Renaissance Charitable Foundation Inc
Rochelle Nevitt
Ronald and Lora Ogden
Saxon Financial
Scott and Kristyn Niederhaus
Soar with Grace
SPSC Class 523
T.D. Data-Link Controls Inc.
Tiffany Kosch
Tim and Erin Slivka
Tom Riegel
United Way Worldwide
Whitley's Wishes
YourCause, Pacific Life

\$2,500-\$4,999

Adage Capital Management, L.P.
Adrienne Coe
Alan and Anne Posnack
Amazon.com
Anthony Carstens
Avelino and Martha Guevara
The Bank of America Charitable Gift Fund
Bank of New Hampshire
Bill and Joy Macklem
Blasius Kia

Bob Gerstemeier
The Brady Family Fund of the Goldman
Sachs Philanthropy Fund
Brandon and Jennifer Salazar
Brian and Carrie Bullard
Brian Bednarek
Brian Starck-Riley
Bryan and Amanda Kilgore
Bryan Moritz
Chris Patsilevas
Christina King
Connie Rau
Darryl and Julie Zavodny
Dave and Diana Schwoeppe
Demitrios Athanasiou
Dennis and Lorrie Brady
Don and Leanne Verhaalen
Douglas and Maria Cramer
Edward Jones
Elizabeth Weiner
FNTS Holdings LLC
The Fort Poker Room
Gavin and Fatema Baumgardner
GHG Timing LLC
Gustavo Gomez
H and B Packing Co., Inc
Heather Wilson
Henry and Althea Lee
Infintech
Ivette Duran
J. McLaughlin
James Dodson
John Davis
Jeff and Allison Thomas
Jeff Miner
Jeffrey Route
Jennifer McIsaac
John and Suellen Jessen
John Weidler and Christine Edwards
Jonathan Sprawka
JonLe Heating and Cooling
Joseph Geiger
JP Morgan Charitable Giving Fund
Just Because
Karen Schumacher
Kelsey Construction LLC
Kevin Faske
Kim Bledsoe
Kimberly Chen
Leisa Girard
Lisa Clemens
Lisa Thomas
Marcus Billingsley
Mark and Elizabeth Thornton
Matt Kahle
Matthew and Tricia Verhaalen
Matthew Hensler
Mecha Noodle Bar, LLC
Meierjohan Building Group, LLC
Michael and Carla Eng
Michael DeBlasio
Michael Larson
Michael Ricke
Mindi Albers
Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, LLC
Nadia's Performing Arts Centre
Nancy Hesko
The Natter Family Foundation
Network for Good
Ohio Eagle Distributing
Paul Mckeeon
Paulette Jennings
Paypal
Pete Morin
Pinnacle Hemp
Rhonda Nause
Ronald and Jane Midgley
Ruth and Lance Odum

Stacey Parrish
Stefano Dukcevic and Maria Lucrezia
Stephen and Kelly Hamilton
Suzanne Sunvison
Sylvia Rodriguez
TD Ameritrade Clearing
Teck Min Ho
Thomas and Diane Weinrich
Timothy Bratz
Trent and Cara Hummel
UBS
Union Pacific Charity Custodial Account
Union Pacific Railroad Company
Wanda Weniger
Wendy Doherty
Wes and Kimberly Ritchie
William and Karen Muehlbauer
YourCause, Standard Insurance Company

\$1,500-\$2,499

Aaron Offutt
Ace American Insurance Co
Al and Sherry Churilla
Alex MacDonald
Amanda Lanza
Amber Baynum
Amy's Ice Creams, Inc.
Andrew and Rachel Morbey
Anne McDaniel
Annunciation Catholic Academy
Anthony Diana
Anthony Sinders
Balefire Goods
Bamwx LLC
BASYS Processing, Inc
Bing and Ellen Yao
Bonnie Gierczak
BPOE #521
Brian Janssen
Broderick and Tanika Pierce
Bruce Hubbard
Bryan and Lindsay Kuck
Capital Ford, Inc.
Carmin Moutinho
Caroline Wicks
Cath Hammack
Cecilia Gieringer
Cecilia Holden
Chhavi Jauhari
Children's Dentistry
Chris and Karen Chiappinelli
Christopher and Effie Goodall
Combined Federal Campaign
The Community Oven Inc
Concetta Buscema
Daniel Carroll
Daryl and Bradley Thompson
David Bean
Dede Markel
Don Richardson
Donald and Lisa Lane
Doug Tracy
Douglas and Sherri Desserich
Edgewater Strategies
Edward Bruciati
Elizabeth Caltabiano
Emily Whitehead
Eric and Carrie Goetsch
F Street Lincoln Center LLC
Fifth Generation, Inc
Gabriel Staub
Garrett Hickey
Greg Cowan
Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce
Harder Funeral Service, Inc
Henry Isefuku

Hulsbosch Dairy Farm
Indeco Sales, Inc
Jay and Kaylah Bendes
Jeff and Sheila Wyatt
Jeremy and Emily Ronnebaum
Jerry and Barbara Milligan
Jim and Melanie Denholm
Jim Skaggs
John Getgey
Joseph O'Neill
Joshua and Maria Schoonover
Kathy Dunlap
Kelly Lambeth
Kendra Scott LLC
Kenneth Popovec
Kimberly Monti
Kimberly Ritchie
KPMG's Community Giving Campaign
Kroger Community Rewards
Kush Shah
Laura Harris
Lauren Ford
Lily Larue Foundation, Inc
Lisa Sexton & Susan Doyle
Marguerite McKean
Martyn and Lynne Redgrave
Mary Ann Llanes
Matthew Baumann
Matthew Borto
Matthew Hare
Matthew Pannell
Melissa Green
Mia Whalley
Michael and Barbara Chatron
Michael Gieringer
Nabila Hafez
Nelsson and Carrina Waneka
North Texas Power Wash
Paul Castellana
Paul Lafferty
Peter and Carolyn Crosby
Philip and Melanie Maguire
Price Municipal Corp
Raymond James Global Account
Reid and Brenda Huckle
Richard and Bonnie Penfold
Robert and Paula Kempe
Russ and Angie Walter
Somerset Federal Credit Union
Steven Johns
Stratford School, Inc
Sylvan Feldstein
Tamara Heller
Tammie Harrison
Ted Vick
Tim and Christy Bitto
Tony and Melissa Saladonis
Trae Dunlap
Tri City National Bank
UBS Financial Services
United Way of Benton and Franklin Counties
US Bank Foundation Employee
Matching Gift Program
Vanguard Charitable
Victor Nigro Jr
Vince Robinette
Virginia and Larry Li
Voshte Gustafson
Warrior Kids Foundation
Wes Wallace
Wilma Wittrock
YourCause, Bread Financial
YourCause, Chevron Matching
Employee Funds
YourCause, Farm Credit Services of America
YourCause, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
Zorn Compressor and Equipment Inc

OVER \$30.5 MILLION* IN RESEARCH AND SUPPORT FUNDED

See grants funded prior to 2021 at theucresstartsnow.org/grants

2022-2023 CYCLE

Cincinnati Children's Hospital: \$50,000
University Medicine Gottingen: \$50,000
Funding of PBTCF 2023: \$25,000
And more going through approval

2021-2022 CYCLE

University of Queensland Diamantina Institute: \$100,000
Erasmus University Medical Center: \$432,354

Cincinnati Children's Hospital: \$60,000
Cincinnati Children's Hospital: \$153,867*
Hunter Medical Research Institute: \$232,932*
Sonasense: \$198,436*
UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh: \$100,000*
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago: \$100,000*
The Hospital for Sick Kids (SickKids): \$100,000*
University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center: \$100,000*
Hunter Medical Research Institute: \$200,000*

Institute of Cancer Research: \$501,183*
Cincinnati Children's Hospital: \$50,000
SIOPe DIPG/DMG Registry: \$779,018*
CONNECT Consortium/Nationwide Children's Hospital: \$1,370,177
Pediatric Brain Tumor Consortium Foundation: \$25,000

* Denotes grants funded with our DIPG/DMG Collaborative partners. All numbers reflect financial data accurate at time of print.

CONNOR'S "CURE"SADE AGAINST CANCER



Connor George is a spunky little boy who sees magic in every part of his life. He looks at the world with absolute joy and an open heart. Much of Connor's young life was spent in the hospital when he was diagnosed with medulloblastoma. After his diagnosis, his mother Brooke began researching for information, education, and organizations that specialized in pediatric brain cancer leading her to discover The Cure Starts Now. After months of research, Brooke determined The Cure Starts Now's mission was the revolutionary pathway to funding pediatric brain cancer research.

"I loved the fact that The Cure Starts Now is made up of families affected by pediatric brain cancer and are all fighting together for our children."

— Brooke George

Medulloblastoma is a fast-growing primary central nervous system tumor. It usually appears as a solid mass in the cerebellum. As a common malignant brain tumor predominantly found in children under the age of ten, aggressive subgroups of medulloblastoma can be resistant to treatment, fitting the criteria for Homerun applications. "While medulloblastoma has a better prognosis than DIPG/DMG, survival does not come without challenges," Brooke stated. Thanks to recent research, DIPG and medulloblastoma have greater similarities than previously believed.

Connor received his diagnosis when he was two years old. Within one month, he underwent seven surgeries before he was able to begin his required treatment. Once cleared, he began an eight-month journey with chemotherapy. Connor relapsed three short months after completing treatment, requiring additional surgeries and six weeks of proton radiation. Despite spending most of his childhood in the hospital, Connor never complained.

Separation from his siblings during treatment took a toll on Connor, though they tried to visit when able. On a trip to the zoo with his mom, Connor picked out stuffed animals for himself and his siblings who were back home, out of state. Brooke said she would buy a toy just for him. He quickly

returned the toy to the shelf and replied, "I don't want to get anything if no one else does." Connor's big heart and capacity for kindness continue to teach his family the value of time and the power of love.

"Some people shy away from the cancer world after treatment finishes but I threw myself in. I wanted to turn my pain into purpose."

— Brooke George

Brooke's priorities began to change after Connor's first completed treatment. A passion began to take hold of her heart to advocate for childhood cancer awareness. She reached out to The Cure Starts Now and asked to start the first North Dakota Chapter, Connor's CUREsaders.



The George family, from left to right: Colton, Brooke, Lainey, Connor, Chris, and Harper.

"Pediatric brain cancer is a monster. A relentless, abusive, life-destroying bully. And if we can stop cancer in its tracks by first defeating the biggest enemy, that being pediatric brain cancer, then who wouldn't want to support that?"

— Brooke George

Now, at age 5, Connor has no evidence of disease status. With every new experience, Connor consistently views the world as a magical place. He is finally able to experience school, summers, and events that he loves. His family celebrates all of the big and small wins every day. The George family also remains humble. Quick to cry and quicker to worry, the family lives in a state of constant fear of the unknown. Anxiety builds every four months as they prepare for his scans, and they hope the cancer remains at bay. They are committed to advocating for childhood brain cancer and funding essential research until the cure is discovered. Only now, they have a support system of hundreds of The Cure Starts Now families to help them in their journey.

To donate go to donate2csn.org/nd-connors-uresaders

SUPPORT IN THE SMOKIES: DIPG/DMG MOM'S RETREAT

This year's DIPG/DMG Mom's Retreat welcomed over 50 attendees from all over the nation to gather in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, for a relaxing weekend in the mountains. The biggest draw to this retreat isn't the fresh mountain air or the theatrical pirate show in Pigeon Forge, but the opportunity to meet women face-to-face who have once brought comfort and reassurance through a computer screen.

"This is a "club" I never wanted to be in, and that I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy. But it is also full of the strongest and most badass women I know."

– DeeDee Acevedo, Mom of DIPG Angel Hailey



All attendees to the 2023 DIPG/DMG Mom's Retreat in Gatlinburg, Tennessee

Families often feel isolated and alone during this journey. Being in the comfort and safety of other mothers who know the realities of the DIPG/DMG journey allows for a space of reflection and healing. The Cure Starts Now was proud to sponsor a retreat that brings women together to commune in nature and build strong relationships with one another.

"My grief and pain obviously are still there and I don't know if it will ever go away. But this weekend gave me some relief. I smiled more, and actually feel different."

– Kim Bragdon, Mom of DIPG Angel Maya

This fall, a similar retreat welcomed fathers of the brain cancer community to West Virginia. This opportunity allowed fathers to connect and recharge in the mountains.

[Learn more or become a sponsor at retreat.dipgevents.org](https://retreat.dipgevents.org)

TEXAS ESPORTS CLUB IS NERFING CANCER

Belle Santos loved Pokémon! The love for the cartoon quickly turned her dad, Adam Santos, into a Pokémon competitor. Gaming always brought him joy and then became a bonding activity with his daughter Belle during her battle with DIPG.



Adam and Belle playing against the winner of the Big Brave Beebes Cup in November 2021.

Since Belle's passing in 2021, Santos has begun teaching a competitive esports club after school. As a math teacher at ASEA Prep, he recognized the need to give students who like to game an opportunity to learn

team-building skills after school. He focuses on teaching effective communication, teamwork, and what it means to be a good digital citizen. "These are life skills that kids would not normally learn playing video games on their own at home," Santos noted. The club culminated to the end of the year live stream for Nerf Cancer. The fundraiser also allowed Santos to teach his students about DIPG and share Belle's story.

"It was a great way to end the school year, a streaming party where they got to apply all the knowledge they learned throughout the year and help raise money for a good cause. The kids did all of the work and it only cost me pizza."

– Adam Santos



During the stream, the students called family members and friends to ask them to log on, watch, and donate. Within the first three hours of the stream, the students reached their goal of \$5,000. By the end of the 8-hour stream, they raised \$9,000!

"Every dollar gets us closer to defeating the deadliest childhood cancer."

– Adam Santos

The Nerf Cancer event allowed Santos to inspire students to turn hobbies into passions while practicing the art of good digital citizenship. The group is already looking forward to an even bigger year in 2024. We are proud to welcome the Santos family to The Cure Starts Now as the new Texas (Big Brave Beebes) Chapter.

[Learn more about Nerf Cancer at NerfCancer.org](https://NerfCancer.org)



COLLABORATION IN CONNECTICUT

On May 6th, hundreds gathered at Lighthouse Park in New Haven, Connecticut, for the 2nd annual Connecticut Blast Cancer Walk. The Blast was inspired by a collaboration between two Connecticut Chapters: the Connecticut Chapter, directed by Robyn Staub in honor of Lea Doran, and the Connecticut (Milford) Chapter, directed by Stacey Arisian in honor of Serena Mulligan.



OVER \$98,300 RAISED

“Robyn suggested that our two chapters team up for the walk last year. After that, she thought that since we knew several families in CT affected by pediatric brain cancers like DIPG, medulloblastoma, and DMG, we could ask them if they would like to participate.”
 – Stacey Arisian



From left to right: Kristen Arisian, Emma Pfeifer, Gabby Staub, Molly Fogle, Robyn Staub, Christy Drinnen, Stacey Arisian, and Jeremy Staub

Incredibly, 10 additional local families, familiar with the pain of a brain cancer diagnosis, joined The Blast. The families of Mia, Avery, Audrey, Kiera, Finley, Nina, Trenton, Maven, Luca, and Wesley participated by rounding up their friends and family in preparation for the occasion. A banner with a photo of each child was held by the family and friends during the opening remarks before the

beginning of the walk. Avery, Luca, and Mia were present at The Blast and were welcomed with a celebratory round of applause and unwavering support.

In the weeks before the event, chapter directors Robyn and Stacey raised their goal by more than \$25,000 to keep up with donations. Over 600 registered walkers gathered to walk in honor of a specific child or in honor of all children affected by pediatric



The Cure Starts Now staff members, Emma Pfeifer (left), Christy Drinnen (right), and Molly Fogle (not pictured) attend the event to provide help, support, and sell TCSN gear.

brain cancer. “Blasters” leisurely strolled a 1.2-mile loop and were encouraged to continue at their discretion or peruse the raffle baskets and donation giveaways. Kids and teens appreciated the scavenger hunt, face painting, tattoo station, and crafts table, keeping them entertained while on the course. While it was important to Robyn and Stacey that the event was fun, they also wanted to emphasize why they were gathered. The sister of 11-year-old Avery, who has been battling cancer for over 21 months, helped bring the importance of the event to the crowd.

“Lexi delivered a beautiful tribute to her little sister, Avery, her hero. That made each of us love these kids and their siblings even more.”
 – Stacey Arisian

Donations poured in from friends, families, sponsors, and acquaintances known to one of the 12 families, along with kind-hearted strangers sympathetic to the cause. In pooling their resources and supporter base, the event raised over \$100,000 for pediatric brain cancer research. The event was an overwhelming success. We are looking forward to what they are going to accomplish next year!

Email_events@thecurestartsnow.org to learn more or host a Blast Cancer Walk in your city. 📍



Families stand with their child's banner, showing the faces of the kids the Blast Cancer Walk attendees are honoring.

2023 FUNDRAISING EVENTS: OVER 120 EVENTS WORLDWIDE!





International Headquarters
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 SINCE 2007,
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- FOSTERED A NETWORK OF OVER 100 BRAIN TUMOR EXPERTS**
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