

**kids
candidly**

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK, TRANSFORMING
THE LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH CANCER

25
YEARS
+you | **kids
cancer care**

FALL 2020 ISSUE

kidscancercare.ab.ca



**YOU ARE INSPIRING
HOPE IN FAMILIES**

CEO message



Unique Perspectives Photography

25 YEARS + YOU Words cannot express the gratitude I feel, looking over the last eight months. We put out a desperate plea for help and you responded with generosity and compassion.

Thanks to special one-time COVID-19 funding from the Calgary Foundation, the federal and provincial governments, generous anonymous donors and YOU, we are surviving 2020.

This issue of Kids Candidly illustrates some of the many pivots your generosity made possible this year.

As a smaller charity, we were able to respond nimbly, but it wasn't without heartache. We lost precious staff. We lost significant donors and partners. We lost sleep, our patience, and sometimes our tempers, but we kept moving forward. And thankfully you moved right along with us.

Thank you! I wish you a joyous Christmas season filled with love and peace.

Christine McIver, M.S.M., LLD (Hon), CFRE
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

PS. Please take a moment to read our Christmas appeal with the story of my son Derek, who was diagnosed with a brain cancer on Christmas Eve in 1986. Derek is the inspiration behind our work at Kids Cancer Care and the reason I get up every morning ready to fight this disease. Please give generously.

community built by you

You are giving Savannah a caring community

"The only visitors she had for six months were her parents. That was tough on her mental state" – Amy

When Savannah started to complain of shortness of breath, her parents Amy and Dave Button took her to South Calgary Health Centre.

It wasn't long before she was transferred to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at the Alberta Children's Hospital. A CT scan revealed a large mass in her chest, wrapping around her airways. That evening, she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, a type of blood cancer.

Within days, Savannah's breathing had deteriorated so much, they sent her to the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton, where an ECMO* machine was waiting should she need it. After two weeks of radiation and chemotherapy, the mass had shrunk enough for her to resume treatment in Calgary.

Savannah underwent six months of intense chemotherapy, where she was in-hospital for up to 50 days at a time.

"We were finally back home at the Alberta Children's Hospital and the pandemic hit...no one could visit." says Amy. The isolation and loneliness were almost unbearable.

Gradually, after treatment, Savannah grew more independent again and started telling her parents she wanted to meet other kids with cancer.

Thanks to you, this fall, Savannah was able to meet other teens through our PEER** exercise program.

Recognizing the mental health benefits of social activity, our PEER coordinator

Dr. Carolina Chamorro Vina (PhD), began supplementing our online exercise sessions with physically distanced outdoor activities.

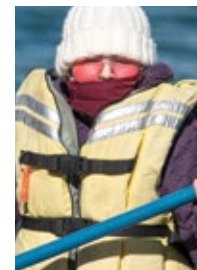
To ensure the canoe trip fulfilled government COVID-19 protocols, Carolina consulted with our nursing manager, who conducted health screening at the event.

Savannah enjoyed it so much, she also joined our online PEER sessions. "She loves PEER," says Amy. "She has something to look forward to every week. She really likes listening to the other teens share their cancer stories."

With your support, Savannah is already seeing the benefits of PEER exercise: "Physically, she is more balanced and her cardio and endurance are also improving," says Mom.

But it's the social and emotional benefits that are really improving her well-being: "Her spirits have improved so much," says Amy. "It's so important for these kids to interact in a safe environment, where everyone understands because they've all been there."

With plans for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing this winter, thanks to you, our PEER program is giving teens like Savannah lots to look forward to.



Thank you to the Flames Foundation and other generous donors for supporting our PEER exercise program! You are improving the health and well-being of kids isolated by cancer. ■



Unique Perspectives Photography

Savannah (front) and her brother Dominic.

*An ECMO is a heart-lung bypass system that circulates blood through an artificial lung back into the patient's bloodstream.

**Pediatric Cancer Patients and Survivors Engaging in Exercise for Recovery.

camp

hope inspired by you

You are spreading hope and lifting spirits

“Waving goodbye to smiling parents and paint-splattered children — some already fast asleep in the car — was a wonderful reminder of the importance of spreading hope and lifting spirits.” – Leighana

When Giselle was diagnosed with a rare cancer* as a four-year-old, her father Arnaldo had just returned to work in the oilfield as a petroleum engineer. Giselle had recently started kindergarten and her big sister Princess was in grade one.

Dad would work 20 days in the field and return home for 10. Meanwhile Mom juggled life at home — hospital visits, medical appointments, household duties, school and extracurricular activities.

New to Canada, Arnaldo and Yazmin Pimienta had no family to turn to, and after an eight-month stretch of unemployment, they were in no position to turn down a job.

“I treated it like it was a big adventure or space odyssey,” says Yazmin, recalling how she and Giselle re-imagined the high-tech medical equipment as a backdrop for their epic mission. “I acted like nothing unusual was happening, but on the inside, I would close my bedroom door and cry. Then I would wipe the tears from my face and come back out with the biggest smile on my face.”

Thanks to you, early in Giselle’s cancer journey, the Pimientas found a second family in Kids Cancer Care. The girls went to camp in 2010 and have never missed a summer since. That is until COVID-19 hit and forced the cancellation of summer camps.

Thankfully, you were here once more, helping families navigate these uncertain times.

While families are benefitting from our online programs, a survey conducted last spring revealed that they were missing a connection to other families. With your generous support, we were able to adapt and respond to their needs.

In early October, Camp Kindle hosted 64 kids and parents at our first COVID-adapted, in-person camp program. With the health and well-being of our community foremost in mind, Leighana Shockey and her team at Camp Kindle worked with our nursing manager to ensure the event complied with government COVID-19 protocols.

Situated on 160 acres, Camp Kindle offers ample space for physical distancing. Families easily stayed within their family cohorts as they moved through the outdoor activity stations.

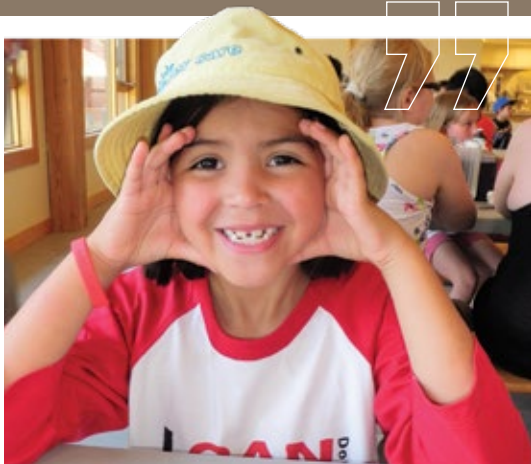
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Giselle during chemotherapy showed courage.

Photo courtesy of the Pimienta family

“The girls love Camp Kindle! It is the only place I let my daughters go for a long time. It’s the only place I trust.” — Yazmin



Unique Perspectives Photography



Giselle at Camp Kindle in the summer of 2012 (left) and in October of 2020.

* Giselle was diagnosed with Langerhans cell histiocytosis, a disorder where an excess of immune system cells called Langerhans cells build up in the body. Langerhans cells help regulate the immune system. After surgery and a year of chemotherapy, Giselle went into remission and has been cancer-free for six years.

how to help

5 ways you can help us

rebuild young lives during COVID and beyond



BE A MONTHLY DONOR

For the price of a coffee, your monthly gift will add up over time and make a **lasting impact** in the lives of children with cancer.

MAKE A ONE-TIME GIFT

Your gift will help ensure we're here to **help kids in these uncertain times.**

FUNDRAISE ONLINE

Start an online fundraising event to help kids **living in fear of what COVID-19** could do to their fragile health.

BE BRAVE

Join our **online Big Brave event** and cut, colour or shave your lid for a kid, while raising funds for essential online and COVID-adapted programs.

CELEBRATE

Large social gatherings may be off limits, but you can still celebrate in style. **Dedicate your birthday or milestone** to Kids Cancer Care and show children living in isolation they're not alone.

Donate, register or learn more at kidscancercare.ab.ca today.

camp

Cont. from page 3

Wearing bright smiles beneath neat-fitting face masks, the families played Giant Snakes and Ladders, where they were the game pieces. They built boats and raced them down Silver Creek. They played laser tag in the forest, roasted marshmallows for s'mores and carved pumpkins for Halloween.

Spending a day at Camp Kindle means the world to families like the Pimientas: "The girls love Camp Kindle! It is the only place I let my daughters go for a long time. It's the only place I trust. They are so happy and free at Camp Kindle. It's their magic place."

As with many of our families, the Pimientas have opted to keep their kids home for online learning. They aren't sure how Giselle's immune system* would react to COVID-19. The forced isolation is an eerie reminder of another frightening time.

Thank you! You are lifting spirits by providing a safe place for families to escape the isolation of cancer and COVID-19. 🍀



The Pimienta family at Camp Kindle, earlier this fall.

25 YEARS +you kids cancer care

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