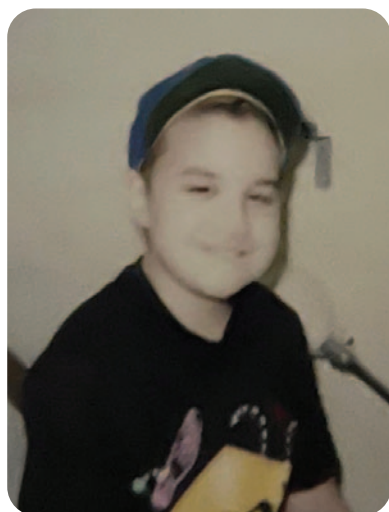




CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SERVICE TO NJ FAMILIES! *Thanks to YOU! In this issue we feature several families from the early days of ECF's existence. "Where are they now?" READ TO FIND OUT!*



BILL: DEFYING THE ODDS

IN 1989, Bill was seven years old and living a "normal" life with his parents and two older sisters. Over Christmas break, while staying with his grandmother, Bill became seriously ill. He remembers it was

New Year's Eve when an MRI revealed a brain tumor the size of two fists. What followed was surgery (which could only safely remove one fifth of the tumor) and six months of radiation, six days a week.

The radiation to his brain required his head to be strapped to the table with what Bill calls a "Michael Myers" mask. He attributes his claustrophobia to this experience. Though harrowing, the treatment shrunk the tumor to the size of a walnut, which remains in his brain three decades later. *"They took out the brain and left the tumor,"* Bill jokes.

He had to live carefully for a long time, avoiding contact sports, difficult for a rambunctious young boy. His parents worried about his every move. Their ECF caseworker helped calm their fears. *"My family would not be where they are now without ECF,"* said Bill. *"They gave us physical things like monthly groceries and holiday gifts but also care and concern."* Bill's mom became a committed volunteer, running multiple events over many years. *"ECF was her passion,"* said Bill.

When Bill was in treatment, his doctors told the family their son might be intellectually challenged, might not live to 16, and would never have kids. He contradicted all of these dire predictions. Bill is now 41, a college graduate, and married with two daughters ages 11 and 14. He lives in Lancaster, PA

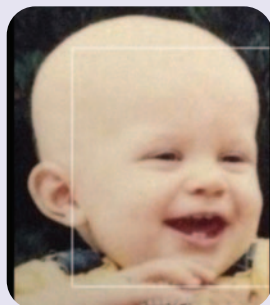
and loves his job teaching STEM and computers to kids in kindergarten to 8th grade.

His life has not been free of challenges though. Right before the pandemic, he was in the middle of teaching and suffered a seizure. Doctors found a tumor on the other side of his brain that fortunately was not cancerous (and apparently unrelated to his childhood tumor). They removed the growth, and he is back to his healthy self, though on lifelong medication. He said the experience was different than when he was a kid. *"It was an eye opener. I have more to lose now, but also more to be grateful for."*

Giving back also means more to him now. He has always volunteered—inspired by his mom and her selflessness. He says he is like a Swiss army knife. *"With all that I went through, I will do anything if someone needs help."*



JOE: FROM CANCER PATIENT TO DOCTOR



JOE'S LIFE HAS BEEN QUITE A JOURNEY. He went from being a baby with cancer to becoming an orthopedic oncologist. "I always had a feeling to give back and work with kids," Joe says. "My calling is orthopedic surgery."

Joe was just turning five months old when he was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a cancer of the nerve tissue common in children. For over a year, he endured surgery, countless tests and months of chemotherapy. His mom had to give up her job to care for Joey, and then his dad was laid off and had to take a lower paying position. This West Orange, NJ family suffered extreme financial hardship.

ECF sent a caseworker who tended to this family's emotional and material needs. "ECF was a light at the end of the tunnel," said Joe. "They embraced us within a united community of people fighting against cancer. This had a profound impact on my family." Fortunately, Joe went into remission at age two. At four years old he started playing hockey, which became a lifelong love. Into adulthood, he remained active and ambitious, despite long term effects of the chemo including cardiac issues and hearing loss.

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KEITH: LIVING LIFE IN THE MOMENT



IN 1983, the year ECF was founded, 13 year-old Keith was diagnosed with stage four Hodgkin's Lymphoma. His family was told his chances for survival were slim. The yearlong treatment plan ended up lasting almost two because his blood counts often were too low to handle the rigors of chemo..

The chemo worked, and for a while Keith was doing great, back in school and "breathing fresh air and loving every minute of it." But a relapse of his cancer proved to be an even tougher battle. Keith remembers approaching the second time around with a much better attitude. "My theory was that I had looked death in the eye once before, so I wouldn't have a problem doing it again."

He beat cancer again, finishing high school and graduating college with an engineering degree, despite missing all of 8th grade, part of 9th and half of 11th due to his treatment. "It

was a hard five years, but I've gone on to live a life I didn't think was possible—having a great family, a great wife, three kids and a storybook career," said Keith. "If I had the opportunity to look forward at age 13 and see that I went on to live this amazing life, I would have been happy to have known that!"

Keith was one of the first families helped by ECF. His family struggled financially during his years of cancer. ECF paid for expensive hospital parking, and Keith remembers that the caseworker's visits to his house had a calming effect on his mom. "It was an enlightening demonstration of how good people really are," said Keith. "I am forever grateful to ECF, as well as family, friends and even strangers who helped me and my family through that difficult time."

Though Keith doesn't "recommend anyone have childhood cancer," he says it instilled lessons in him that are still beneficial in his life. "It helped me learn how to prioritize what is critical and what isn't." He says it made him tremendously driven, resilient and a "live in the moment kind of person." His experience surviving cancer proved useful when a car accident 18 months ago left him a quadriplegic.

Even now, he says "life can become normal again - whatever that means." Keith sees the glass half full. "Surviving cancer and catastrophic injury is not an experience you will have a fond memory of, but as strange as it sounds, someday you are able to look back at it in a positive light. It's a hell of a character builder."



NANCY: MY JOURNEY WITH ECF

MY NAME IS NANCY and I wanted to share my ECF story with you from long ago:

In 1984 my youngest daughter Danielle was diagnosed with leukemia. I was a single parent with three children under 6 years old.



One day a lady named Joanne Bigley called me and explained that she worked with ECF and wanted to help us. I patiently listened and then politely told her that I had no idea what I needed and had no time to meet with

her. She called several more times and finally came to my home in Teaneck. After hearing about our day to day struggles and how even meal prep was exhausting, she asked about the kids' favorite foods. We said our goodbyes with her promising to be in touch.

A few days later, after a long grueling day of hospital testing, I found an enormous box at my doorstep. Inside was a giant microwave with a note from Joanne saying she hoped this would make meal prep a little faster. I cried for hours just knowing that someone out there cared enough to do something for us. I was so alone in my life trying to hold it together to navigate this new cancer world and still provide for my other two children. This random act of kindness brought Joanne and I close for the next year until

my daughter passed away. Danielle was even ECF's first poster child after Emmanuel. Almost 40 years later, I still have that poster. I attended several charity events after her death and went on to become a hospice volunteer for a while.

I have never forgotten ECF and their unique way of helping. I thought about them from time to time and recently Googled them. I was delighted to see they are still thriving and helping families. Imagine my surprise when I read the blurb on Google about ECF's beginnings, and there in front of my eyes was a description of a young mother who had no time to speak with them. They bought her a microwave to help out!! That mother was ME, and once again almost 40 years later I cried.

I live in Butler, NJ now and my other two children are grown and have blessed me with two grandchildren. Thank you ECF for all that you do.



DAVID: IN HIS OWN WORDS

I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER

IN MAY 1997, approximately one month from my seventh birthday. I received 38 months of chemo, including 22 spinal tap treatments and 18 bone marrow aspirations. I don't remember much about side effects, except after losing my hair it grew back darker, and my eye color changed. My family was so supportive, and I share a very special bond with my parents and siblings. I have always had a very unique bond with my mom due to her being my primary caretaker during the cancer years. She's always been a rock to count on and rely upon.

ECF always made sure holidays were fun and brought together a great community of families affected by cancer to refocus on living outside of treatments and hospital visits. They made childhood feel more normal and even special.

As a kid I loved golf, as it was the most active outdoor activity I was allowed to participate in. My grandfather got me into the game, and one of the earliest dreams I can remember was becoming a golfer on the PGA Tour. Later I became very active with theater, music and karate, and I thought I'd become a famous martial artist or musician.

However, I had some serious life moments that altered my path over the last decade, from losing my grandfather and my beloved dog, to pursuing a transition from theater to film to chasing dreams of entrepreneurship. From all this change I came full circle back to pursuing a career in golf. Currently I work as a Head Golf Professional at Cranbury Golf Club, and I'm in pursuit of my PGA membership. Working in the business of golf has been an amazing focus in my life. My inner child is very happy.

To be honest, my experience with cancer has had interesting effects throughout my development. Peers don't always have the same perspective of someone who has gone through a life-threatening disease. I find I interact better with people 25 years my senior, which makes golf an excellent environment as most people who play are much older than myself. My advice to kids going through cancer is to keep strong. Enjoy all things you CAN do! Have faith that all will be well and all will be well.



ECF's first newsletter!
ECF's original logo
was titled "A gift from
the heart."

upcomingEVENTS

9TH ANNUAL TRICKY TRAY FUNDRAISER

May 20, 2023

12TH ANNUAL CHARITY BASH

June 14, 2023

CENTRAL REGION GOLF OUTING

July 17, 2023

DENNIS DROHAN MEMORIAL GOLF OUTING

September 29, 2023

BOCCE TOURNAMENT

October 1, 2023

SOUTHERN REGION GOLF OUTING

October 16, 2023

CRYSTAL GALA

March 2, 2024

ECF IS GRATEFUL TO THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS AND CORPORATIONS THAT PROVIDED RECENT GRANT SUPPORT:

Abundant Life Reformed Church
ACME
Bastazo, Inc
Dennis Drohan Memorial Golf Outing
Exelon
First Energy Foundation
Greater Bergen Realtors Care Foundation
Hyde and Watson Foundation
Independent Order of Odd Fellows
International Paper Foundation
JJC Memorial Golf Outing
Johnson & Johnson Family Companies
Merrick Family Foundation
New Jersey Association of Student Councils
Rite Aid Foundation
Robert & Joan Dircks Foundation
Select Equity Group Foundation
St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church of Ridgewood
The Arnold A. Schwartz Foundation
The Ellis Family Charitable Foundation
The Mariner Foundation
United Way of Gloucester County
Wall Wrestling Booster Club
Walmart Foundation

Thank You!

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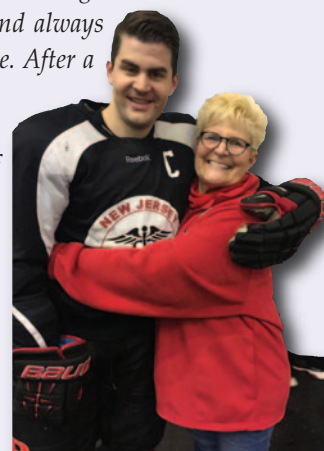


JOE: FROM CANCER PATIENT TO DOCTOR

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At one point during their ordeal, Eileen wrote to ECF: "You guys are the greatest. I can't wait 'til we're back on our feet again so we can help you out. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts." And she did just that, getting involved with events and running fundraisers on ECF's behalf.

Like his mom, Joe dreamed of giving back. "As I got older, I found my doctors to be role models and always dreamed of a way to give back to others like me. After a long journey, I've completed medical school and orthopedic surgery training at Rutgers University. Now, I am finishing my final year of a fellowship in orthopedic oncology at the University of Chicago, performing surgery for patients with cancer in the bones and muscles. I feel blessed to be able to do this and look forward to continuing to give back by caring for and comforting patients and their families afflicted with cancer."



“To me, ECF represents one of the rainbows in this world. In all that downpour, when it seemed like the rain would never stop, and I felt overwhelmed by the storm, ECF was the ark which helped provide food, shelter, and most of all, someone to listen and understand.”

—ECF MOM



We are sincerely grateful to be the chosen State Charity of the New Jersey Federation of Women's Clubs that have been offering such generous time and support.