



Dancing and Singing in the Hospital



CAIRO IS ALWAYS SMILING!

CAIRO was diagnosed with cancer at 4 months old, right in the middle of the pandemic. His parents had noticed a bump on his stomach and his rib cage began protruding. Their pediatrician dismissed their concerns, but they sought a second opinion. As soon as that doctor lifted Cairo's shirt, he knew something was wrong and sent them for further tests. Imaging found masses in his stomach, and Cairo and his mom were sent to the hospital for 10 days of testing (his dad was not allowed to join them because of Covid). During an x-ray, Cairo's mom Nataly watched the technician's face drop. They found multiple lesions on both his kidneys—precancerous tumors that would have caused significant problems if not detected so early.

Cairo endured 13 rounds of chemo. Despite losing his hair and facing countless painful needle sticks, Cairo never cried, always dancing and singing Blue's Clues songs in the hospital. But his mom struggled, being alone at Cairo's bedside from morning to night, worrying about her son. Cairo's family also struggled financially. Mom lost her job during the pandemic and surviving on one salary was difficult.

Because of your support, ECF was able to help the family pay their rent and provided gift cards and deliveries of groceries.

“ECF gave us so much more than that,” Nataly said. “There were Christmas and birthday gifts and help with the transition to real life after so much time in the hospital.”



NATALY AND CAIRO, LAUGHING AS USUAL.

Cairo is now two and a half years old and finished with treatment. He didn't even flinch when the doctors removed his chemo port. Cairo loves music, dancing and for his parents to read him Pete the Cat books. He knows his ABCs, his numbers to 20, and all the basic colors and shapes. Though the lesions on his lungs are still there, the chemo stopped their growth. His kidneys are working fine, so the doctors are just monitoring him closely. His mom has anxiety for the whole month leading up to his regular scans. But Cairo looks forward to seeing the doctors and nurses. *“When he goes to the hospital now, he isn't scared,”* said Nataly, who is thrilled to have him home with the family.



THE POWER OF YOUR KINDNESS

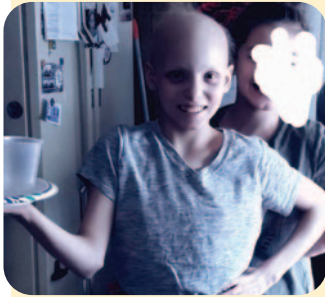
MAGGIE WAS 10 AND CLOSE TO BECOMING A BLACK BELT IN KARATE when she was diagnosed with leukemia. What started as a sprained wrist that wouldn't get better spiraled into a sudden cancer diagnosis a month before she was to begin middle school. *"I literally felt my eyes roll back and went into shock,"* said Maggie's mom Stephanie, when the doctors told her the terrible news.

Maggie's chemo started immediately. Just as immediately, her kidneys started to fail from the toxic chemicals, landing her in the ICU. Maggie ended up in the hospital for 180 days—6 rounds of chemo causing every possible side effect. Maggie was a trouper, and her mom and dad were by her side through the whole ordeal. But she required another two years of treatment, which included 33 painful spinal taps.

"Maggie's treatment was absolutely horrific," said her mom. *"I cut her long blonde hair off in the hospital room, and what I witnessed her go through - I will never forget how sick she got and how fast it happened."* Maggie missed a lot of school, but on good days she was happy to go, though classes turned virtual due to Covid just as Maggie was finishing treatment. *"She was never afraid to be herself, and was so graceful doing so,"* said her mom.

Regardless of how she felt or what she was going through, Maggie always thought of other kids with cancer and worked to brighten their spirits. Over the past couple of years, Maggie ran a Play-Doh drive and a pediatric PJ drive where she collected over 500 pairs. Maggie also ran a campaign she called Pillowcases for Happy Faces where she collected fun pillowcases to give kids something to make them smile during chemo.

Fortunately, Maggie is now thriving and living her life with the support of her friends. The 16 year old enjoys being in school and loves music (which she finds therapeutic), trips to the mall, and going to the movies. Maggie's mom says she will never forget the kindness of her ECF caseworker during the darkest parts of her daughter's treatment. The caseworker continues to be the family's guide and lifeline, a resource made possible by kind people like YOU.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW? TIFFANY

TIFFANY DIDN'T THINK SHE COULD BE A MOM because of all the chemotherapy she went through as a child. Her father remembers the doctor telling them how low her chances were of conceiving. But despite several miscarriages and other complications, Tiffany now has three children! Her oldest is almost at the age when Tiffany was diagnosed with leukemia.

She was 15 years old, in her first year of high school. She endured two years of chemo, and because of the side effects, Tiffany was home schooled until she graduated. She lost her hair twice and suffered from memory loss (which still plagues her). Her hip joints ultimately collapsed due to bone deterioration from the chemo, forcing her to have a hip replacement at 17. She mostly kept to herself, only hanging out with close friends.

It was tough on her parents, older sister and younger twin brothers. Her dad, Pedro, took her to most appointments because his work schedule as a chef was more flexible than her mom's. *"What she went through was so tough,"* he said. When they would give her a spinal tap, her dad would cry and say *"do that to me, not her."* The family took it step by step.

In an odd twist of fate, the family lived across the street from ECF's Eastern Regional Center in Wall, NJ. *"I knew it was there, but I never knew we would need it,"* Pedro said. *"God put us in ECF's way."* Though Pedro never stopped working, the family

still struggled financially. ECF helped with mortgage payments, grocery deliveries, and guidance with medical issues. *"ECF made me feel less stressed and not alone,"* Pedro said. ECF Executive Director Joann Passantino, then the Eastern Regional Director, remembers Pedro always running across the street to help whenever he saw her carrying heavy bags or boxes into the office. *"Even before ECF was assisting his family, he would pop in just to say hi or Happy Mother's Day or offer to help deliver groceries to families,"* said Joann.

Tiffany is now 33. She says that a lot of her memory is a blur, but her continued hip pain is a daily reminder of what she went through. She is now in school for medical billing. Her experiences inspired her to want to do something in the medical field. *"If you see her now, you'd have no idea she went through so much,"* her dad says. *"She is so beautiful."*



TIFFANY IS NOW A MOM AND DOING GREAT!



TIFFANY AND HER MOM DURING TREATMENT

MY SON'S STRENGTH CARRIES ME THROUGH THIS JOURNEY

Cameron was diagnosed with neuroblastoma right before his 4th birthday. Within days he was admitted to the hospital for surgery.

Over the past five years, Cameron has been treated with numerous chemotherapies, various radiation treatments, a stem cell rescue, and participated in clinical trials. While they have all been helpful, nothing has been successful in completely curing the disease. His mom, Kesha, says the only good thing about their cancer journey has been *"the kind, loving and generous people we've met along the way."* She said the other families in the hospital, the nurses and doctors, the foundations, and donors like you *"are angels on earth, and we are so very thankful."*



The journey for the family of five—Kesha, Cameron, dad Reggie and twins Christian and Camille—has been arduous. Cameron has dealt with numerous hospital stays, many months of missed school, and being forced to miss opportunities for fun activities and sports enjoyed by other kids his age. *"But through it all he remains positive and strong,"* says Kesha. *"We always are in awe of the strength and resilience he has shown along this journey."*



CAMERON IS NOW PROUDLY IN SCHOOL AFTER SO MUCH TIME IN THE HOSPITAL

Cameron's parents did everything they could to help their son. Kesha had to stop working and quit pursuing her doctorate in order to take care of Cameron full time. Cameron's dad spent nights in the hospital, leaving at dawn to get to his full time job. Kesha said *"every appointment, medication, scan, side effect and precaution became my job."* Cancer affected Cameron's siblings too, forcing them to give up a "normal" childhood in many ways. *"We all put one foot in front of the other, and take things day by day,"* Kesha says.

Cameron is now 9 and doing well, though his scans have not yet been clear. His parents are hoping and praying a new drug regiment will keep the cancer at bay and ultimately eradicate the disease. Cameron is attending school consistently for the first time ever, and he was able to participate in a basketball workshop this winter, which he loved. He also loves Pokémon, playing games on his Nintendo Switch and spending time with his friends and family. *"We always tell him he's our gladiator and little hero,"* says Kesha. *"I know his strength carries me through this journey as well."*



CAMERON AND HIS MOM KESHA ARE THANKFUL FOR YOUR SUPPORT

KIAH KICKS CANCER IN THE BUTT

WHEN LITTLE KIAH WAS DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER, she and her mom, Jaya, focused on this mantra: *"We are going to kick cancer in the butt."* Kiah's diagnosis was discovered not only during the pandemic but soon after a painful divorce between her mom and dad. First, Jaya had to move Kiah and her older brother Zehn to a one bedroom apartment, where Jaya had to manage remote schooling for both kids. Then Kiah got diagnosed with oral bone cancer as a result of a well visit to the dentist. The concerning finding on the x-ray turned out to be a tumor. *"We got very strong and resilient from this experience,"* Jaya says.

What followed were multiple surgeries, month-long stays at the hospital and 17 rounds of high intensity chemo. Kiah was also enrolled in a clinical trial due to lesions found in her lungs. As a family they came up with the idea of having 17 gifts Kiah could look forward to opening after the completion of each brutal chemo cycle.

Kiah had complete jaw reconstruction surgery to remove the tumor. She still has no teeth on the left side, but must wait until after puberty to get dental implants. Though she has trouble eating, as well as severe nausea and smell aversions from the chemo, Kiah loves food so she has found ways to compensate. Asian foods—with the flavors of basil, cilantro, garlic and ginger—especially appeal to her changed taste buds.



KIAH LOVES VALENTINE'S DAY

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upcoming EVENTS

SPRING FLING
May 22nd, 2022

TRICKY TRAY
June 11th, 2022

CHARITY BASH
June 15th, 2022

CENTRAL REGION GOLF OUTING
July 18th, 2022

**SOUTHERN REGION
GOLF OUTING**
August 8th, 2022

**DENNIS DROHAN MEMORIAL
GOLF OUTING**
September 28th, 2022

BOCCE BALL-A-PALOOZA
October 2nd, 2022

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CORPORATIONS THAT PROVIDED RECENT GRANT SUPPORT:**

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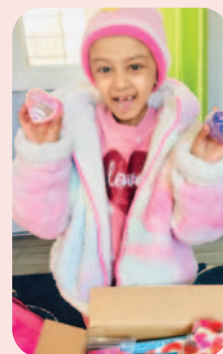
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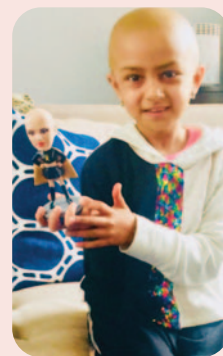
KIAH KICKS CANCER IN THE BUTT

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Unfortunately, the lesions in Kiah's lungs have not disappeared, and she is constantly in the hospital for various side effects of the continuing treatment. But on days off her mom and brother try to make life fun for Kiah. They go to movies, the circus, playgrounds, and long walks around NYC with Kiah in the stroller. She lost her hair but often wears fun beanie caps made by her mom or patterned scarves. Kiah loves outdoor activities, arts and crafts, Valentine's Day, slushies and her big brother Zehn. When she saw him after being in the hospital for a week, she was so happy she literally jumped onto him, almost knocking him down with her excitement despite him towering over her four-foot tall body.



**KIAH LOVES TO HAVE FUN
DESPITE ALL SHE HAS
BEEN THROUGH.**



For a while, Jaya couldn't talk about her experience without getting emotional. Things changed when ECF connected her to other families facing cancer and when ECF caseworker Caitlin came into her life, giving Jaya emotional support that is helping her get through this ordeal. ECF also provided grocery gift cards to buy the specialty foods Kiah requires, a big help to single mom Jaya who had lost her teaching job during the first wave of Covid. *"Caitlin has been a blessing,"* Jaya says. *"We wouldn't have gotten this far had it not been for ECF."*

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cancer and their families.*

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chosen ECF as its Special State Project! We are
so grateful for the honor and excited to partner
with this amazing organization.**