

Outlook

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMMANUEL CANCER FOUNDATION



spring 2016

Created in collaboration with the Independent Order of Odd Fellows of New Jersey – proud partners in support of kids with cancer. www.ioof.org

ECF KIDS, Where Are They Now?

FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES, BILL HAS BEEN DEFYING THE ODDS.

When he was just eight years old, Bill became quite ill while spending time at his grandmother's house. A trip to the community hospital's emergency room was the first of many. Diagnostic equipment was inadequate, but doctors knew something was very wrong. Bill was referred to a speciality center where his parents would get the shattering news that Bill had astrocytoma - brain cancer – and his tumor was the size of two fists. Bill doesn't remember being scared that day; he remembers being disappointed that the helicopter wasn't available for his transfer and he had to ride by ambulance instead.



Bill (r) during his cancer treatments with family friend Dave (l). The boys got a limo ride to a basketball game in Philadelphia and were excited to meet all of the players from the Nets.

It was New Year's Eve 1989 and Bill had brain surgery. Surgeons were able to remove half of his tumor, but his prognosis was grim:

- He would not live past the age of 18
- He would have multiple types of disabilities, including severe intellectual disabilities
- He would never have children

Bill and his family soldiered on. Following surgery, Bill endured a year of radiation treatments that started every Monday and ended on Fridays. The treatment center was far from home, so Mom and

Dad alternated. One would stay with Bill at the Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia and the other would stay home with their two older children.

Bill missed a year of school, but was lucky that his second grade teacher was a neighbor who tutored him during the weekend. He did his homework while at the hospital and was promoted to third grade with his classmates. Bill remembers an absolute outpouring of support in those days. His classmates sent him get well cards which he still has today. The local police raised funds to bring Bill home from the hospital in a limousine. The community held an auction to raise funds for his medical expenses. And of course, there was the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation which came on the scene soon after his surgery, offering emotional support, grocery deliveries, and important advice on how to pay bills that were astronomical. Bill and his sisters loved getting holiday gifts from ECF and the entire family appreciated ECF events where they met other people experiencing similar circumstances.

Eventually Bill returned to school but still had to undergo various treatments such as monthly shots and constant monitoring to watch the tumor that remained.

Medication side effects caused extreme weight gain. Bill couldn't participate in football, wrestling or other contact sports, so he joined the cross country team, eventually got approval to play basketball, and became an active boy scout. As soon as Mom was able she began giving back to ECF by volunteering – delivering groceries to families and conducting fundraisers. To this day Ellen remains a dedicated and cherished volunteer, involving family and friends in all she does. As a child and teen Bill would always participate in ECF volunteer activities with his mom and encouraged his friends to help as well. In high school, he was honored with an award for his high level of volunteerism.

Today, Bill is 34 years old and has defied his doctors' early prognoses one by one. In fact when he turned 18, he said, "Ha ha, I did it!" Number two, he is not intellectually challenged; in fact, he graduated from college and is currently a social studies teacher. He married his wife, Sarah, and six years later when they learned that Sarah was expecting, Bill realized that he defied his doctors' third prognosis: Bill and Sarah now have two adorable little girls of their own. While he no longer lives in the ECF service area, he has never forgotten the love he and his family felt from ECF and others in the community. So, together with Sarah, he instills in his children a desire to give back. *Their most recent volunteer project?* Collecting pajamas for children in the hospital – donations came from 38 states. The girls are already excited to beat their record next year!

Bill is cancer free, although he lives with a walnut-sized tumor. He knows he was given a second chance and he appreciates his gift of life. He is an outdoorsman who enjoys hiking and biking, and a family man who speaks with admiration about his wife and daughters. When asked where he sees himself in ten years, he answered with his great sense of humor, "Well, my daughters will be 16 and 14 years old, so I imagine I'll have a lot of gray hair." And then he answered more seriously, "I just want to share the joy of life. I don't have a bucket list. I take things as they come and I want to see my daughters get through life."



Bill and his beautiful family today, including their beloved dog Pretzel who comes from Puerto Rico. The family loves adopting rescued golden retrievers.

If you want to learn more about ECF kids, upcoming events, or volunteer activities, like us on Facebook at: [facebook.com/EmmanuelCancerFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/EmmanuelCancerFoundation) or visit our website at: emmanuelcancer.org

the faces of ECF

MEET THE BOARD

ECF'S BOARD is growing and includes these talented individuals who generously give their time and support to oversee ECF's mission.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Joel Markel, President
Preferred Home Health Care & Nursing Services

Steven M. Wooton, Vice President
(C) Systems Global

John F. Kwasnik, Secretary
Mezzacca & Kwasnik, LLC

Carl Hillier, Treasurer
Johnson & Johnson

TRUSTEES

Bill Campbell, *Townsquare Media*

Karen Diaz, *Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp.*

Ralph Diaz, *Merrill Lynch*

Dr. Lisa Forzani,
Forzani Family Chiropractic Center

Dr. Steven Halpern,
*The Valerie Fund Children's Center/Overlook
& Morristown Medical Center*

Jonathan Kanarek, *Global Credit Services*

Christina Mecca, *Community Volunteer*

Robert Mecca, *Bristol-Myers Squibb*

Betsy Shaheen,
Builders General Supply Company

Mike Walsh, *Ameriprise*

Michael Yushak, *Shore Systems, LLC*

FOUNDERS

Joseph & Susan Vizzoni

*ECF mourns the passing of
two good friends:
ROGER POST
and
THOMAS TIZZIO.
They will be missed.*

REFLECTIONS

from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

As I approach my 23rd year here at ECF, I can confidently say I have been through most of our ups and downs, good times and bad, changes and improvements, welcomes and goodbyes to amazing co-workers, and above all, the good work we do here at ECF.

Sometimes, I can't believe how luck brought me to ECF, just answering an ad for a part-time office manager for a local nonprofit. Coming from New York's garment industry, newly married and relocating to the Jersey Shore, I thought, "Why not...I could use a break from the daily New York grind." Boy, was I in for a surprise! There is not a day that goes by here at ECF where the phone isn't ringing, the door isn't opening, volunteers aren't coming and going, and the e-mails aren't flying. Quiet? Not at all. Hectic? Every day. Amazingly satisfying, oh absolutely.

As you can almost tangibly feel while reading this newsletter, every article tells the story of ECF's emotional impact. Each staff member, family, volunteer and donor is touched in an inexplicable way. Maybe

that is the case at all nonprofits? I couldn't say. But I can say with certainty that there is something very magical about working at ECF and with the families we serve. ECF makes us count our blessings, and drives us to dig down deep and work harder every day. It allows us to be better people...there is no room here for shortcuts.

So, if you are reading this newsletter, you, too, are part of a very special group of folks. Take this time for your own reflection, and take this opportunity to count your blessings as well.

Thank you,

JOANN PASSANTINO
Executive Director

P.S. Don't miss news and updates on ECF kids. It's easy to "like" ECF on Facebook: www.facebook.com/EmmanuelCancerFoundation.



VEHICLE DONATIONS

A free, convenient service for converting that extra car, truck, or RV into a tax deductible donation benefiting **Emmanuel Cancer Foundation Inc.** You can donate online at v-dac.com or call **877-999-8322** to make your donation.

*let us
remember...*



**Junior
Khiyana
Logan**

REFLECTIONS from the Regional Centers

CENTRAL REGION:

I would like to reflect on my gratitude for the wonderful people I have met since I started at ECF nine years ago. My volunteers are truly an inspiration to me. I am happy and thankful that I have had the opportunity to work with them and to get to know them personally. Today I consider many of them good friends as they have been with me from the beginning. I have also been fortunate to have many volunteers come in weekly since they started high school. Several will be moving on to college and I will truly miss each of them. All of the volunteers are important to me. I am very grateful for their friendship, and for their help, time and endless support of ECF.



Central Regional Director, **Barbara Kopel**, and therapy dog Yogi at the ECF Frito Lay Carnival.

EASTERN REGION:



Eastern Regional Director, **Rose Contreras**, at ECF's holiday party.

Not everyone can say they wake up in the morning looking forward to going to work, but I can! I feel blessed to be a part of the ECF team. The work we do for such special children and their families is so rewarding. I have had the opportunity to meet and work alongside many fantastic volunteers - it is heartwarming. And the generosity from our supporters is overwhelming! We fulfilled every wish list this past holiday season as well as distributed

holiday meals and doubled up on our food deliveries because our donors were so generous. We have also had a fantastic outpouring of "birthday in a box" donations so our ECF children and their siblings can celebrate their birthdays in a special way. The best part about this job is meeting our inspirational families. As I get to know each family, hear their story and watch their journey, I admire their bravery and strength.

NORTHERN REGION:

"A busy place here," a donor commented while stopping by ECF's Northern Regional Center during the holidays. "It's a rotating door." It was my first holiday season at ECF and it was a special time to be part of a wonderful foundation. So many donors came into the office to assist with food and gift cards and to give of their time to help our families. I was thrilled to meet them and hear the stories that connected them to ECF. It was heartwarming to see the outpouring of help from a community which allowed us to fulfill 160 gift wishes for ECF children and provide 30 local families with holiday food baskets. I am now looking forward to our busy spring season. We have food drives planned, volunteers making Easter baskets and birthday bags, and our annual Bash at the Brick House on April 8th!



Northern Regional Director, **Patricia Brussel** (l), with volunteer Kay in the food pantry.

SOUTHERN REGION:



Southern Regional Consultant, **Melanie Giblin** (r), and Rose Contreras prepare a van full of groceries for delivery.

Welcome to spring! As many know, in October we temporarily closed our Woodbury location and have been experimenting with providing services in the Southern Region without an office building. To date, the experiment has been successful: services to families have continued uninterrupted, and ECF has saved considerably on administrative expenses. As ECF's Southern Regional Consultant, it is my job to coordinate family services with our Caseworkers and local volunteers. In December, I enjoyed attending the Southern Regional holiday party which included a festive lunch as well as an afternoon of entertainment. In addition to spreading joy and cheer, this event had the added benefit of bringing families together to support each other with laughter and

strength. I look forward to continuing to serve our families with the utmost care. Closely communicating with our Caseworkers and warmly welcoming new families are top priorities. I also look forward to promoting awareness of ECF's mission in different areas by visiting local businesses. Thank you to everyone for your continued efforts. We are truly making a difference for our wonderful families!

To You



FROM THE DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

FOR SIX YEARS I have been writing this column, but today will be my last as my career is taking me in a different direction. While I look forward to my new adventures, leaving is difficult! To say goodbye, I would like to start with words of thanks and end with a few thoughts that have been on my mind.



Thanks to all who donated to our matching gift challenge in December. With your generosity, and the incredible \$10,000 match by our anonymous donor, we were able to raise a record amount of money to help ECF families like Jordan's. A young artist, Jordan is only seven years old and courageously fighting leukemia. Her artwork was selected in a contest to be used in ECF's winter mailing.

Congratulations Jordan and thank you for helping ECF.

As a grassroots non-profit, with a small staff and no government funding, ECF relies on the community for financial support. So, we are grateful to all of our donors, including the following foundations, corporations, and organizations which provided recent grant support: **Church & Dwight Employee Giving Fund, Eisai, MagyarBank Charitable Foundation, Party With Purpose, Ronald McDonald House Charities NYTSA, Select Equity Group Foundation, Shapiro Family Foundation, St. Elizabeth's Church-Ridgewood, Standish Foundation, The Arnold A. Schwartz Foundation, The Hinman Foundation, The Westfield Foundation, the Thomas H. Hamilton Foundation, United Way of Gloucester County, and Woman's Club of Ridgewood.**

People come to ECF for different reasons and in all different ways. Mine was indirect. In 2009 I spent eight months at my dad's side as he fought valiantly through a losing battle with kidney cancer. To see someone you love suffer from a relentless disease is simply inexplicable. Several of our many visits to the emergency room stand out - one in particular was on Halloween. My father's disease was quickly claiming his life; little did we know he had only one month left. On that awful Halloween day in the hospital, I heard the screams of a young patient. While other children her age were dressing in costume, trick-or-treating and eating candy, she was in the hospital scared and hurting. I always knew cancer struck children, but I don't think I fully understood what that meant until I saw firsthand the horror of cancer, and until I heard that little girl's desperation. Her cries are still with me today. Six months after my dad's passing I learned of ECF and was immediately connected to the mission. I was hired as a part-time grant writer and since then I have worked diligently to raise money for the families we help: for children crying because it hurts and because they are missing the fun activities that children love, and for parents watching helplessly as their children suffer. I have been honored to work at ECF and awed by your generosity. I can't thank you enough and ask you to continue supporting this wonderful organization.

I know I will.

NOTES & PHOTOS FROM OUR FAMILIES



I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR MY DAUGHTER'S PRESENTS THIS YEAR.

You guys went above and beyond her heart's desire. We thought maybe one thing off the list would've been amazing and you got her entire list of toys. She was jumping up and down and then going to Amy (ECF Caseworker) and giving her hugs and kisses. Again thank you for all that you do for so many and for being so selfless.



Thank you so much for the awesome gifts given to Evan and his sister, Sarah! They couldn't have been happier!! Your generosity is overwhelming. It is so heartwarming to know there are people out there that really care!

Thank you for all that you do for families like mine!

WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP FAMILIES

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD LOGAN has leukemia. He lives in Northern New Jersey with his parents and two younger siblings. Mom had to stop working to care for Logan whose intense treatments have included multiple rounds of chemotherapy and steroids resulting in infections, hair loss, and time away from school. ECF's Caseworker Eileen has been providing the family with emotional support and has coordinated with the Regional Center to help meet some of the family's specific needs. For example, in the family's apartment, utility costs are included with rent payments, but increase in the summer to accommodate window air conditioning units. Through the Emergency Assistance Fund, last summer ECF was able to cover the cost of a window air conditioning unit for Logan's room so he would remain comfortable. ECF's Northern Regional Center provides the family with monthly groceries which are delivered by a loyal volunteer. ECF has provided the family with donated grocery store gift cards, gifts for the children on their birthdays, and most recently holiday gifts for the kids and food baskets for the family's holiday meals.



During Logan's treatments he broke his wrist.

Last fall, Mom became concerned about the tires on her car; after many miles transporting Logan to and from the hospital, her tires were wearing thin. Mom turned to her ECF Caseworker for help and ECF posted a plea on Facebook. Within ten minutes, a generous donor called and paid to have two tires delivered to Logan's home. Upon hearing the news, Mom wrote:

"I cannot even begin to say how thankful we are for your help! We had nothing but horrible news all week and this has brightened our spirits. We have been trying to make ends meet and this is amazing! Thank you oh so very much."

Then, when the tires arrived Mom wrote, *"We received the tires! Thank you again! My Logan was really excited about them and was actually just checking them out for a half hour. He gets so excited over things! Thank you!"*

Soon after a volunteer called a local garage, arranged to have the tires mounted and balanced, and paid the entire bill. What an amazing example of the community coming together to help meet the very specific needs of one grateful family!



Logan LOVES the new tires donated by a generous ECF supporter.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ECF holds many enjoyable events throughout the year in different parts of the state. Please visit our website for more information:
www.emmanuelcancer.org

FRIDAY, APRIL 8:
Rutgers Medical vs. Dental Charity Hockey Game
Newark

FRIDAY, APRIL 8:
Bash at the Brick House
Wyckoff

SUNDAY, APRIL 24:
Annual Spring Tea
Brick

FRIDAY, APRIL 29:
Tricky Tray
Scotch Plains

MONDAY, JULY 18:
Celebration of Champions Golf Outing
Deal

VOLUNTEERING is a great way to help at ECF. We are always in need of volunteers for a variety of projects.

Opportunities are available at all four Regional Centers throughout New Jersey.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Central Regional Center – Scotch Plains (908) 322-4323, ext. 17
Eastern Regional Center – Wall (732) 282-2324

Northern Regional Center – Midland Park (201) 612-8118
Southern Regional Center – Virtual Office (732) 282-2324