Violet’s mom Jaime says the kindness of others got them through their cancer ordeal. But so did the family’s commitment to healthy eating and exploration of holistic healing practices. And what Jaime calls her six-year old daughter’s “unparalleled optimism.”

Violet was diagnosed in December 2018 with stage 3 kidney cancer. For several years Violet had a protruding stomach, despite a diet that was gluten and sugar free and mostly organic. Doctor after doctor said she was fine and attributed her distended belly to constipation, even when a large mass appeared. But her mom Jaime instinctually knew there was something seriously wrong. After a trip overseas, where Violet was lethargic and had no appetite, Jaime brought her to even more doctors until she was finally sent to the emergency room, where she received the cancer diagnosis.

Almost immediately, Violet was launched into a rigorous regimen of surgery and treatments. The tumor was removed along with her right kidney and part of her adrenal gland, followed by a week of full abdomen radiation at Memorial Sloan Kettering in NYC and, simultaneously, the launch of 25 weeks of chemotherapy. Little Violet suffered from nausea and vomiting and developed neuropathy pain from the chemo drugs. Violet had to miss school and stay isolated from other kids because of her compromised immune system. “Violet dealt with it all like a rock star,” says Jaime, who had to quit her job to care for her daughter, who alternated being in the hospital and stuck at home recovering. “Violet’s grandmother and I kept her busy through homeschooling, science projects, reading and watching a bit more TV than I would generally allow.” In addition to a Gofundme page the family set up to help them with their financial distress, the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation stepped in to help lift some of their burdens, financial and otherwise. “Our ECF caseworker Caitlin has been sweet and kind and helped me find other resources to get us through, and provided Violet with gifts to cheer her and is very kind to her as well.”

Violet completed her chemo treatments in June, and her scans are all clear, though she will be monitored every three months for the next five years. Violet’s recovery has not only been because of her aggressive medical treatments. Her mother has always been passionate about holistic healing, and it has made a significant difference in Violet’s tolerance of the treatment and managing the side effects. Violet used various supplements and had daily Reiki treatments and weekly acupuncture, as well as cranial sacral therapy, healing through sound, and detoxifying sauna visits. The family also remained gluten free and organic and eliminated sugar completely, except from fresh fruit. Violet’s mom believes acupuncture completely resolved Violet’s neuropathy pain.

Violet’s hospital team was both on board with the alternative path and inspired by its results. “The advanced practice nurse and the hospital nutritionist both asked me to meet with them regarding learning more about what holistic things we did and who we used,” said Jaime. “I am actually going to write a blog and a book to share that info with everyone. A lot of parents don’t know that a diet change can make a big difference in their child’s health.”

Violet and her mom are also in the process of starting a foundation called Viva Violet to raise money for other children with cancer to get acupuncture. Like her mom, Violet also focuses on helping others. She is passionate about making the world a better place, possibly by becoming president of the United States. She also loves to dance, sing and most of all make art. Jaime says Violet is “very spirituality minded” and looks for meaning in everything including her illness, often praying, “I don’t know why this has happened to me but when you are ready to show me I am ready to know.” She has said to her mom, “I am glad this happened to me and not someone else because I can handle it.”
**TAX SMART GIVING:** There are many ways to help ECF! Did you know:

- You can purchase a life insurance policy in an Irrevocable Trust with a charity as the beneficiary, and the proceeds will not be subject to estate taxes for your beneficiaries.
- If you have no children, or are married with no close family as beneficiaries, you can name a qualified charity as the beneficiary.
- For larger gifts, consider the benefits of a donor-advised fund—tax deductions, reduced capital gains, potential growth in the value of the fund, and the ability to recommend charities of your choice.

Speak to your financial advisor for more information. Thank you for thinking of ECF!

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**KELLY DOES DARES FOR ECF**

If you dare Kelly Holechek to train for a marathon in a unicorn costume or wearing a sombrero, she will happily do it.

Why? Because it is her way of showing a passionate commitment to the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation (ECF) and helping kids with cancer.

This is something Kelly has been doing for 15 years, since middle school, when she and her best friend Stephanie began selling bracelets and collecting money in front of a shop in her hometown of Maplewood. A friend had battled leukemia and it became a fight close to her heart. In high school the pair of friends created the "Kids that Care Fun Fair" with bouncy houses, cotton candy, and face painting, all to raise money for ECF. Kelly continued her dedication to ECF through college, inspiring her Rutgers sorority to collect holiday gifts, and into her professional life as an employee at Maybelline, volunteering at the ECF holiday party and collecting gifts and school supplies with the help of friends and coworkers.

Four years ago, as a way to gear up to run the Paris Marathon, Kelly created the novel fundraising concept of #DonateToDareKelly. Friends, family, and coworkers who donated $50 or more could “dare” Kelly to train for the marathon in any costume of their choosing. She raised $2,550 for ECF at that time. So this year Kelly reprised #DonateToDareKelly for the September 15th Sydney Marathon, training per her supporters’ requests in a hula skirt, carrying a baguette, in her pajamas, an evening gown, dressed as a cat and a baby shark, and countless other crazy costumes and accessories! Along the way she posted pictures on Instagram (@kellyholechek). As of the beginning of September, she had raised $4,260, far surpassing her goal of $2,500!

ECF is so grateful for dedicated, passionate volunteers like Kelly. “If I called Kelly today to say I needed something for an ECF family, she would be right there with ‘how can I help!’” says ECF Senior Regional Director Barbara Kopel. “She is one of the most kind and caring people that I have ever met, and I am proud to say she has also become my friend over the last twelve years.”
Anthony’s Story

Fourteen-year-old Anthony is looking forward to being able to go swimming again.

He has not been able to since he had a bone graft to stabilize his arm after tumor removal surgery. Anthony was diagnosed with bone cancer in the fall of 2017, when he was 12. The surgery was followed by in patient chemotherapy. Though the first bone graft did not take, a second surgery done this February has been effective, and Anthony is responding well to physical therapy.

Anthony enjoys computers and video games and excels in math and science. He lives in Essex county with his parents and three younger siblings. Though the family is close knit, they have no other relatives in the area. Both parents had to alternate staying with Anthony during his hospital stays. ECF has been a welcome support network for the family, providing a shoulder to lean on and monthly groceries. Additionally, ECF board member Mike Yuschak donated a laptop to Anthony, which thrilled this technophile!

Though Anthony’s arm may not yet be healed enough to go swimming before the warm weather ends, this past July he and his family were able to enjoy a visit to Disney World through the Make-a-Wish Foundation. We are so happy he is on the mend!

Paige Crandall:
Outstanding Volunteer

Paige Crandall volunteered for ECF’s Central Region all through her four years of high school and continued during college breaks. She is currently a Senior at University of Delaware majoring in finance and is planning to work for JP Morgan as they offered her a full time position at the completion of her internship with the company this past summer. Paige made a donation to ECF from her earnings.

“Paige told me this is something she has always wanted to do,” says ECF Senior Regional Director Barbara Koppel. “I am so proud of Paige and so thankful to have had her volunteer at ECF.”

ECF is grateful to the following foundations and corporations that provided recent grant support:

- Abundant Life Reformed Church
- Buckelew Family Foundation
- Fanwood Presbyterian Church
- Fanwood-Scotch Plains Service League, Inc.
- Independent Order of Odd Fellows of NJ
- IOOF Union Lodge 213
- Monmouth Shore NJ Chapter Smart Set
- The Meta C. Mergott Foundation
- Westfield Rotary Club Foundation, Inc.
- Westfield Service League

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My son was diagnosed with almost stage 4 Hodgkins lymphoma at the age of 17. He is special needs and has overcome so many obstacles in life. But this was by far the biggest crisis our family had ever faced. My entire world was flipped upside down.

ECF came into our lives, and we were blessed with Caitlin, our caseworker. Her presence helped me in so many ways. Her support and knowing she was with us every step of the way gave me comfort in this horrific experience. ECF helped our family with groceries, special events, gift cards, holiday presents and many other things, along with emotional support.

My son has been battling cancer ever since, as it came back just one and a half years after his first diagnosis. He relapsed, required experimental treatments and a stem cell transplant-- and ECF continued to help us! They always did.

Jhony is now cancer free (for 3 years), thank the Lord! To this day we still continue to receive support, and my son absolutely gleams with happiness every time we receive a surprise from ECF! I thank God every single day for ECF; they are sincerely angels. God bless them always for everything they have done for our family and all the other families.

—JHONNY’S MOM
ALEXANDRA AND ELISABETH WINNERT, sisters from Ridgewood, NJ, both asked friends to donate to the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation in lieu of birthday gifts. Alexandra turned 13 in February and Elisabeth turned 11 in April. Their parents have been giving to ECF’s Northern Regional Center for almost a decade. We are moved by the girls’ generosity and their family’s commitment to supporting ECF.

ALEXANDRA:
“I learned about the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation through CCD service projects in Midland Park. I decided to donate to ECF through my birthday because I did not want gifts, and I wanted to help people in need. When I was 4 years old, I had a friend who died from cancer and ever since then I have wanted to help other kids with cancer. Over 10 people donated. Some facts about me are I am 13 years old, and I love soccer, basketball, lacrosse, and hanging out with my friends. My experience was great, and it was nice to know I made a difference in people’s lives.”

ELISABETH:
“I learned about the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation through my school’s Willard Service Day. I decided to donate to the Emmanuel Cancer Foundation because I realized that people with cancer needed the money way more than I did. I am 11 years old. A little something about me is that I live in Ridgewood, and love dancing, soccer and lacrosse. I have spent time volunteering in a local nursing home singing Christmas carols, doing a Halloween Parade and helping residents with arts and crafts. I was very happy with myself after the experience. I think I did the right thing to help other people in need and would love to do it again.”

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