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ANNUAL REPORT  
Fiscal Year 2023–2024



Whether you are a volunteer, CCC family, long-term supporter, or one of the 734 first-time donors to CCC in 2023, **YOU make a meaningful impact** on CCC's mission to connect families affected by childhood cancer by providing opportunities that encourage relationships and strengthen community.



**35 years—wow!** Children's Cancer Connection celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2023. As I reflect on the year, I am filled with gratitude for all that we were able to accomplish over the course of our anniversary year. Families, donors, volunteers, and staff all play an important role in carrying out CCC's mission, and we have much to celebrate!

Children's Cancer Connection began as a standalone oncology camp in 1988. Thanks to your support, CCC has grown to now offer nearly 60 programs to 834 families. In the past year, Teen Programs have grown significantly, with Exploration Expedition and Teen Camps both reaching full capacity (and having waitlists!). Family programs and support programs have expanded to offer Fall Family Outings in both Central and Eastern Iowa, and monthly Kids Club and Teen Hangout programs have also increased in attendance. 2023 also marked CCC's first full year back to normal Camp Heart Connection Camps, hosting all six camp programs (Oncology, Sibling, Teen, Day and Fall and Spring Family camps) without any pandemic restrictions!

CCC's Jeff and Deb Hansen Home for Hope facility in Johnston underwent a full renovation in the spring of 2023 making the facility even more child-friendly and accessible to all. There's a beautiful Prairie Meadows (multi-purpose) Room for programming and a comfortable "Sparkle Room" that serves as a gathering space to watch movies and play video games. CCC is now able to host cooking and baking programs in the spacious kitchen and store Day Camper lunches in the huge refrigerator. A Gold Ribbon Walkway begins at the front of the building leading visitors around to the backyard where an inclusive Variety Star Playground and basketball sport court are located. The Gold Ribbon Walkway serves as a memorial to the Iowa children lost to pediatric cancer, and the beautiful paver patio with a bright green shade sail is a popular gathering place for visitors to the play area. The outdoor space has quickly become a favorite spot for children and teens attending programs, providing a safe area for all to enjoy outdoor recreation while forming connections with others on their cancer journey. CCC's outdoor space is also open to the general public when CCC is not holding programs.

What is next for CCC in its 36th year? We will continue to provide quality programs to support pediatric cancer families and grow its increasing reach. CCC currently serves families in 79 of Iowa's 99 counties, and it is a goal to serve everyone that is living, treated or diagnosed with pediatric cancer in the state. We are working to establish strategic partnerships with hospitals and nonprofit organizations within and beyond state borders to strengthen our combined networks of support for families of children with pediatric cancer, and to ensure these families are informed about CCC and the support services we provide.

We are excited for 2024 and beyond as we continue to connect and care for Iowa families affected by childhood cancer.

*Jennifer Hines*  
Jennifer Hines, CEO



**532**  
CAMPERS  
attended



**26,378**

BEADS4BRAVERY® TO



childhood cancer  
**WARRIORS**



**74**  
Welcome  
BOXES

delivered to  
new families  
welcoming them to the

**CCC**  
family

**ten**  
★★★★★

STAR BOXES



were sent to  
provide comfort  
to families whose  
children sadly  
passed away



VOTED AS A 2023  
**Top-Rated  
Nonprofit**  
BY GREAT NONPROFITS



**69**  
"My Journey Books"

were distributed to  
**Blank Children's Hospital**  
the University of Iowa  
**Stead Family Children's Hospital**



**40**

SUPPORT  
PROGRAMS  
& OUTINGS  
offered throughout Iowa



OFFERED SERVICES TO

**800+**

Iowa families  
THROUGH NEARLY 60

**FREE**

program opportunities





**My Journey Series®** supports families through every stage of treatment and beyond with hospital- and clinic-based programs.

**My Journey Book** is a place to organize treatment information and take notes as well.

**Welcome Box** includes information about CCC's free services and fun items like a blanket, water bottle, distraction toy and a Louie LionHeart® stuffed animal.

**Courage Store®** at Blank Children's Hospital allows kids to redeem the Bravery Bucks® they have earned.

**Beads4Bravery®** program allows families to collect a bead for every step and milestone to tell the story of their unique journey.

**Hospital Activities** at the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital provide crafts, games and other activities to children undergoing treatment.

**Star Box & Gold Ribbon Walkway** offer a heartfelt touch to families who lose a child to cancer.



**Support programs & outings** are offered to give families the opportunity to connect with others who relate to their experience.

**Family Outings** help families grow connections across the state.

**Kids Club** helps kids of all ages connect with other kids at CCC.

**Back-to-School Bash** is a fun-filled family event with free school supplies and the chance to connect before school starts.

**Comfort Connection** is for caregivers of an oncology child to connect with others on similar journeys.

**Teen Hangouts & Lock-Ins** are designed for teens to have fun and connect with friends.

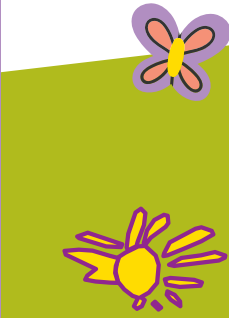
**Exploration Expedition** is a weekend for teens to explore various parts of Iowa together.

**Empowering Scholarships** help with the cost of furthering education, book reimbursement and tuition assistance.

**Holiday Drop-Off & Winter Wishes** are for families affected by childhood cancer that could use some extra joy and support during the holiday season.



Our Mission: connect families affected by childhood cancer by providing opportunities that encourage relationships and strengthen community



**Camp Heart Connection** is a magical place where childhood cancer survivors and their families have a secure environment to connect, grow and create lifelong memories.

**Oncology Camp** is for childhood cancer warriors (on or off treatment) to enjoy traditional summer camp activities.

**Sibling Camp** gives brothers and sisters a chance to experience a week of all the same fun camp activities just for them.

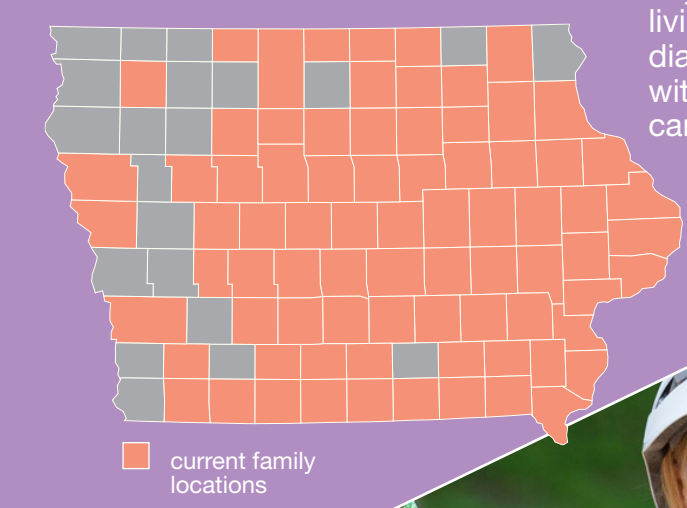
**Family Camp** is a relaxing weekend stay and an opportunity to connect with other families.

**Teen Camp** is a weekend for teens to connect with peers who can relate to their journeys.

**Day Camp** is for kids to come and enjoy fun activities without an overnight stay.



## CCC SERVICE AREA



\* CCC serves any family living, treated or diagnosed with pediatric cancer in Iowa.





“ There are no other kids with cancer where she goes to school. This is a place where she can feel seen and understood. When Evelyn didn't have hair, CCC was a place where she didn't feel self-conscious, because those other kids understood. ”

**Evelyn is a spunky,** courageous, very kind, and energetic girl. She is really funny and supportive of others. She wraps you around her finger and has a way of just making you feel really comfortable with her as soon as you meet her. She loves crafts, arts and is obsessed with cats. She loves to play outside, rock climb, and kayak, and she's not afraid to get dirty, but she's also quite the girly girl. She loves getting her nails done. She loves Barbies and Legos. There's not a lot of things Evelyn doesn't like to do. She's a well-rounded child.

In August of 2020, she was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. She went through two years and two months of treatment. The first six months were really tough—really hard on her. We entered the maintenance phase and things kind of got easier, but there were some hiccups that she experienced. She thankfully rang the bell in October of 2022.

Hard isn't really the word I would use. It was excruciating, to be honest. She was only 5 when she was diagnosed, so trying to make sure she understood what was happening to her along with coming to terms with it as parents and letting our families know in terms that they would understand was very hard, but we all got stronger through it, and thankfully she's doing well.

Evelyn loves to do **Kids Club** the first Saturday of every month at Children's Cancer Connection. We sign up religiously. When I drop her off, I don't even get a "bye mom." She's there, and she's ready to go. Evelyn's been to the **Spring Break Specials**, and she's been involved with Day Camp too. She loves doing that. And then there's the **Back to School Bash**. Anything that we're able to sign her up for through CCC, we do—she loves it.

Treatment was really tough. I quit my job to be her caretaker for a while, so we were living on a one-income household. **CCC's free programs** are why she's able to do as much as she's doing with them.

Evelyn struggled with port access the entire treatment because she had a port infection really early on, and that was trauma that followed her, so those **Bravery Bucks** and going to **CCC's Courage Store** were huge motivators for her.

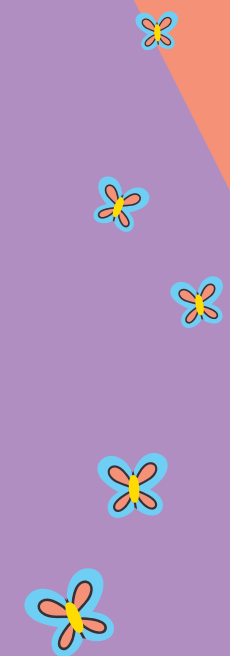
We also had the **My Journey Book**, which was really helpful for her dad and I. I opened that a lot during the beginning of her treatment when things were really tough. There are phone numbers to call in there, people to contact, and it just kind of organizes everything.

CCC is a place where Evelyn can meet other kids who either have gone through this journey or have watched their siblings go through this journey. It's a place where she can connect.

It's a place where Mike and myself have met other parents—it's always nice to connect with other people who have gone through this journey in one way or another and understand what you've gone through as a family.

A little back story on my family—I have a little sister that passed away from cancer back in 2014. My sister and brother—Evelyn's aunt and uncle—go to CCC programs frequently. Being able to see the **Gold Ribbon Walkway** with our sister's name on it helps, not only my sister and brother, but also other siblings. It's nice to know that people don't forget about your loved ones after they pass away. It's a beautiful remembrance of them.

CCC is and has been, and always will be, a huge tool that families and children are able to use. Without CCC, I don't think Evelyn's journey would have gone as smoothly, and she would not have made those connections with other people during a time where she wasn't able to make those connections with others in a normal setting.



“ I think it's amazing that CCC is there for the entire family through the whole journey. That sentiment is something that we hold very near and dear to our hearts. Especially in my family's situation where we have one child here with us and then we have another one that we remember always. I will be forever indebted to CCC for what they've done for my family. ”



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Corteva Agriscience  
Member Since 2021

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NCMIC  
Member Since 2022

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Blank Children's Hospital, UnityPoint Health  
Member Since 2019

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Key Mortgage Group  
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Iowa Methodist, UnityPoint Health  
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**Jennifer Hines, CEO**  
Children's Cancer Connection  
Non-Voting Member Since 2019

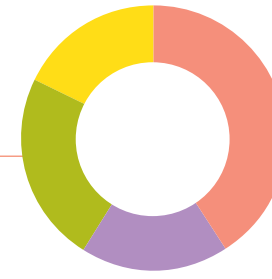
**Lindy Kramer**  
Johnston High School  
Youth Board Member Since 2022

**Alex Kron**  
Ridge View High School  
Youth Board Member Since 2023

**Addison Whipple**  
SE Polk High School  
Youth Board Member Since 2023

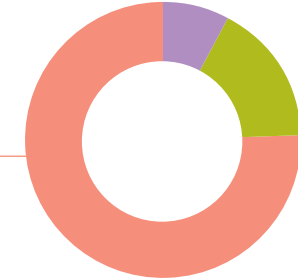
# FINANCIALS

<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$1,523,358</b>
Total expense	\$1,358,683
Administrative expense	\$105,473
% of expense for administrative purposes	7.76%



## Sources of support and revenue

23.3% Corporations  
17.6% Foundations  
40.9% Individual Contributions  
18.2% Other



## Expense allocations

\$1,023,214 Program service expenses  
\$105,473 Management & general expense  
\$229,996 Fundraising expenses



# LEADERSHIP TEAM



**Jennifer Hines**  
CEO



**Sarah Jungers**  
Chief Development Officer



**Holly Peters**  
Director of Programs



**“We found out that our son, Lincoln,** had multiple system Langerhans Cell Histiocytosis, a really aggressive, rare, and hard-to-treat blood cancer.

He was pale, covered in an awful rash, fighting to breathe, fighting to eat, hooked up to a million tubes and machines.

In the middle of this horrific situation, we were loved and supported by so many people and groups, including Children's Cancer Connection.

**“** We treasure their support and are thankful that this local organization is ready to continue to support those who will experience the terrors of a pediatric cancer diagnosis and treatment in the future. **”**

**CCC supported my entire family** during the hardest part of our journey. Even after Lincoln made a remarkable recovery and was able to discontinue treatment, CCC was still there for us.

From regular events and celebrations to the much anticipated weeks at **Camp Heart Connection**, my children regularly and continuously benefit from the services of this organization.

CCC has proven to provide **a community of connection, support, and celebration** for my whole family throughout the years.





# TOP 10 DONOR GROUPS

Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation	\$175,000
Prairie Meadows	\$150,000
Polk County Board of Supervisors	\$75,000
University of Iowa Dance Marathon	\$60,000
Ockenfels Family Foundation	\$50,000
Carlson Family Foundation	\$40,000
Danny Joe Memorial Golf Tournament	\$32,000
Lexi Stiles Memorial Golf Tournament	\$23,035
Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation	\$15,000
Sammons Financial Group	\$12,000



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

When CCC moved to its location in Johnston in December of 2021, it had a goal of increasing program attendance. 2023 was an exciting year for just that! The Eastern Iowa Fall Family Outing more than **doubled its attendance** over the past year with nearly 70 people attending. CCC reached its **highest ever registration number for Kids Clubs and Comfort Connection** in the fall, and **teen programming had wait lists** because of the popularity. New in 2023, CCC offered outings in the Des Moines metro area as part of **CCC's Teen Hangouts**, and those included a bowling alley, arcade, and Sky Zone trampoline park. **Camp Heart Connection programming returned in full force with zero pandemic restrictions**, and additionally, **staff resumed in-person hospital activities** at the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital with children currently on treatment. Not only that, but for the first time ever, **CCC is now visiting Blank Children's Hospital** and its family room monthly as well. Staff will be available to pediatric oncology families for whatever they need—from program information, to helping children retrieve their Beads4Bravery or Courage Store prizes. Rounding out the My Journey Series, a **digital version of CCC's My Journey Book was officially launched in May**, and it provides a digital format to CCC families for more accessibility. We're looking forward to continuing this momentum into 2024 and beyond!

**Evan Oppman was barely a year old** in 2018 when he was diagnosed with stage IV neuroblastoma. He had a spunky spirit, sweet smile and silly personality. Sadly, Evan passed away in May 2020 following 18 months of treatment. While Evan got to utilize **Children's Cancer Connection's Bravery Bucks** and the **Courage Store**, and the family received **Winter Wishes** gifts in 2019, it's important to families like the Oppmans that CCC can support caregivers and siblings through their entire journeys.

"CCC is a unique organization. Their support targets whole families, not just the cancer patient, and it is beneficial for the mental and emotional health of family members," Joy said.

As Joy, husband Nathan, son Henry and daughter Violet continue to navigate their world without Evan, Joy said "CCC helps us keep connected to this piece of our past while providing us with ongoing connections to people who have walked this road and can be part of our present and our future." They found their safe place to connect at **CCC's Family Camp and Day Camp**. Joy said she hopes to attend the parent support group **Comfort Connection** in the future.

"Outside of the cancer community, a lot of people get stuck and don't know what to say when we mention Evan. But he's a huge part of our lives, so we are going to talk about him!" Joy said. "The other CCC families get that, and that freedom to share about him is a blessing." Evan's memory also lives on through CCC's new **Gold Ribbon Walkway**.

"I love that Evan has a paver on the Gold Ribbon Walkway," said his mom Joy Oppman. "His life made a huge impact on our family, and we will love him forever. But the world continues on, and we know that his life slowly becomes a memory to most people who are not family. Putting his name on the walkway reminds others of his story. And for a few moments at least, we know that someone else will be thinking about him with us."

“

They also continue to support families whose oncology child has passed away. Going through oncology treatment has similarities to fighting a long, drawn-out war, and it changes how a family looks at life and how they function. Having a place where warrior families can connect socially is a great outlet and source of encouragement.

”







“I have a unique view of childhood cancer—both as a sibling and as a parent.

When I was four, my six-year-old brother was diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma. I remember how hard it was on my parents and now, as a mom of a child with cancer, I understand why.

I not only worry if my daughter, Lennox, will be okay, but also if I'm giving enough attention to her older sister, Esme, and if we're going to be able to pay the bills.

As a kid, the highlight of my year was **Camp Heart Connection**, where other people understood. I didn't get that anywhere else and it was therapeutic for myself and my brother.

We attended **Family Camp** in 2021 where for the first time, Lennox saw someone with barely any hair, just like hers. Esme had never heard another sibling talk about their fears before. This experience was life-changing for our kids, and it wasn't even the full camp experience they would begin experiencing in 2023!



“ CCC's Camp Heart Connection will ALWAYS be on a pedestal in my heart. It really is for the whole family for the entire journey. ”

