



2021 GRATITUDE REPORT

KIDS KICKING CANCER
HEROES CIRCLE



From the Desk of Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg

Founder and Global Director, Kids Kicking Cancer
Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics,
Wayne State University School of Medicine

Dear Friends,

For years, the medical community has attempted to draw a sharp divide between the workings of the mind and the rest of the anatomy. Issues of the brain were regulated exclusively to the fields of neurology and psychiatry. As medicine has advanced in being able to scan the workings of the mind and the interconnective nature of the body, it has become clear that an effective therapeutic approach must include the thoughts, feelings and spirit of the patient. In medical schools, we are now emphasizing the importance of understanding the entire individual as more than an amalgam of diseased organs and vessels.

This holistic approach has been the philosophy of Kids Kicking Cancer since its very beginning in 1999. *Power, Peace, Purpose* allows children to participate in their healing by empowering them beyond the standard victimization associated with pediatric disease and treatment. Over the years, our published studies and brain scans have indicated the efficacy of allowing little warriors to *breathe in the light and blow out the darkness*. Their spirit is very much a part of their healing.

As we are transitioning into the Heroes Circle® that allows our young martial arts heroes to teach the world, we are seeing the power of this impact on all children facing trauma, as well as the adults who are inspired and motivated to learn from them. Our Heroes Circle celebrates the power of children across the planet. It is replicable, sustainable, and extraordinarily cost effective. Most importantly, it is the wind beneath the wings of beautiful boys and girls who learn that they can “fly” even if they are unable to walk.

Thank you for the wisdom of your mind and the power of your heart. You help us to reach the whole child! Together, we will help these children to teach the world.

Power Peace Purpose,

Rabbi G.



Our Vision

is to empower
one million children to
reduce their pain and stress –
transforming them from victim to
victor – and helping them emerge as
“powerful martial artists.”

**Thank you for joining our mission to
improve the lives of children globally.**

Year In Review

We hit plenty of milestones during 2021, and we did it all with one goal in mind: empowering more children and adults with our unique therapeutic martial arts programs.

Thanks to the generosity of our philanthropic Heroes Circle community, this year has been transformational for our small, but mighty organization.

JANUARY 2021

Pain Medicine News

We kicked off the new year with Pain Medicine News's publication of our latest pediatric focused study, "Martial Arts Based Therapy Shows Promise for Reducing Pain and Stress in Children."



JANUARY 2021

Teen Program Heroes Circle Anthem Launch

Thanks to a grant from Nike, we launched a teen program in 2020 for our Pediatric Healing Program. As part of this program, participants were able to create an original Heroes Circle anthem called "We Are One" with songwriter B. Sean debuting in January 2021. This was the precursor to our AYA (Adolescent Young Adult): Empowerment Program.

FEBRUARY 26, 2021

Virtual Global Dance Party

In 2021, we hosted a series of virtual dance parties for our Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing Program community. Program participants and their families enjoyed a live DJ, interactive conversations, and of course – lots of dancing!

FEBRUARY 2021

Launched Year Two Parent Support Program

A vital multi-year grant from Impact100 Oakland County allowed us the opportunity to promote community and reduce parent/caregiver isolation during the pandemic for our Pediatric Healing Program. Virtual parent support programs included culinary therapy, art therapy, parent/educational sessions, parent/caregiver martial arts classes and writing workshops.



MARCH 2021

Expanding Partnerships in Israel

Our Israel program kicked off pilot classes for youth-at-risk in Bet Shemesh in coordination with the municipal social service department. Later that spring, the kids in our Maagal Giborim (Heroes Circle) program participated in a special event with Rabbi G., followed by a belting ceremony in July.



APRIL 22, 2021

Global Virtual Appreciation Concert

In April, we hosted our annual virtual appreciation concert for our Martial Arts Therapists and volunteers. Attendees joined from the U.S., Canada, Israel, Italy and South Africa.

MAY 23, 2021

AYA: Empowerment Program Launches Thanks to Grant From Michigan Health Endowment Fund

Our AYA: Empowerment Program offers a unique opportunity for adolescents and young adults in our Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing Program to engage with their peers who are also facing similar life challenges related to illness or disease. The monthly program focuses on socialization, community building, reduced isolation, career exploration, life skill development, stress reduction and support for teens 12+ years old dealing with current or post effects of illness.



MAY 27, 2021

Connecting With Child Life Specialists and Social Workers Globally

Rabbi G. was invited to serve as the keynote speaker at the Association of Child Life Professionals National Conference. In addition to introducing the Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing Program and our unique evidence-based

techniques, he led the participants in a Breath Brake®, a technique used by our little heroes. In both April and May, we also served as virtual exhibitors at national conferences for the Association of Pediatric Oncology Social Workers and Association of Child Life Professionals.

MAY 2021

Journal of Pain Medicine Publication

A research study was published in the Journal of Pain Medicine examining neurobiological and behavioral effects of the Heroes Circle's virtual reality-based meditative 12-week intervention in patients undergoing Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT).

JUNE 23, 2021

Annual Belting Ceremony for our Pediatric Healing Program Families

We kicked off summer with a drive-through belting ceremony in Southfield, MI. The kids were able to see their hard work pay off and celebrate their move into their next martial arts belt level.



JULY 26, 2021

Annual Golf Outing and Dinner

Our supporters enjoyed a day on the links and the chance to network with other like-minded philanthropists. Our annual golf outing raises funds to support our Heroes Circle community and ensures that we can continue to provide programming to families at no cost.



AUGUST 4, 2021

Friends of the Heroes Circle: Legislative Open House

Members of the State of Michigan's legislature joined us at Pepper Elementary in Oak Park, Michigan, to discuss their position surrounding the state of education and children's mental health services. During the event, attendees were introduced to our Heroes Circle School Program and our Child Resilience Initiative co-chaired by Bridget McCormack, Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court, and Jamii Hitchcock, Ph.D., Superintendent of Oak Park Schools.



AUGUST 25, 2021

Continuation of the Heroes Circle School Program in Oak Park, Michigan

Fall 2021 marked year three of our elementary school program pilot in Oak Park School District. We kicked off the school year by hosting our first virtual professional development session. More than 150 Oak Park elementary school administrators and educators participated in our workshop. This training was one of 17 professional development workshops hosted in 2021.

SEPTEMBER 2021

#10KickChallenge

In support of National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month and National Sickle Cell Awareness Month, we partnered with Century Martial Arts to recognize our powerful little heroes and celebrate our Martial Arts Therapists. Participants showed their support by filming and publishing their 10 best kicks on social media.



SEPTEMBER 1, 2021

Pediatric Cancer Awareness Game

Thanks to our friends at the Detroit Tigers, our Michigan-based Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing program students were honored at the September 1st game and given the chance to participate in pregame traditions like throwing the first pitch and reading the player line-up. Mascot Paws also presented the

kids with a custom Detroit Tiger tie-dyed martial arts belt.



SEPTEMBER 2, 2021

Heroes Circle Program Launches in Australia

We expanded our virtual programming into Australia, thanks to a partnership with the Koala Kids Foundation. In September, we conducted our first weekly virtual therapeutic martial arts class for children undergoing treatment for cancer and their siblings.



NOVEMBER 3-4, 2021

Virtual Pediatric Psychosocial and Palliative Care Conference

Our 3rd annual virtual conference, powered by the Children’s Foundation, featured five world-class experts on Pediatric Psychosocial and Palliative Care. This event had over 400 participants from 13 countries in attendance.

DECEMBER 2021

New International Partnerships

In 2021, we worked diligently to create new partnerships in the U.S. and globally, with programs starting in Toronto, Ontario at

ErinoakKids, Phillip Aziz Centre for Hospice Care and Emily’s House Children’s Hospice.

DECEMBER 2021

South Africa Media Coverage

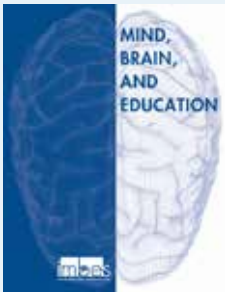
A major news outlet in South Africa, Carte Blanche TV, featured a segment on our international Kids Kicking Cancer program, highlighting the benefits we offer to families and our unique impact on their community.



DECEMBER 2021

Mind, Brain, and Education

A published research study titled “Martial Arts-Based Curriculum Reduces Stress, Emotional, and Behavioral Problems in Elementary Schoolchildren During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Pilot Study” was released by the International Mind, Brain, and Education Society displaying the results of an elementary school pilot study, focused on our Heroes Circle School Program. The research was conducted by Hilary Marusak and Wayne State University.



Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing Program

We **TEACH** pediatric patients to use martial arts-based techniques to manage their response to pain and stress.

At the Heroes Circle, we connect children to a supportive community where they can use the techniques of the martial arts to focus on their inner strength and capabilities in confronting disease.

A SILVER LINING IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Overnight, COVID changed the model for how the Heroes Circle connected with its participants. Yet despite the challenges presented, we remained committed to connecting children and families with the tools and techniques necessary to reduce their pain and emotional stress.

We started the year with our mind set on innovative practices and program expansion. What was once a brick and mortar offering, was now virtual and highly scalable, allowing us to reach more children across the United States and globally. Thanks to the power of technology, we offered virtual therapeutic martial arts classes across the globe seven days a week, allowing children to participate in class from their homes, hospitals, clinics, in virtual community classes or one-on-one.

After nearly a year of experience and recalibrations, we saw an increase of more than 70% in summer camp participation, with 17 illness-based camps offerings Heroes Circle programming in the U.S. and Canada teaching over 50 camp sessions. Our focus on strengthening and growing partnerships in healthcare also resulted in 18 new in-person and virtual program offerings in 2021.

Like most nonprofit organizations, we had no idea how our efforts would be affected by COVID. Fortunately, we’ve experienced some unexpected yet positive outcomes, partnering with national community organizations like HopeCam and Gilda’s Club, and even expanded our reach to two new countries – Australia and Europe. Your support made our growth possible. Thank you!

A NEW DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

Thanks to a 1 million dollar pledge from Larry and Jackie Kraft, the Heroes Circle is one step closer to reaching our goal of empowering one million children. This gift, building upon the family’s previous support, will be invested into the development of the Kraft Digital Dojo, a virtual place where children will be able to connect with Martial Arts Therapeutic Mentors, as well as friends and peers all over the world.

We’re excited about the future of our organization, and we are thankful for our Heroes Circle community supporters. Together, we can lower the pain and trauma of more children, while empowering them to teach the world.



“Thanks to the Kraft Family, our students will be able to further connect virtually across the globe, enhancing their support and sense of community, regardless of where they live.”

–Cindy Cohen MS, CCLS
Heroes Circle Global Program Director.

27/8/5

The Heroes Circle served kids in twenty-seven states; within eight countries; and spread across five continents.



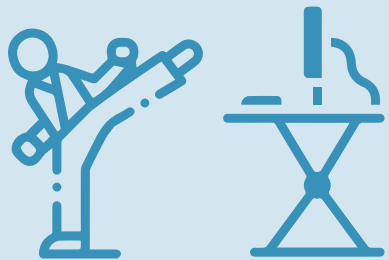
20,000+
Breath Brakes® taken by our Heroes Circle community.

Volunteers gave nearly
1,000
hours of service



NEARLY
3,000

pediatric patients each participated in an average of five sessions last year.

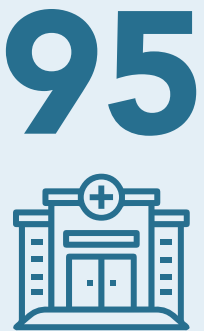


The total number of instances that children in our Heroes Circle Pediatric Healing Program participated in a class or session

10,409



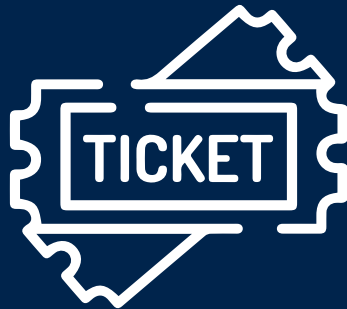
212
The number of Martial Arts Therapists working with our Heroes Circle community worldwide.



95
Hospitals and program locations offered Heroes Circle programming.

90

The number of Heroes Circle sponsored events, including virtual dance parties, talent shows, drive-through parties, and more!



Meet Cole: A Little Hero From Michigan

Cole Yahara sounds like a typical 10-year-old at first, rambling enthusiastically about video games, his desire to sneak a snake into the house, and getting on his two sisters' nerves. The next moment, though, he sounds wise beyond his years, discussing the loneliness of having a chronic disease, **and describing light as "Everything that makes you feel good: being with friends, family, and having fun."**

The "light" Cole describes relates to power breathing, which Cole learned during martial arts therapy. Cole was diagnosed as an infant with SCID, or Severe Combined Immunodeficiency. SCID is a rare condition that leaves him without an immune system and requires monthly IV immunoglobulin transfusions to keep him alive. Cole's mom, Amy, learned about Kids Kicking Cancer and the Heroes Circle program when she was on the Hematology/Oncology floor at the hospital. She initially hesitated to reach out as Cole does not have cancer, but made the call anyway. It paid off. Cole's entire family was welcomed with open arms, and the results have been astounding.

"They get a sense of normalcy from the program," says Amy. "That was important because he felt like an outlier." Cole joined a Kids Kicking Cancer martial arts therapy class in Southfield, Michigan, attending multiple days a week to learn to punch, kick, and utilize techniques like body scans and power breathing to manage pain.

For Cole, who lives a very isolated life, the big win was meeting other children with their own health struggles. Participating in the Heroes Circle removed the sense of loneliness that sometimes left him feeling depressed. "My friends have to deal with cancer or other stuff too," Cole says. "That makes me feel like my life is not useless... that makes me feel nice, and doesn't make me feel lonely."

As Cole's SCID leaves him incredibly vulnerable to illness, activities in his life have always been extremely restricted. When the Covid pandemic hit in March of 2020, life for the Yahara family got even more isolated. Still, the Heroes Circle program continued, with classes pivoting to virtual classes that keep Cole connected.



Kids Kicking Cancer has been "awesome" about creating drive-by events for holidays like Christmas and Halloween, when Cole and his sisters decorated their car and got to wave to other families and pick up goodie bags. And for a boy who cites Science as his favorite class, online offerings with KKC and partner Cranbrook have been amazing.

Cole's parents appreciate the support Kids Kicking Cancer has provided for their entire family. Amy is grateful about how well the organization includes *all* their children; when Coles gets a gift, her daughters get gifts. **This is important as the whole family is affected by Cole's illness; Coles' sisters forgo many typical childhood experiences like sleepovers to keep their brother safe.** Cole's dad James

advises parents in similar situations to get involved. "Join," he says. "Start going. Include the whole family. Do the extra events. Do the classes, do everything...it can only impact your family in a positive way."

Cole summarizes all the challenges going on around him in two words: "Stuff happens." For his parents, Cole's struggles are far more than stuff. **"When your kids are sick and there's nothing you can do but watch them suffer, it hurts. It's painful,"** says Amy, who cites using body scans to help Cole ease his anxiety when he gets treatments. For James, Cole is truly a hero. "While he does struggle, he's still happy, he still goes after life with an enjoyment, he still loves being Cole...and Kids Kicking Cancer has helped him with keeping him in the positive."

Cole, of course, has his own view on how Kids Kicking Cancer has supported him. With a smile, he says, "It has really gotten me in the fighting spirit."

Heroes Circle School Program

We **EMPOWER** children with the tools to build resilience and overcome stress that can impact learning, behavior and long-term health.

From students to administrators, our school programs are designed to empower individuals at all levels of the school community throughout the districts that we serve.

Elementary School Pilot

Using the power of martial arts to teach meditative breathing, mindfulness and movement, the Heroes Circle elementary school curriculum is a social and emotional based learning program adopted by Oak Park School District as part of a multi-year pilot aimed at teaching self-regulation and empowerment.

During the 2020-21 school year, we continued to manage our pilot program across three participating elementary schools and introduced the Heroes Circle to over 870 students and faculty – resulting in over 2,000 hours of curriculum engagement. Teachers and Breath Brake Coaches were encouraged to tailor lessons to fit the needs and learning styles of all students, ranging from 3rd – 5th grade.

Using a 360-degree approach, we also focused our efforts on professional development for classroom teachers, administrators, school safety officers and lunchroom supervisors. We know that adults in the school must have tools to understand and manage their own stress before they can help students do the same. In 2021, we hosted 17 workshops, training, and collaboration sessions with nearly 500 total participants from Oak Park School District.



Middle School Expansion

2021 was dedicated to the development of our new middle school standards-aligned curriculum that helps students identify and manage their stress effectively. Left unmanaged, stress can lead to frustration, anger, depression, and physical illness. In the school environment, unchecked stress can become toxic, and in some cases, violent. The curriculum was also designed to be beneficial for teachers and other school staff, helping to foster a safe and harmonious school environment for all. Our ultimate goal is healthy teens.

With a soft launch in spring 2022, students had the opportunity to practice martial arts inspired breathing, express their feelings, share ideas and thoughts, listen to others, and engage in dialogue about pertinent issues they are facing.

Our program consists of 19 units that focus on the specific social and emotional needs of early adolescents. All lessons are aligned with Michigan standards for Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, English Language Arts standards, and CASEL Social Emotional Learning Competencies: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, Self-Management and Relationship Skills.

Internal Mind, Brain, and Education Society

In December 2021, a published research study was released by the International Mind, Brain, and Education Society outlining the results of an elementary school pilot study conducted by Hilary Marusak and Wayne State University. The study examined the impact of the Heroes Circle School Program on stress, emotional and behavioral problems in elementary school children 2-5 months after COVID-related school shutdowns. Satisfaction with the curriculum was high among those who received the intervention and children reported increased mindfulness and decreased stress over the school year. 77% of children were still using our techniques and reported benefits five months later, including a decrease in COVID related fears.

... YOUR IMPACT IN 2020-21 ...

825

The number of students in Oak Park School District who were introduced to our Heroes Circle curriculum in 2020-21.

076,800

The total number of instances that children in our Heroes Circle School Program participated in a Martial Arts Instructor-led class.

Nearly 4,500
Hours spent by elementary students engaging with the Heroes Circle school curriculum.

17

Workshops, training and collaboration sessions were held in 2021 with nearly 500 instances of participation by Oak Park School District staff.

Nearly 9,000

Breath Brakes® taken by students during school hours.

Heroes Circle Adult Healing Program

We **INSPIRE** healing and well-being in adults.

Our tools and training help parents and caregivers of our Pediatric Healing Program participants, as well as adults in need of healing and purpose.

An Innovative App Like No Other

Thanks to a generous grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, we successfully kicked off the development of our new adult warriors app. Intended as a complementary therapeutic approach for reducing pain in young Substance Abuse Disorder (SUD) patients, the app will serve as an interactive space where the children in our Heroes Circle community can inspire and motivate them. The app will also help SUD patients to visualize their inner beast, proving effective in reducing personal demonization and increasing a patient's ability to face down that beast. Our trademarked Breath Brake® will also serve as a reminder to engage the breath, relaxing the body and reducing stress signals to the brain, thus reducing pain and cravings. The app will be piloted as part of a clinical research study beginning in 2023.

A Complimentary Intervention for Opioid Use Disorder Patients

In May 2021, a research study was published in the Journal of Pain Medicine examining neurobiological and behavioral effects of the Heroes Circle's virtual reality-based meditative 12-week intervention in patients undergoing Methadone Maintenance Treatment (MMT). Preliminary findings concluded that after each intervention session (relative to pre-session), ratings of pain, opioid craving, anxiety and depression (but not anger) decreased. Furthermore, this demonstrates the feasibility, therapeutic promise, and brain basis of a meditative intervention for OUD patients undergoing MMT.



Our U.S. Partners

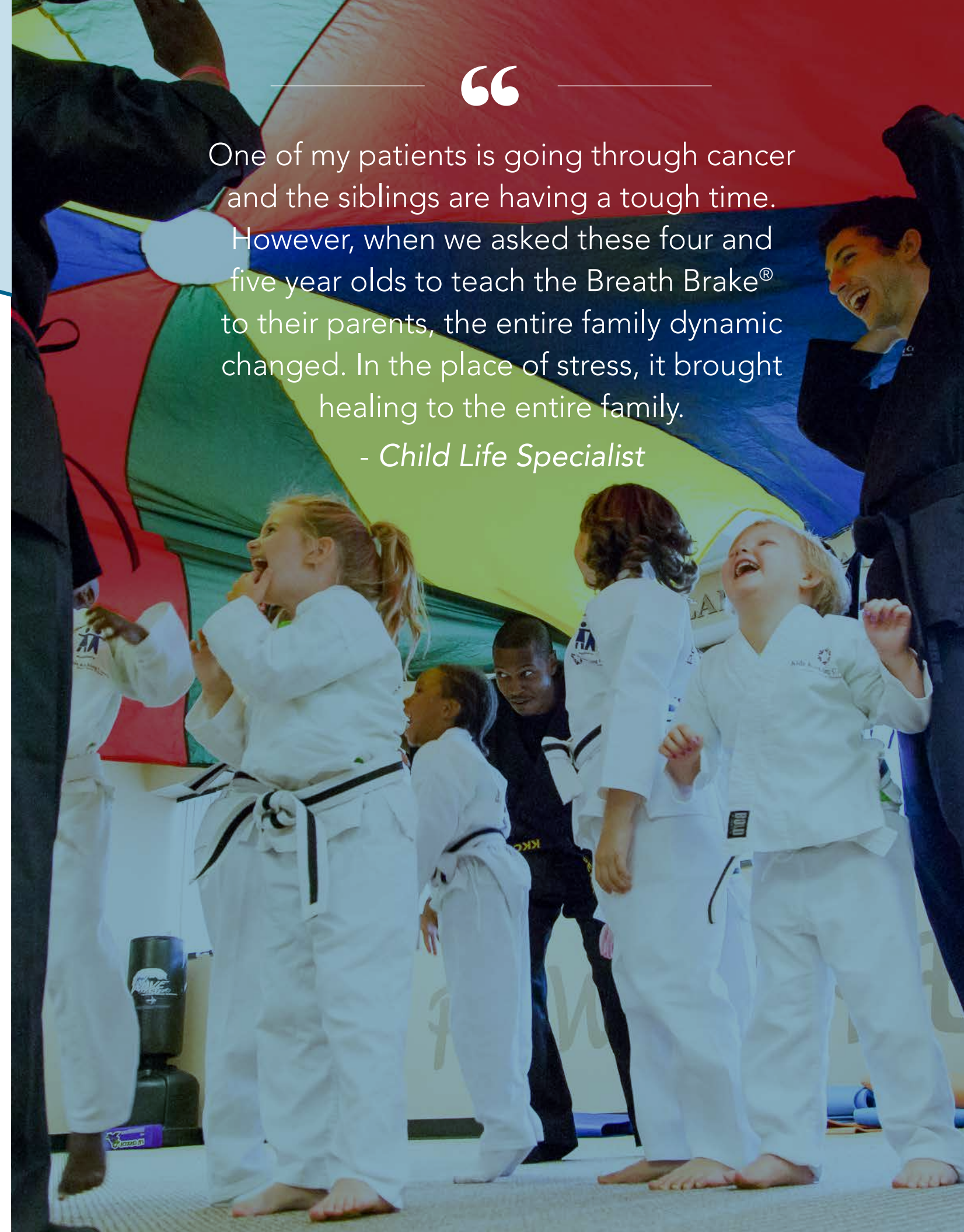
The Heroes Circle is a proud partner of over 50 health care providers and illness based camps across the United States. We are always looking for new opportunities to expand the reach of our therapeutic applications, while working alongside partners who are focused on providing children with the highest quality medical care. A sampling of our partners are listed below.



“

One of my patients is going through cancer and the siblings are having a tough time. However, when we asked these four and five year olds to teach the Breath Brake® to their parents, the entire family dynamic changed. In the place of stress, it brought healing to the entire family.

- Child Life Specialist



Heroes Circle Events

Family Connections January – December 2021

For our Heroes Circle families suffering from the isolation exacerbated by illness, we offer interest based virtual programming monthly. Events include virtual dance parties, cooking lessons, movie nights, arts and crafts, and holiday gatherings.

Last year we hosted over 90 family gatherings, both in-person and virtual, thanks to our in-kind partnerships with The Henry Ford, the Detroit Pistons, the Detroit Tigers, Cranbrook Institute of Science, and more!



Detroit Tigers Pediatric Cancer Awareness Game



Cranbrook Institute of Science Virtual Summer Camp



Annual Belting Ceremony Drive-Through



Blue Angels Private Meet and Greet



Light the Night Event



Cranbrook Institute of Science Virtual Halloween Science



Virtual Global Dance Party



Annual Belting Ceremony Drive-Through



Valentine's Day Drive-Through



A Day at Henry Ford Greenfield Village



AYA: Empowerment Program Kickoff



The Henry Ford Greenfield Village Salute America



Virtual Costume Party

Heroes Circle Events

4th Annual Golf Outing and Dinner July 26, 2021 | Knollwood Country Club

Golfers gathered for our 4th annual outing at Knollwood Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. The event raised more than \$228,000 to support the growth of our global Pediatric Healing Program.

Thank you to our event chairman, Josh Kaplan, our 2021 outing sponsors, and the many other generous donors who made the event possible.



Heroes Circle Events

Virtual Pediatric Psychosocial and Palliative Care Conference November 3-4, 2021

In November 2021, we hosted our 3rd annual Pediatric Psychosocial Palliative Care Conference, powered by the Children's Foundation.

Our theme, Creating a Culture of Healing Empowerment, focused on standards of care and how to create a personalized approach that addresses the physical, psychological, and social effects a possibly life-threatening illness can have on a family.

Our virtual conference brought together world-class experts on pediatric psychosocial and palliative care, as well as 420+ health care professionals from 13 countries. Speakers included:



Justin Baker, MD
Chief, Division of
Quality of Life &
Palliative Care
St. Jude Children's
Research Hospital



Suleika Jaouad
Cancer Survivor,
Journalist & Author,
Between Two
Kingdoms-A Memoir
of a Life Interrupted.



Abby Rosenberg, MD
Assoc. Professor, Pediatrics,
Hematology, Oncology &
Palliative Care, Seattle
Children's Hospital



Leonard Wexler, MD
Professor of Clinical Pediatrics,
Weill Cornell College of
Medicine; Senior Attending
Dept. of Pediatrics, Memorial
Sloan Kettering



Ahmar Zaidi, MD
Medical Director, Clinical
Development, Agios
Pharmaceuticals, Sickle
Cell Advocate

Our guests left informed
and inspired, receiving
continuing education units
for social work, nursing, child
life and medicine.

**Stay tuned for more information
about our 2022 virtual
conference taking place
November 2-3, 2022.**



2021 Board of Directors

Our work is only possible with the support of our Heroes Circle board of directors, as well as our government, corporate, foundation, community, and nonprofit partners. Their knowledge, expertise, and commitment power our mission. **Together, we will work to empower one million children to reduce their pain and stress.**



Robert Bronstein
Chairman



Neil Schloss
Treasurer



Doug Filzek
Secretary

MEMBERS



Daniel Bral, DO



Barbara Hertzler



Tonya Matthews



Stephen Cheifetz



Josh Kaplan



Bridget McCormack



Gail Danto



Chris Keogh



Norman Pappas



Keyantee' Davis



Larry Kraft



Shirley Stancato



Brad Feldman



Bonnie Larson



Lawrence Wolfe

Financials

Heroes Circle supporters like you made a big difference in 2021.
THANK YOU!

REVENUE	2021
Annual Campaign	\$1,437,375
Grants	\$1,222,464
Other Revenue	\$215,909
In-Kind	\$150,295
Total Revenue	\$3,026,043

EXPENSES	2021
Fundraising	\$608,216
Program & Administration	\$2,653,853
Total Expenses	\$3,262,069



Charach Global Center
27600 Northwestern Hwy., Suite 220
Southfield, MI 48034

HeroesCircle.org