



FUND NEWS

Empathy. Understanding. Hope.

DECEMBER 2016 • 9TH ISSUE

THE FORREST SPENCE FUND - THROUGH THE YEARS



When the Forrest Spence Fund was founded in 2007, we did not envision a one-size-fits-all approach to care. Our mission was to know families on a personal level and then attempt to meet their unique non-medical needs. We began with this goal, and as much as the Fund has grown and transformed over the past nine years, that remains the same...

we aim to know our families and pinpoint their greatest needs for health and well-being during a devastating time. We strive daily to stay true to our initial mission in the face of exciting growth, and relationships will always be the crux of why we do what we do. The families we care for will forever be the heartbeat of our mission...

2008 – Dionne Jackson • Murfreesboro, TN

"For me, it started with a basket. It was a basket overflowing with essentials we needed to endure a hospital stay with our infant daughter. We did not know it at the time, but she would remain in the hospital for a long seven months, and the Forrest Spence Fund would become an absolute lifeline for our family. Included in the basket was a letter from David and Brittany Spence, and as I read the story about their son it felt so familiar and reflected all the difficult and unexpected moments we were experiencing. When we met them and shared our story we felt validated and understood in our fatigue, struggles, and emotions.

The basket also held a roll of quarters to use in the

hospital vending machines. Some of those quarters intentionally went into our daughter's piggy bank to be opened on her 18th birthday as a reminder of her journey from being a fragile and very ill infant, to a healthy young woman. During the time of her illness I learned to use scripture to bless our family because of a book included in the basket, and I will practice this the rest of my life. Also included was the Jesus Storybook Bible for our daughter, and we continue to use it daily to teach her about God and His great love for her. The basket of supplies was so much more to our family than just that... it was an introduction, a support system, and a great encouragement in our darkest hour.

Later, when the holidays approached, we did not have the strength, energy, or money to even think about celebrating. But the Fund stepped in with meals, gift cards, and presents for my other children who were young and just barely adapting to the whole ordeal. Even on the most difficult days with my daughter flat-lining, they were there. Eight years later, we still cannot adequately express how the Fund changed our experience and impacted our lives."

2009 – Mondie Cobble Haynes • Williamsburg, WV

"On October 6, 2009, my son Briton was born. He was immediately transported to Le Bonheur and diagnosed with an AVM which controls the blood flow through the body. Once I arrived, there were many meetings and decisions to be made and I was terrified. One of the NICU nurses referred me to the Forrest Spence Fund, and our 90-day stay at the hospital was dramatically different because of that introduction.

I was not able to work for five months, but the Forrest Spence Fund helped pay my cell phone bill and secured Christian counseling for me and my older son,

Blake. One of my fondest memories of that dark time was Christmas, when we were able to celebrate in the hospital as a family because of the Fund. Tears of joy rolled down my face that day when Brittany Spence came into Briton's room with a little red wagon full of wrapped gifts for each of us. We will never forget it.

There is no doubt in my mind that the support we received from the Forrest Spence Fund helped Blake and I persevere through our sadness and struggles and come away healthy and thriving. In hindsight, I most appreciate that the Fund allowed me to spend every minute possible with my sick son."

2010 – Hanna Williams • Senatobia, MS

"I can't help but smile when I think of the Forrest Spence Fund because I am reminded of how much they helped me in my time of need. My son, Hayden, was in the NICU at Le Bonheur for four months. We were completely blindsided by his deteriorating health and found ourselves scared and overwhelmed. Even after we arrived at Le Bonheur, it took a little more than a month to fully comprehend his diagnosis of a very rare genetic disorder. When I met Brittany Spence, she was kind and smiling and she just brought warmth to an otherwise depressing situation. I cannot describe how comforting it was to have someone who could empathize with your situation come to you and talk with you daily. My sustenance of choice were the smoothies from the hospital cafe and once Brittany learned how much I loved these, she began bringing them to me when she came to visit. It sounds so simple, but that 'small' thing was such an encouragement to me during that time. I remember running into her in the hallway during our last week there, the last week we knew we would have with our son. I gave her an update and she immediately was able to help guide us in the direction we needed to go for the next phase of our lives. The emotional and mental support I received from the Forrest Spence Fund is indescribable. I am forever grateful for the support the Fund offered me and my family during the darkest time of our lives."

2011 – Bethany Chu • Memphis, TN

"The NICU is a pretty scary place to be, but having twins in two NICUs across town from each other was more overwhelming than we thought we could handle. As my husband and I wearily left one baby to visit Le Bonheur and the sicker baby, we were greeted with two care bags for both of our children! Each one held a lot of helpful items and a soft 'lovie' that would stay with each of our girls during all of their separation time. Those lovies became a symbol to me of our togetherness as a family even though we could not be together physically. To be cared for as an entire family

unit even when our family was spread across the city meant the world to me. I knew that someone saw us and cared about our situation. It made facing uncertainty easier, and made us feel like we could bear the load."

2012 – Shannon Jackson • Olive Branch, MS

"In the fall of 2012, our family found ourselves in the darkest place we had ever known. Our fourth baby girl had been born almost three months early. She contracted E.Coli and suffered from a perforated bowel. We had three other young daughters being cared for at home, and we were being admitted to Le Bonheur with our infant. The majority of our stay was touch and go, never knowing what the next day would bring. There were many days in a row that we did not even leave the hospital and as time wore on we grew weary and broken down. As wonderful as the staff was, we found ourselves living in a world that had come to a complete stop, while outside it was still turning. We had an amazing support system of family and friends, but desperately needed to talk to other parents who had been in our shoes and could understand our unique struggle. That is where the Forrest Spence Fund entered our lives. Brittany Spence listened, guided me, let me vent, and taught me it was okay to have the emotions I was having. Our hospital stay took a toll on our whole family and our oldest daughter really started to struggle. The Fund provided professional counseling for her and when we left the hospital we had a healthy baby girl, but also healthy hearts throughout our whole family because of how they stepped in for us and addressed our important emotional needs."

2013 – Lee and Kevin Holt • Memphis, TN

"Our first son Gabriel received a fatal diagnosis of double kidney failure at his 20-week ultrasound. We carried him for 31 weeks until he met Jesus as he came into this world. Brittany Spence was a personal friend before Gabriel's birth and death, and we immediately reached out to the Fund for guidance and support in the midst of our tragedy. Brittany told us he was a uniquely blessed child because he would only know the love of Jesus and the love of his parents. He would not know the pain of this world, the brokenness, the sin. Brittany does not sugar coat things; she's road-tested, and it is such a comfort. She spoke to us with sincerity, empathy, and Christ-centered hope. The Fund played a key role in our survival during that time. It centered us as Christians, and framed us as parents. They provided personal encouragement, wide-open love, a reality check, and friends for life. When we needed it, the Fund provided professional Christian counseling that helped us heal in countless ways. I remember Brittany saying, 'You're a member of a club now. A club no one

ever wants to join, but you're in it now... and you're going to be OK.' The Forrest Spence Fund is a real family helping other real families. It is truly a lifeline of hope."

2014 – Roxanne McGowan • Memphis, TN

"My daughter Talia was born at 24 weeks. She weighed one pound, ten ounces and measured 12.75 inches. During her first month we found out she had a PDA and brain bleeds. The bleeds grew more severe almost immediately and many complications arose before she was transferred to Le Bonheur. Around that time I heard about the Forrest Spence Fund Family Dinners, and those dinners became a welcome and necessary break from sitting by my daughter's bedside around the clock. They were my only chance to speak to other parents who had babies in similar situations. I felt listened to and understood by the people from the Fund. My other children were cared for as well, and the Fund provided activities and fun things for them to do while waiting around the hospital. When Talia finally graduated from the NICU I thought that we would have to "graduate" from the Fund also, but they still visited my family every week and made sure that we were all cared for. The Fund helped with bills we could not pay plus provided us with meal vouchers and gas cards. Having an ill premature baby is the toughest thing I have faced in life and produces so much stress and doubt. I am so thankful for how the Forrest Spence Fund supported Talia, me, and our whole family."

2015 – Lara and Rob Bachieuro • Nashville, TN

"We welcomed our son, Blake, in January of 2015, after a long and scary pregnancy. Due to the complications we knew he had, he passed away just 20 hours after he was born. Despite the fact that we had been prepared for the worst, we were devastated. We lost our precious son, and we also felt the loss of the family we had always hoped for and dreamed of. We were left clinging to one another, to God, to our family and friends, and to our healthy four-year-old daughter. We had so many questions, and were filled with so many different emotions, and although we could process them together, there were so many times that we just did not know how to begin to put words to our pain. Shortly after Blake's birth, friends reached out to us and let us know that they wanted to help us get grief counseling via the Forrest Spence Fund. Although this was something we knew we might need at some point, it took this little nudge to get us into the office of an amazing therapist. We were both able to talk, cry, share, listen, and learn what it is like to live with grief. We were assured we were not alone and that our feelings were normal. We were relieved to learn that this is not, in fact, something you "get over," but something that you learn to live with, and that truly

heals with time. We were reassured about the fact that God was grieving with us, and that He is familiar with pain and sorrow. Those counseling sessions were truly one of the most amazing gifts we could have been given. They did not 'fix' anything, but set us on the path toward healing, and gave us strategies to process together and with other people. We are so grateful for the Forrest Spence Fund, and for the way that they are caring for the needs and hearts of families who carry so much pain."

2016 – Emily Forman. New Albany, Mississippi

"I was introduced to the Forrest Spence Fund when my son, Clayton, was at Le Bonheur after being born with a diaphragmatic hernia. During his short life, the Fund offered me hope. Brittany Spence knew my heartache and fear because of her experience with her own son. When Clayton's health declined and we knew he would not make it I was so thankful to have someone to talk to who really understood my devastation. The Fund helped me make decisions the day that he passed away and they have been checking on me and supporting me in the months since. They provided meal vouchers and gas cards that I needed so much and it helped immensely to know that those important details of my life were secure."





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THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Our volunteers are truly a remarkable group of people - of all ages and from all backgrounds, who give generously of their time and talents. We are continually overwhelmed by their willingness to serve and the bottom line is this: our volunteers are the reason the Fund is growing and having an impact in Memphis and beyond. Volunteers, THANK YOU!

If you are curious about donating your time to the Fund, we welcome your questions! We would love to get you plugged in. Please email us today for more information!

Email: donna@forrestspencefund.org



The Forrest Spence Fund is a 501c3 non-profit organization based out of Memphis, Tennessee. Our mission is to assist with the non-medical needs of critically or chronically ill children and their families throughout the Mid-South. The Forrest Spence Fund is a community of staff and dedicated volunteers offering empathy, understanding and hope to families in need.

WWW.FORRESTSPENCEFUND.ORG



THREE EVENTS THIS YEAR

We enjoyed THREE events this year designed to raise awareness and support of our mission. All three events occur annually, and together they provide our yearly operating budget. Thank you to everyone who planned, participated in, sponsored, and attended these fund-raisers in 2016. Our mission is possible because of your support!

1. NO SHOW Ball

Where every guest is a no show!

A delicious selection of food and wine was delivered to the front door of each ticket holder. This year was the inaugural year for the "Ball," and it proved to be a success on every front. Over 270 dinners were delivered - several were donated to families at Le Bonheur. Over \$26,000 was raised for the Fund. Best of all, our "guests" enjoyed a curated meal from some of Memphis' best in the comfort of their own homes!

Thank you to the following sponsors:

- Axiom Contracting Group • Corks Liquor Store
- Diamond Brokers of Memphis
- Fino's East Italian Deli & Catering
- Galler Foods • Lisa's Lunchbox • LSI
- Lucchesi's Ravioli and Pasta Company, Inc.
- Matthew Gant State Farm Agent • Whole Foods

SAVE-THE-DATE for the 2ND ANNUAL
NO SHOW BALL

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017

Tickets will be available online in January.

Make your plans now to "attend!"

2.

SPRING FOR FORREST

Cocktail Party and AUCTION

A beautiful evening of food, friends and fun!

The 2nd annual Spring for Forrest Cocktail Party & Auction, sponsored by the dental practice of Avery, Meadows & Associates, was an incredible evening! The pleasant spring weather enhanced the already beautiful setting of Memphis Botanic Gardens. The night was filled with delicious local food, and both silent and live auctions. Thanks to our generous patrons and donors, we raised over \$80,000 for the Forrest Spence Fund and had lots of fun to boot! We especially thank those who gave of their time and resources to make this event such a success, particularly our planning committee and team of volunteers, auction donors, sponsors, and guests!

Food was generously provided by the following Memphis area restaurants:

- Drinks from Local
- Belly Acres • Flying Fish • Gus's Fried Chicken
- La Fayette's • Rizzo's Diner • Sweet Grass



SAVE-THE-DATE for the 3RD ANNUAL
SPRING FOR FORREST EVENT

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 2017

Tickets will be available online in February.

WWW.FORRESTSPENCEFUND.ORG

The printing services for this newsletter were donated by J.W. Moore.

3.



Our annual 5K has been around as long as the Fund has been in existence, and remains our largest fundraiser of the year. We work hard to make it a fun morning for the whole family and delight each year as families from the Mid-South and beyond return and bring their friends. The addition of team competitions brought in workplace, school and church groups and highlighted the spirit of community we strive to foster in a fun way. We are thrilled to report that new fundraising and attendance benchmarks were achieved at this year's 9th annual race. We forged a new partnership with Start 2 Finish Event Management and it proved a valuable relationship.



Approximately 1,600 participants registered and over \$120,000 was raised toward our yearly budget. Thank you to our race sponsors, volunteers, and runners!

PRESENTING SPONSOR: Campbell Clinic

DIAMOND SPONSORS:

• 747R10 • The Chris Galjour Family • Key Biologics, LLC

PLATINUM SPONSORS

- Center for Orthotics and Prosthetics Inc.
- Harris, Madden Powell • Joyce Signs/LSI
- Pediatric Emergency Specialists • Vineyard Vines
- Walnut Grove Animal Clinic • Oak Hall



FAMILY DINNERS

Each month the Forrest Spence Fund hosts a Family Dinner at Le Bonheur. This meal serves families by providing a warm, free meal for the whole family and an opportunity to leave the hospital room and connect with other parents and Fund volunteers. We consider these regular meals to be the "front line" of our mission, and they serve as a comfortable introduction of who we are and how we can help. While parents eat and relax they are served by Fund volunteers and given the opportunity to talk if they so wish. Siblings are engaged in a craft or fun activity.

This year, we have served approximately 3,500 warm meals and created 450 crafts with children during this time. Many of those crafts are used to brighten the rooms of patients, giving well children a way to express themselves and play a helping role. Families tell us that these dinner events provide a respite, camaraderie, nourishment, and needed entertainment for siblings. We are so thankful to have the opportunity to serve hurting families in this way.

It takes approximately 425 volunteers to make these dinners a reality. Groups from local businesses, non-profits, community organizations and churches often serve together. Many thanks to our dedicated volunteers, Le Bonheur Children's Medical Center, and our wonderful local sponsors. If you are interested in getting involved with a Family Dinner in 2017 - email and let us know! Thank you to the following local sponsors who donated and/or discounted delicious food: • Central BBQ • Fino's East • Taziki's • Jim's Place Grille • Gus's Fried Chicken

THE FORREST SPENCE FUND - BY THE NUMBERS (2016):

22,831 various forms of assistance for patients/families - including rent/utility bills, care bags, new tires, car notes, phone bills and purchases of new cribs, bouncers, and other equipment needed, meal vouchers and gas cards)

12,261 various forms of Institutional/Hospital Support - including fulfilling wish lists of much needed items such as rocking chairs, high chairs, DVD players, game systems, CD players, sound machines, and crib mobiles along with our Unit Appreciation Program and Heart Project

65 patients/families received free third party counseling of at least three sessions

\$110,000 total funds awarded to families through grants