



FUND NEWS

Empathy. Understanding. Hope.

14th Annual Newsletter | 2021



OVERCOMING UNCERTAINTY

An ill child lives with a constant sense of uncertainty that becomes a way of life for them and for their caregivers. Families dealing with childhood illness have hopes and dreams for the future, but they also understand the fragility of life and the unexpected outcomes that go along with serious pediatric diagnoses. The families in the care of the Forrest Spence Fund are unfortunately used to navigating life amidst devastating setbacks; their courage inspires us to move forward with purpose. In 2021, as the pandemic persisted and the Fund faced great uncertainty, we looked to our FSF families.

Like most of the world, the Forrest Spence Fund was strained and challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many ways the backbone of our mission was at risk because the well-established and consistent measures we rely on to connect with and care for families seemed to be no longer an option. Meeting parents in the hospital, serving meals, and providing care packages could not go on. For 18 months, we have

planned programs and meals within the hospital without the assurance that they would ever come to fruition. We proceeded to schedule events for families on shaky ground, planning for every contingency, only to see guidelines change. We have had countless meals, programs and events cancelled, rescheduled, or re-imagined to function within a shifting framework, always with the safety and health of our families, patients, and Fund supporters as our top priority. It has been a uniquely challenging year to keep the Forrest Spence Fund operational, active, and available to vulnerable families with critically or chronically ill children.

It has been discouraging at times, but also hopeful. Every day we see the strength of the families in our care, and it moves us to push our mission forward. On the days it feels like we are navigating a maze blindfolded, we remember our families who move through life with such courage amidst the challenges of pediatric illness on top of the pandemic complications. In so many ways, the

families of the Forrest Spence Fund continually teach us how to persevere in hardship, love each other well in times of trial, and navigate uncertainty with wisdom. We have been overwhelmed by the unknowns at times throughout the year, but the amazing children and families in our care have inspired us to get creative, make adjustments, and move outward with our mission of hope.

For many years the Fund has served breakfast and dinner to families at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in order to provide nourishment, connection, and offer a moment's relief. When the pandemic hit, these regular meals had to be suspended and we instantly mourned the absence of such a practical way to meet and serve families in the hospital. Instead, we provided meal vouchers for families to use in the cafeteria while we regrouped behind the scenes to shift our efforts.

We partnered with some incredible local restaurants, and we were eventually permitted to start offering delicious catered meals to families. Since June, we have delivered roughly 125 boxed dinners per month. Many of the amazing staff members at Le Bonheur saw the impact this small gesture made on weary caregivers and even volunteered to distribute meals alongside us in their own time. We have adopted the same model for breakfast distribution and were thankful to be able to also provide donuts and chicken biscuits for every caregiver in the hospital.

The Comfort Cart is another cornerstone of our work that was compromised due to the pandemic. In years past, volunteers have taken the Comfort Cart around the hospital to offer families essentials that they may need but not be able to attain without leaving the hospital. In an effort to minimize contact, we now provide families at Le Bonheur with a list of essentials that we have available at all times. If an item is needed, a caregiver needs only to make a simple request and a member of their medical staff will bring it to them from our supply.

Though we are not currently able to meet families in the hospital, sit with them, and talk in person as we once did, we are constantly seeking out ways to connect. We remain committed to walking alongside vulnerable families and have relied on frequent phone calls and emails to stay available and aware of significant needs or crises. Our financial assistance programs continue in this way, and we do everything we can to meet the variety of needs that are presented to us. We still offer individual grants of up to \$5000 to help ease the financial burden of having a critically ill child and these grants most often cover utility bills, rent, food, and transportation for families in need. But sometimes our families require more specific assistance and our Benevolence Program is set up to handle these situations. For some, this may look like a single phone bill or rent payment. For others, it means construction of a wheelchair ramp so a child can finally go home.



We have come to accept the hard truth that COVID-19 may be around for a bit longer, and we are working to adjust our programs in ways that provide long-term solutions. Despite the challenges of 2021, we have had thousands of points of impact throughout the year. Moving forward, we continue to carry out our mission each day with creativity and purpose, and we will adjust as we need to for tomorrow. The current of love and hope continues to flow as we seek new ways to meet families with critically or chronically ill children, connect with them and share their burdens, and offer support through one of life's darkest journeys.

The mission of the Forrest Spence Fund is to assist with the non-medical needs of critically or chronically ill children and their families.

Empathy. Understanding. Hope.





WHEN COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

Over the past year, we have seen our community come together like never before to keep the mission of the Forrest Spence Fund going. In light of the pandemic we adjusted our programs and shifted gears to reach families in unique ways. Just as we settled into some new rhythms, disaster struck our office. On June 1, 2021, a fire broke out in our building and we lost the entirety of our inventory due to smoke damage. We keep all of our supplies and donations at this site, categorized and organized to be ready to pull out when needed. It is a busy operation, and we are constantly rotating and shifting inventory as we distribute supplies, essentials, care packages, and more. When the fire hit, our shelves were stocked with essential toiletries, parent literature, blankets, plush toys, baby equipment, children's books, swaddles, handmade items, and much more. The next month seemed insurmountable as an organization as we looked to build back our inventory, restore our office, and continue service in new and challenging ways. All told, we lost \$30,000 worth of children's books alone, and over \$60,000 worth of supplies overall. But the story does not end there.

We reached out to our community, and we were blown away by the kindness and generosity we found there. From day one, people have been willing to help in any way possible so that we could get back to serving families. Supporters of all ages "rolled up their sleeves" this summer and helped the Fund get back to a functional state in creative and unique ways!

One of our previous employees, Taylor McKnatt, offered to come back for the summer to head up the massive project of itemizing all that was lost and restocking the shelves. More than 50 volunteers also helped with this project and sifted through our damaged office to inventory, organize, clean, and properly prepare to once again receive goods that can be safely stored for distribution to patients and families with immune system

concerns. Taylor and the team of volunteers spent over 200 hours on this project, making sure that proper records were kept of losses, and compiling a detailed list of what needed to be restocked. Their work allowed us to start receiving goods again and opened up a channel for others to be able to give back through donations. Thanks to our amazing community, we are filling our shelves and we have started making deliveries to hospitals again with much-needed essentials for families and staff.

Following the fire, a group of children decided they also wanted to help with restoration. They set up a lemonade stand on a summer day to raise money. They then used their earnings to purchase materials to make six no-sew blankets to donate to children in the hospital. Their joy in service was an encouragement to us in so many ways and we love to see young people come together to happily serve their community.

Maylen, a teen volunteer, got creative and coordinated with an area Kroger to collect donated items from shoppers. Maylen and her friends passed out flyers to Kroger customers asking if they would support the Fund with a financial donation or by purchasing toiletry items and snacks. They raised money, helped replenish supplies, and raised awareness for the Forrest Spence Fund. We couldn't be more grateful for the creativity and hard work that these teens put in, and appreciate their initiative and original ideas!

Many groups around the community came together to lend a hand following the fire and it is a joy to see the supplies come in and to know that so many played a part in bringing the mission of the Forrest Spence Fund back to life. A group of ladies from Independent Presbyterian Church knit beautiful, one-of-a-kind blankets, prayer shawls, and stuffed animals which serve as comforting reminders to families in the hospital that they are not alone, but are loved and seen. A local neighborhood ran a collection

("When Community Comes Together" continued)

drive and gathered hundreds of supplies that will make up care bags for families facing an especially difficult or long stay at the hospital. Another amazing group of friends from a retirement community raised money and hosted a book drive, enabling us to once again fill our shelves with brand new children's books. There were many stories just like these throughout the summer of 2021... stories of selfless individuals and groups of friends who faithfully used their time, talents and resources to get the Fund back on its feet.

To our entire community of donors, volunteers and supporters...THANK YOU. You have raised support, donated, cleaned, organized, shopped, created, spread the word, prayed, and lovingly packaged goods. This not only serves patients' families, but also the hospital staff who work night and day to care for them. We could not do what we do without you. We can now look to the future with hope, in full assurance that we have a loving and vibrant support system in our community of volunteers. Just as it is always our goal to remind families that they are not alone, you have reminded us of that important truth this summer as well.

NASHVILLE STORY



Haisten

was born at only 29 weeks and immediately went to the NICU at Vanderbilt with a disorder that affects many body systems. At only two days old, Haisten had his first surgery. The long hospital journey continued from there with multiple surgeries, a tracheotomy, and more. After awarding Haisten's family with a financial grant, his father responded by saying "we are very thankful there are organizations like the Forrest Spence Fund who are able to provide assistance to help ease the burden. There were so many unknown things needed to make the transition to home life from the NICU possible for Haisten and the grant we received from FSF has helped make that transition easier for us. We will forever be grateful for the assistance you have been able to provide."



NASHVILLE QUOTES



The Forrest Spence Fund has been a generous partner supporting many programs at the Monroe Carell Jr Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. We are particularly thankful for their support of the memory books we provide to families after the loss of their child. The memory books allow us to preserve a lock of hair, handprint and footprint, and other milestone moments of their beloved child. We are most grateful for the ongoing support from Brittany and her team.

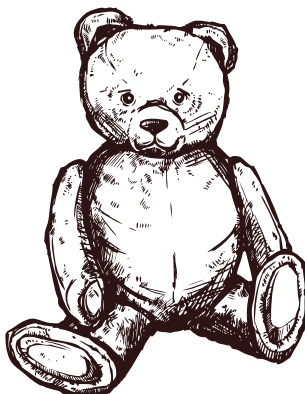
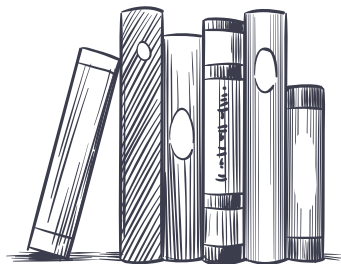
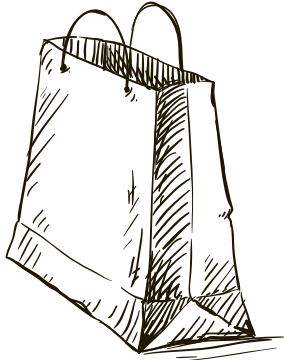
- Adelaide Vienneau, Director Junior League Family Resource Center at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt

The FSF helped us out tremendously. Colton's journey has been an excruciatingly long year of being in the hospital and it has worn us down in so many ways. His hospital bills were just racking up and trying to figure out how we were going to pay them on essentially one income and still be able to afford our other bills was paralyzing. The Fund has made it possible for us to pay off almost 100% of his remaining bills and this has taken a huge burden off of us. We can't thank the Forrest Spence Fund enough for the generosity we were shown and the blessing it has been to have the financial burden lifted from us, during this stressful roller coaster we are on. We truly hope other families can get to feel what we've been able to feel with having the help of this amazing foundation. - Taylor Key





To volunteer or for more ways to help,
email Program Director, Marilyn Bridges
marilyn@forrestspencefund.org



Are you looking for a great way to be involved in your community? The Forrest Spence Fund has several opportunities to give back, and many can be done from afar. Most of our volunteer activities are appropriate for any age, and we welcome families, friend groups, schools, church groups, businesses, or teenagers working on service hours. Whatever your area of interest or your group size, we have a place for you to serve and make a difference for children and families affected by childhood illness, as well as the medical staff who care for them.

PACKAGE BAGS:

Each month, the Forrest Spence Fund fills hundreds of bags for families and medical staff throughout the Mid-South. Create and package goody bags for medical staff, snack bags for families in outpatient areas of the hospital, and essential bags for families with children hospitalized in an inpatient unit. This is a wonderful hands-on-activity for families, groups, and those who love to get their creative juices flowing.

ASSEMBLE CARE BAGS:

Care bags are given to children who are experiencing an especially long or difficult hospitalization. Collect and/or purchase items to include, and assemble the bags. We provide the bags and a list of items for each bag and you do the rest! These bags allow you to put your own spin on things and give each bag a personal touch.

HOST A DRIVE:

We have a consistent need for various items that can be collected by our friends in the community. Set up a drive to collect new and unused books, or travel-sized essential items. Encourage your family and friends, child's school, your office, etc. to get involved by donating these much-needed items to the Forrest Spence Fund.

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

- Collect or donate gifts for our Christmas Toy Drive
- Make no-sew blankets for care bags
- Donate items for our NICU Development Center
- Donate items from our Amazon Wishlist
- Donate items for our Bereavement Carts
- Collect travel-size toiletry items for our Comfort Carts

EVENT DATES 2022



JANUARY 1

Stay tuned for something new.

FEBRUARY 12

No Show Ball - Memphis

APRIL 1

Spring for Forrest - Cocktail Party & Auction - Memphis

AUGUST 27

15th Annual Forrest Spence 5k - Memphis

SEPTEMBER 17

Friends for Forrest - Nashville

FALL

No Show Ball - Chattanooga

15th Anniversary Celebration - Memphis



MEMPHIS STORY



Amalia is an eight-year-old with Ullrich Muscular Dystrophy. Amalia's four-month-old little sister recently received the same diagnosis. On June 28th, 2021, her family home caught fire and burned to the ground. They lost everything, including all of the medical equipment Amalia had at home. The Forrest Spence Fund gave them a \$4,000 financial grant to help cover replacement expenses.

After awarding the grant, the director of the MDA Clinic at Le Bonheur reached out, saying "Thank you for your generosity and support of our MDA family. Your rapid and helpful response will change this family's outcome and outlook!" Amalia's mother, Alora, also responded saying "This is a huge blessing! I'm in tears over here! Thank y'all so much from the bottom of my heart!"

MEMPHIS QUOTE



"Kids dream about their birthday for months leading up to the day of celebration. They never imagined they might have to spend that day in the hospital. We pull out all of the stops to make birthdays in the hospital better and partnering with the Forrest Spence Fund to provide special birthday cakes for our patients helps make their day so much better. The cakes are always incredible and delicious. We are so grateful for the Forrest Spence Fund and the bakeries they partner with for everything they do!" - Anna Epstein, Certified Child Life Specialist III, Le Bonheur Children's Hospital



CHATTANOOGA QUOTES

When your child has a serious illness, the last thing in your mind is money, but you still have to pay the bills. The Forrest Spence Fund and other organizations like it enable families to focus on what is most important - getting their babies healthy again. Words can't express how grateful we are that you reached out a helping hand during the worst time in our lives.
- Joseph, April, Michael, and Brother

"You mean we get toys?!?" - This was a quote from a mother of a NICU patient who was so excited when we brought rattles and a mobile to the bedside. Her daughter has multiple congenital anomalies and will be hospitalized for several months. It almost brings tears to my eyes every time a parent responds this way. A simple item can provide so much joy to a parent who is struggling with having a chronically ill child. It is an honor to be the one to bless these families in this way. Thank you for giving us the resources we use to provide joy within the hospital. This moment showed me that the mom was really struggling and that a normal baby toy can make her day so much better. This is just one example of how the Forrest Spence Fund helps our patients and families by providing the developmental toys for the NICU and PICU. We now have volunteers in both areas who have been able to help use these toys to increase interaction when parents cannot be present. Our nurses are more interactive with our older babies in the NICU because they have something to help them facilitate play. Watching the evolution of our NICU with the creation of our Forrest Spence Fund Developmental Toy Closet has been a delight. Nurses are now asking me for toys before I realize they are needed. Thank you for your continued support! I tell everyone that the Forrest Spence Fund has provided the most positive change in our hospital since I started working here 18 years ago!" - Stacey Miles, Physical Therapist and Chair of the NICU and PICU Development Centers Erlanger Children's Hospital



CHATTANOOGA STORY

Tinley

"I wanted to share this photo with you and tell you how thankful I was to have this mirror y'all provided. When we first started holding Tinley we had to hold her on our chest in a prone position. Having something so thoughtful as that mirror made those moments even more special to me. Thank you for everything you do!" - Ashley Hillsman



BY THE NUMBERS - *Ways We have helped since 2011*



82,606

Various forms of assistance for patients/families - including rent, utility bills, car notes, phone bills, meal vouchers, gas cards, care bags, and purchases of items needed for the home

22,201

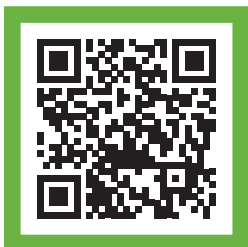
Various forms of institutional/hospital support - including fulfilling wish lists of much needed items for the hospital and with programs like Unit Appreciation

299

Patients and their families received free third party counseling

\$587,000

Total funds awarded to families through financial grants



To give online to the FSF, scan the QR code or visit www.forrestspencefund.org and click the donate button on the homepage. You can make a general donation or select a specific item such as a care bag, counseling session, or meal vouchers. You may also select the city to which you would like your donation allocated. Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga each have their own operating budgets and donors can choose where to send funds from the online menu as well.

You may mail a check to the **Forrest Spence Fund: PO Box 770478, Memphis, TN 38177**. You can specify a city in the memo line and include a note if it is in memory or honor of someone. Regular monthly donations are always welcome. For more information or to set-up an ongoing monthly donation, email brittany@forrestspencefund.org.