“OUR GOAL IS THE SAME AS YOURS—THAT NO CHILD SHOULD HAVE TO DIE FROM CANCER.”

—Robert I. Parker, M.D., FAAP
Director, Pediatric Hematology/Oncology
Stony Brook University Medical Center
CHILDHOOD CANCER FACTS

More than 9,510 CHILDREN under the age of 15 are diagnosed with cancer each year. More than 1,500 die from the disease.

Cancer is the leading cause of death by disease among children ages 1 TO 14.

The cause of most childhood cancers is UNKNOWN and cannot be prevented.

Cancer rates for children increase by at least 1 PERCENT each year.

Suffolk County has a high incidence of childhood cancers. 65 TO 70 NEW CASES of childhood cancer are diagnosed each year in Suffolk.

The Stony Brook University Cancer Center treats two-thirds of all children with cancer in Suffolk County, and has treated more than 600 CHILDREN since the Center opened in 1991.
When Susan Shiebler’s four-year-old daughter Elissa was diagnosed with acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL) in 1997, Shiebler was relieved to learn that there was a pediatric cancer program at Stony Brook University Medical Center. Elissa would get state-of-the-art treatment there and, because it was close to their Patchogue home, Shiebler could be with her daughter at the hospital and still make it home to greet her three other children when they returned from school. Elissa entered a clinical trial at Stony Brook for children with ALL, which Shiebler credits with saving Elissa’s life.

Shiebler wanted to ensure that all Suffolk County children stricken with cancer had access to the same high-quality care Elissa received. She met with Robert I. Parker, M.D., director of the Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology and associate director of Stony Brook’s Cancer Center, to discuss how to build awareness of the Center’s pediatric oncology program and to raise funds for programs and research on childhood cancers.

The Sunrise Fund is the result of that meeting. Launched in 1999, the Fund is a grassroots effort by parents determined to improve childhood cancer survival.

Elissa Shiebler drew the organization’s rising sun logo. Says her mother, “I thought, sunrise—it’s the dawn of a new day for children with cancer. That eventually became our motto.”

Since its inception, the Sunrise Fund has raised more than $630,000 and established several initiatives, including Research Grants in the School Re-entry Program, the Daniel Brooks Educational Award, Bereavement Support, and Our Little Heroes.

“I BELIEVE THAT NO CHILD SHOULD EVER HAVE TO LEAVE SUFFOLK COUNTY TO GET THE BEST MEDICAL CARE.”
—Susan Shiebler, Founder of the Sunrise Fund, and her daughter Elissa
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Sunrise Fund raises money in three different areas: to supplement hospital services, for patient and parent support programs, and to support research and faculty initiatives. Here’s how these programs are changing the lives of young cancer survivors and their families:

OUR LITTLE HEROES
The Pediatric Hematology/Oncology department houses Long Island’s only support group for families of children with cancer. The program offers a newsletter, counseling services, and fun family get-togethers away from the hospital.

SCHOOL RE-ENTRY
The School Re-entry program eases a child’s transition back into the classroom when he or she is medically able to return to school. The program encourages communication among the hospital, school, and family about the child’s progress, and educates classmates about cancer.

DANIEL BROOKS EDUCATIONAL AWARD
Established in the memory of former cancer patient Daniel Brooks, who was killed in a car accident in 2002, the program awards up to $1,000 to all pediatric cancer survivors to defray their post-high school education costs. Each year approximately 20 grants are awarded to former patients.

PALLIATIVE CARE/BEREAVEMENT
This program supports parents caring for a dying child and provides an annual memorial service to honor children lost to cancer.

RESEARCH ENDOWMENT
Donations support programs dedicated to finding causes and cures for childhood cancers.

YOUR SUPPORT IS VITAL TO OUR SUCCESS
All gifts to the Sunrise Fund support these important programs. This will allow the vision and the purpose of this wonderful fund to continue to provide the tremendous support that it has since its inception. Please consider a tax-deductible gift made payable to the Stony Brook Foundation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO MAKE A GIFT, PLEASE CONTACT OUR ADVANCEMENT OFFICE AT (631) 444-2899.
THE SCHOOL RE-ENTRY TEAM
The School Re-entry program, the only one of its kind on Long Island, helps young cancer patients have a smooth transition back to school. Stony Brook physicians, nurses, and child-life specialists work with educators to prepare classmates for physical changes (such as hair loss) caused by treatment; provide school personnel with information about the child’s needs; and encourage the child to discuss his or her concerns and fears about returning to school.

“We started the program because our young patients were saying, ‘Kids in my school are making fun of me, my teachers don’t understand what’s happening to me, and we don’t hear those stories anymore,’” says Debra Giugliano, R.N., CPNP, CPON, Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology.

Giugliano started the Back-to-School Conference to help teachers understand the physical and psychosocial metamorphosis a child with cancer undergoes. “In the beginning, school superintendents told us that we couldn’t talk about cancer in the classroom. Now, schools call us to find out when we can come to speak to the children,” says Giugliano.
LOOKING FOR CURES

Stony Brook University Medical Center is the only academic research center on Long Island. To support the Medical Center’s research efforts in childhood cancers, the Sunrise Fund established Targeted Research Opportunity Grants. Edward Chan, M.D., and Marian Evinger, Ph.D., are two recent recipients. Their research focuses on causes of childhood cancers and may eventually lead to more effective treatments.
EDWARD CHAN, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, studies a type of childhood cancer called neuroblastoma. According to the National Cancer Institute, neuroblastoma accounts for 7 percent of all malignancies in children under the age of 15, with one-quarter appearing in the first year of life (making it the most frequent type of infant cancer). It is among the most difficult to diagnose and treat.

Determining what causes neuroblastoma in children is crucial, since in many cases risk factors are not known and screening methods are of limited benefit. By the time many children are diagnosed with neuroblastoma, the cancer has already spread, decreasing their chances of survival.

“Children with late-stage disease have only a 50-percent survival rate. Our hope is that we may find a better treatment for this cancer,” says Dr. Chan. However, federal funding for childhood cancer is limited; most of the funding goes to fighting cancer in adults. This slows progress in seeking and finding cures, says Dr. Chan.

HOW PRIVATE DONORS HELP
Despite limited funding, Dr. Chan’s research is moving forward, thanks to the Sunrise Fund and donations from private foundations. He and his research team are developing tests to identify which neuroblastoma tumors have abnormal tyrosine kinase proteins. Children with those tumors may be candidates for new drugs that fight cancer in adults. According to Dr. Chan, the next five years may see the emergence of new treatment regimens using targeted therapy in combination with standard chemotherapy. “If it weren’t for the Sunrise Fund and other foundations, we wouldn’t be able to advance treatment and find better care and cures for children with cancer,” says Dr. Chan.

“IF IT WEREN’T FOR THE SUNRISE FUND AND OTHER FOUNDATIONS, WE WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO ADVANCE TREATMENT AND FIND BETTER CARE AND CURES FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER.”

—Edward Chan, M.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology, Stony Brook University Medical Center
MARIAN EVINGER, PH.D., associate professor of pediatrics, is investigating a type of pediatric brain cancer tumor called medulloblastoma. It is found between the brain stem and the cerebellum, and affects the central nervous system in children primarily ages 3 to 7 years old. Dr. Evinger’s work focuses on identifying molecular abnormalities, which may provide insight into the biology of brain tumor cancer cells and could lead to more targeted therapy.

“We’re interested in what distinguishes medulloblastoma from its natural cell counterpart in the normal brain,” says Dr. Evinger. “We want to define what genes are expressed or not expressed in these tumor cells when compared to normal neurons in the brain.”

Dr. Evinger has found that the gene expression profile of the medulloblastoma cell resembles early stages of development in the cerebellum. Another finding is that gene profiles in some recurrent tumors differ not only from normal cells, but also from the original primary tumor.

Dr. Evinger is categorizing her results so that the data may be analyzed, allowing scientists to compare the total gene profile of the medulloblastoma tumor cell with normal brain cell tissue, which may lead to more effective diagnostic tests and treatment.

“We’re making initial observations, with the hope that other scientists will take the information and devise a treatment that would be effective with the tumor,” says Dr. Evinger.

CONTRIBUTING TO SCIENCE

Receiving a Targeted Research Opportunity Grant from the Sunrise Fund, says Dr. Evinger, has been crucial in moving her research forward. “The Sunrise Fund has been absolutely essential for the success of this project,” says Dr. Evinger. “The grant enabled us to initiate experiments, gather the tissue samples we needed, and purchase some of the software licenses for data analysis.”