

## **A CHRISTMAS TO REMEMBER: VAUGHN MCCULLUM'S STORY**

In April 2016 we got the news that no parent wants to hear. Your son has cancer. What we thought would be a quick trip in and out of the ER ended up being a 40 day and 40 night stay inside of the hospital. Vaughn had brain cancer medulloblastoma. He went through two brain surgeries, six weeks of brain and spine proton radiation, and four months of intense chemotherapy.



In November 2016 we were excited as it was his last dose of chemotherapy. Little did we know that December was going to be one of the worst months of our life. Vaughn came down with a life-threatening infection that almost took his life. We spent the entire month at the hospital and were discharged less than one week before Christmas. The biggest Christmas gift that we received that year was our son's life. He fought very hard and ended up beating not only cancer, but the infection that had taken over his intestines. It was the first year that we had not put up a

Christmas tree. We did not have time to buy presents and it was a year that our family did not have a lot of extra finances to provide Christmas. We had pretty much lived in the hospital that year. The last thing on our mind was a Christmas tree, let alone presents.

Candlelighters asked us if we would like to be sponsored for Christmas and of course in the clinic I said absolutely. In our mind we were thinking wow, that's awesome, they're going to provide a few presents. Little did we know the company that sponsored us went above and beyond and blessed our family more than anything that we could ever imagine. There were presents everywhere and it took us a long time to open all of our gifts. We were blown away by the love, gifts and smiles on our children's faces.



We thank Candlelighters and the selfless families and companies that sponsor cancer families each Christmas. It means more than you know. Christmas 2016 will be one we will never forget. We did not know if Vaughn would be alive to open gifts that day, but he was, and he enjoyed another Christmas Cancer free in December of 2017. Thank you!

## BULLETIN BOARD

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**UPCOMING EVENTS****Summer Surprises MD Anderson**

July 18, 2018

**Summer Surprises Texas Children's Hospital**

July 25, 2018

**Fun Walk**

September 8, 2018

**Support Group Meeting at MD Anderson:**

Every Wednesday 11:30 am – 1:00 pm  
 MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital  
 Pediatric In-Patient Unit  
 Ronald McDonald House Room  
 For more information call (713) 792-4891

**Support Group Meeting at****Texas Children's Hospital:**

Every Wednesday 1:00 – 2:00 pm  
 Texas Children's Hospital - West Tower  
 Ronald McDonald's Kitchen – 9th Floor  
 For more information call (832) 822-1415

*To stay up to date on Candlelighters events, please check our website at [www.candle.org](http://www.candle.org) and follow us on Facebook at Candlelighters Houston*

**CANDLELIGHTERS OFFICE**

**Gay Foust, Executive Director**  
[gfoust@candle.org](mailto:gfoust@candle.org)

**Lynn Wheeler, Associate Director**  
[lwheeler@candle.org](mailto:lwheeler@candle.org)

**Kelsey Tarpinian, Development Director**  
[kelseytc@candle.org](mailto:kelseytc@candle.org)

**Roxy Gomez, Program Director**  
[rgomez@candle.org](mailto:rgomez@candle.org)

**Sydney Sanislow, Administrative Assistant**  
[admin@candle.org](mailto:admin@candle.org)

12919 Southwest Freeway, Suite 100  
 Stafford, Texas 77477  
 (713) 270-4700 - Fax: (713) 270-9802

**PARENT CONSULTANTS****The University of Texas MD Anderson****Children's Cancer Hospital**

Office (713) 792-4891

Jaynie Hutchinson

**[jaynieh@candle.org](mailto:jaynieh@candle.org)**

Yuvisela Sifuentes

**[ysifuentes@candle.org](mailto:ysifuentes@candle.org)**

**Texas Children's Cancer Center**

Office (832) 822-1415

Maria Pena **[mariap@candle.org](mailto:mariap@candle.org)**

Linda Pena **[lindap@candle.org](mailto:lindap@candle.org)**

Carrie Richardson **[crichardson@candle.org](mailto:crichardson@candle.org)**



# CORPORATE CORNER

## HOUSTON RELOCATION PROFESSIONALS



The Houston Relocation Professionals (HRP) has actively been involved with Candlelighters for over thirteen years. HRP has embraced the mission of Candlelighters with financial support, their commitment to the families we serve and their "can do" attitude!

One of the many projects they support is their annual holiday toy drive which donates thousands of dollars' worth of toys to our Adopt-A-Family and Summer Surprises programs. They also hold an annual golf tournament in honor of Candlelighters.

Last year's tournament was held on Thursday, November 9, 2017 at Wildcat Golf Course. The tournament was a huge success and Candlelighters is honored to be the beneficiary again this year. Cancer Survivor, Blake Gray, did a ceremonial tee off for Candlelighters. Planet Texas Cook team came to the tournament and provided the food which was generously donated by Ditta Meat Food Services. Special thanks to HRP Golf Chairman, Alan Grantham for making this year's tournament another huge success. Candlelighters is looking forward to another fabulous tournament in 2018!



## MONTZ & MAHER - SMILES FOR LIFE

Now through June, visit Montz & Maher Dental Group in Pearland to purchase a whitening treatment to benefit Candlelighters! **Call (281) 485-4829 for more information!**



# 2017 Adopt-A-Family

Each year we approach the holiday season in anticipation of bringing joy to families; and each year, we are reminded of the spirit of the holidays by our generous Adopt-A-Family sponsors. As we are all too aware, Hurricane Harvey left many families in our city in need of a little more this year, including many of our Candlelighters families.

We are excited to share that over 190 sponsors participated this year, and adopted a record-breaking, 320 families - a total of over 1,450 family members! Thank you for supporting Candlelighters through our Adopt-A-Family program during this trying time. We'd like to share several heartwarming stories and photos of this year's program...

## From a Sponsor:

*"I delivered the gifts to Angel and his mom and got to spend a good amount of time at the hospital with them! The look on Angel's face when he opened the gift that he has been wanting for a long time was truly priceless!!! To see his face light up like that is what it's all about and to see his mom cry tears of joy when she saw his face will be with me for life. I look forward to more opportunities to volunteer with you guys in the future!!"*



## From a Family:

*"We are so thankful for your help. Thanks to you we had a wonderful Christmas. We thank God that people like you always give a hand to those in need. We are grateful to Candlelighters for everything you do!"*



## From a Sponsor:

*"Pablo is such a strong little boy and he is definitely my little hero; full of life! We are so grateful we had a chance to make Christmas for the family a little brighter! Mom was so appreciative for the small things, but most of all she was overjoyed that we took time out to come and visit Pablo. "*







# FAMILY FALL FESTIVAL

Although we had to postpone, Hurricane Harvey did not take down our 23rd Annual Family Fall Festival. It took place on Sunday, November 5, 2017, at St. John's School. Our Candlelighters families enjoyed beautiful weather, games, music, a costume contest, and a raffle.

For the past seventeen years, the students at **St. John's School** have planned, organized, and executed the booths for the Fall Festival. Once again, they did an amazing job, and even had a booth with therapy dogs!

**Special thanks to our donors:**  
**Robert Chisholm**  
**Coldwell Banker United, Realtors**  
**Taylor Landry**  
**Caitlin Maggio**  
**Lisa & Mike O'Leary**

Thanks also to our in-kind sponsors: Brittany Maddox Photography, Coca-Cola, Ditta Meat Food Service Company, Justin Benvegna Photography, Katie Stanton, Linda Evans, and St. John's School.

Candlelighters is so grateful for the incredible volunteers who made the Fall Festival such a special day for our families.







# THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY

Douglas Harrison, MD MS



Tremendous strides have been made in the field of pediatric oncology over the last several decades. Today, we cure the vast majority of pediatric patients who are diagnosed with malignancies and there remains great hope for patients and all of the staff who fight this disease. As we move further into the 21st century, the outlook for pediatric patients with cancer is exceptionally brighter than it was at the start of the 20th century. In today's day and age, we will cure more than 80% of all pediatric patients with cancer. At the start of the 20th century, a child diagnosed with cancer would undoubtedly succumb to their disease within a matter of months regardless of their individual diagnosis. Today – the opposite is true due to the extensive research and work done over multiple sequential clinical trials performed by scientists and physicians over the last century. While there is definite reason to celebrate this success – far too many children continue to die from pediatric cancer. More work needs to be done as we strive towards our overarching goal of striking out cancer in all children.

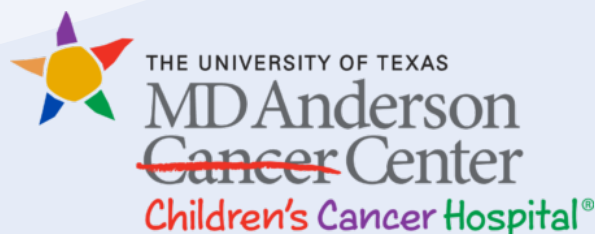
The discovery of conventional chemotherapy in the 1950s that focused on targeting the building blocks of cancer cells so they will die led to dramatic improvements in cure rates for childhood cancer. Unfortunately these medicines also affected normal cells so there was (and continues to be) significant side effects, but for the first time responses were seen and physicians were able to see improvements. The earliest success was in patients with childhood leukemia who suddenly and miraculously began to live longer. As different drugs began to be used in combination – true cures started to be seen. Different strategies of how to give chemotherapy (giving it sooner after the previous cycle or giving it at higher doses otherwise known as intensification) led to not just children with leukemia seeing improvements in outcome but patients with sarcomas, Wilms tumor, retinoblastoma, neuroblastoma, and brain tumors as well. Improvements in surgical techniques, safer and more targeted delivery of radiation therapy, and novel ways in which to provide bone marrow transplant all continued to move the bar forward to where we are today.



Unfortunately, our progress to some extent with these chemotherapy agents has stalled. Research today is focusing on identifying specific mutations in individual cancer cells down to the individual patient that can be exploited by novel medicines called targeted agents to kill the cancer cell. We are trying to get down to very specific mutations that vary in each separate cancer. This will hopefully lead to safer and more successful therapies. The idea of targeted therapy has led to revolutionary changes in how we approach the treatment of cancer and in chronic myeloid leukemia, as an example, has dramatically improved cure rates. Current trials at MD Anderson include several evaluations of targeted agents in pediatric cancers such as osteosarcoma, ewing sarcoma, childhood leukemia and lymphoma, and brain tumors.

Another recent change in how we approach the treatment of pediatric cancer is trying to harness the patients' own immune system to fight the cancer itself. This is commonly referred to as immunotherapy which has led to dramatic improvements in the outcomes for patients with neuroblastoma as well as resistant childhood leukemia and lymphoma where antibodies directed against the cancer cells light up the cancer so that the body's own immune system can then find and kill the cancer cells on its own. Furthermore, we are currently devising new ways of taking patient's own immune cells out of the body and adapting them to fight specific molecules on their individual cancer cells. When these adapted immune cells are reinfused into the blood stream of the cancer patient, they are trained to go back to the cancer and kill the cancer cell. This therapy known as "CAR-T cell mediated therapy" is currently an area of active research at MD Anderson Cancer as well as at other centers.

In closing, while we have had great success in curing children with cancer, much more needs to be done. Our fight continues through immunotherapy and targeted therapy trials underway at major centers across the United States including MD Anderson Cancer Center. Your work and efforts to support Candlelighters continue to allow us to move closer to that overall goal of curing cancer once and for all.



# TWENTY FIVE YEARS

Twenty-five years ago.... In 1993, Jurassic Park was a box office smash hit. A tale of a family fighting against a large and threatening beast. It had all the elements of an enduring tale – a family, children in danger, fighting against seemingly unsurmountable odds. And when it was over, an ending that left a small doubt of complete victory over the beast.

And while most people sat in theaters and watched the story on the big screen, in a quiet hospital room, millions of miles removed from that fantasy world, a family heard those words... .."your child has cancer". Words that would forever change their lives and the lives of thousands of families who came after them.

In 1993, after their children had been treated for childhood cancer, a group of parents bound together by their childhood cancer journey, formed Candlelighters Childhood Cancer Family Alliance. It was their vision to help all the families that followed by giving them all the support and programs they wished they had had on their journey. Someone to talk to, support for their children and their siblings, an avenue to express their worries, their fears and their happiness. Someone who had been there before them, someone who made it to the "other side" of childhood cancer. A shoulder to cry on, a partner to laugh with, an ear to just listen when you wanted to talk about anything but childhood cancer.

Long before social media, when something called the world wide web was a concept, the phone was connected to the wall, and people mailed letters to each other, the founding fathers found a way to reach out and help families. Twenty-five years later, Candlelighters is still providing the programs and services those founding families knew would be needed and wanted. This year we celebrate all their hard work, their vision, and their passion.

The founding families knew what was needed and developed programs and services that are still in place today.

Because of their vision....

- over \$900,000 in parking assistance has been given to families
- over 2,500 family members have spent a weekend away from childhood cancer at Camp CLIFF
- over 13,558 family members have been adopted for the holidays

This year, we celebrate all the children with cancer, those that won their childhood cancer battle and those who lost their battle, and all the families we have had the honor to serve. Today as in 1993, we continue to face the same beast with the same resolve!



## Candlelighters

CHILDHOOD CANCER FAMILY ALLIANCE

SUPPORTING FAMILIES FOR 25 YEARS



# PICTURES FROM CANDLELIGHTERS' FIRST FAMILY CAMP AND SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS



# WELCOME CARRIE AND SYDNEY!

We are so excited to welcome two new members to the Candlelighters family!

Sydney Sanislow is our new Administrative Coordinator, born and raised in Ridgefield, CT and became a Texan in 2009. She recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in Child Development & Family Living from Stephen F. Austin State University. Prior to graduation she spent her last semester interning as the Program Coordinator at GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Center and is an active volunteer at Texas Children's Hospital. Sydney has always had a passion for working with children with cancer and she looks forward to being a part of the Candlelighters tribe!



Carrie Richardson joins the Candlelighters family in the role of Parent Consultant at Texas Children's Hospital. Carrie's love for Candlelighters was born when her 12 year old daughter, Peyton, was diagnosed with High Risk Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in 2015. During Peyton's 3 year treatment at Texas Children's Hospital, her family became very close with many families undergoing treatment as well as the entire Candlelighters staff. Peyton finished treatment on May 15, 2017, ringing the golden bell at the Cancer Center, and life for Carrie's family returned to a different normal. Prior to Peyton's cancer diagnosis, Carrie worked in higher education publishing sales, traveling to school districts throughout Texas. Carrie was ready to return

to her career when Peyton reached remission, but it became very clear publishing was not where her heart was after life with cancer. With the expansion of Texas Children's Hospital Cancer Center in the Woodlands and the West Campus, the need for an additional Parent Consultant was apparent and Carrie joyfully accepted the position. Carrie is excited and grateful to support childhood cancer families, sharing the good that has come from her own daughter's cancer journey. When Carrie is not at Texas Children's Hospital, she is pouring into her family and friends by spending time at the baseball fields with her son Major and husband Roger, teaching Peyton how to drive a car (HELP!), hollering in a spin class and deepening her yoga practice with her precious friends.



# GIVING THEIR PENNY'S WORTH

On December 1, 2017, three lucky Candlelighters families were able to enjoy a little holiday shopping, courtesy of JCPenney. Each member of every family was given a \$100 gift card to shop at the JCPenney in The Woodlands Mall. Not only could they purchase anything in the store, JCPenney's vision parter, US Vision, gave our families a free pair of glasses!

Our families received this wonderful gift thanks to the General Manager of The Woodlands location, Jay Balboa. Jay is a longtime Candlelighters volunteer and he wanted to do something nice for our families this holiday season. Thank you, Jay for everything you've done for our families!

# JCPenney



# KAREEM KARES!!!

Is that Santa? No, it's Houston Texans cornerback Kareem Jackson! In December 2017, Kareem once again visited Texas Children's Hospital and MD Anderson Cancer Center to spread holiday cheer, sign autographs and take pictures with all of the excited patients and their families.

Through the Texans All Community Ticket (TACT) Program, Kareem continues to send Candlelighters families and supporters to Houston Texans regular season home games! He personally purchases tickets so Candlelighters families can enjoy time together beyond the hospital walls. The experience includes an exclusive look at pre-game ritual with tunnel access, a Kareem's Dream Team t-shirt, and food and beverage vouchers. We can't thank Kareem enough for all he does for Candlelighters families throughout the year!

Congratulations to Kareem on another wonderful season!





# SHOP WITH A JOCK

As if his support through Kareem's Dream Team and his hospital visits weren't enough – Kareem Jackson decided he wanted to do something extra special this holiday season for 25 Candlelighters kids! This past holiday season he invited Candlelighters kids to join himself, Brian Cushing, Chris Thompson and Bryce Jones for a chick-fil-a dinner and a night of shopping all provided by the Kareem Jackson Foundation. Each child was given a \$100 gift card and the opportunity to SHOP WITH A JOCK for the evening. They were encouraged to spoil themselves, although we found most of the kids were also thinking about their friends and family when shopping. It certainly was a holiday to remember!





# SCHOOL INITIATIVE



CALLING ALL SCHOOLS! Be a part of our Childhood Cancer Awareness Challenge!

In honor of Candlelighters 25th Anniversary, we're challenging YOU to help us find 25 schools around the Houston area to partake in a Childhood Cancer Awareness Fundraising Campaign for Candlelighters families in 2018. Whether that's this Spring, or getting on the calendar for a September campaign (Childhood Cancer Awareness Month) we'd love to help you start planning!

How to get YOUR school involved:

1. Share how helpful Candlelighters has been to your family with your child's teacher/counselor/principal/nurse
2. Ask that contact if you can connect them with Candlelighters
3. Connect Kelsey at Candlelighters ([kelseyt@ Candle.org](mailto:kelseyt@ Candle.org)) with your school contact - we'll take it from there!

**We are so grateful to these schools who have their campaign on the calendar for Spring of 2018 to teach their students about childhood cancer and how to help others in their community!**

1. Goforth Elementary School (League City ISD)
2. Mark Twain Elementary School (Alvin ISD)
3. West University Elementary School
4. Sam Jamison Middle School (Pearland ISD)
5. Rice University Athletics



As you can see, we need your help to get to our goal of 25 schools! Schools will be counted towards our goal as soon as their campaign is scheduled with Candlelighters.

**No school is too small, too far, or too young or old to participate!**



**Help us start the conversation!**



# *A Royal* **REDO!**

**Hurricane Harvey may have thrown a wrench in our 2017 fall plans, so we're calling for a REDO of both Fun Walk and Camp CLIFF! Save the dates!**

## *Candlelighters Fun Walk*

**Saturday, September 8, 2018**

**Terry Hershey Park**

**Register online at [www.candle.org](http://www.candle.org)**

## *Candlelighters Camp CLIFF*

**October 12-14, 2018**

**Camp For All**

**Registration Forms will be mailed in August.**

**\*Family campers are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis upon when we receive registration forms back in the Candlelighters office.**



# Candlelighters Cares!



## Corporate Volunteer Opportunities

### SPREAD THE WARMTH

Host a blanket drive at your office and schedule a day to deliver them to the children at the hospitals and clinics.

Gift cards, socks, hats, & mittens, and coloring books are also great ideas.

### CANDLELIGHTERS CARES

Each month we are saying "THANK YOU" to the nurses, doctors, and staff who take such good care of our Candlelighters families by providing a special treat. Whether it is cookies, donuts, or a coffee cart, we'd love to have you as a sponsor for these special days!

### SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Sponsor one of our weekly support group meetings by providing food for the parents and an art activity for the children.

### ARTS & CRAFTS DAY

Sponsor an arts & crafts day at the one of the hospitals.

If you'd like to sponsor one of the above programs, or have an idea of your own, please contact our Program Director, Roxy Gomez at 713.270.4700 or [rgomez@candle.org](mailto:rgomez@candle.org)



# RESOURCES FOR CANDLELIGHTERS FAMILIES

Candlelighters mission is to provide emotional, educational, and practical support to children with cancer and their families. If you are a family battling, recovering or bereaving from childhood cancer, or know a family on this journey, please share these resources both Candlelighters and other organizations in our community offer.

Candlelighters provides practical financial support in the following ways:

- Parking passes for parking at the Texas Medical Center
- Grocery store gift cards
- Meal passes in the Texas Medical Center cafeterias
- Gas Cards
- Help with funeral expenses

Candlelighters provides emotional and educational support through our following programs:

- Parent Consultant Program (two staff at each children's cancer center in the Texas Medical Center)
- Newsletter
- Adopt-A-Family for the Holidays
- Camp CLIFF (Children Loved in Families Forever)
- Support Group Meetings (weekly at Texas Children's Hospital and monthly at MD Anderson)
- Fall Family Festival
- Many others throughout the year! Please stay up to date on everything by joining our email and newsletter mailing list, and by following us on Facebook at Candlelighters Houston.

Important Candlelighters Phone Numbers:

- Main Office: (713) 270-4700
- MD Anderson Parent Consultants: (713) 792-4891
- Texas Children's Parent Consultants: (832) 822-1415

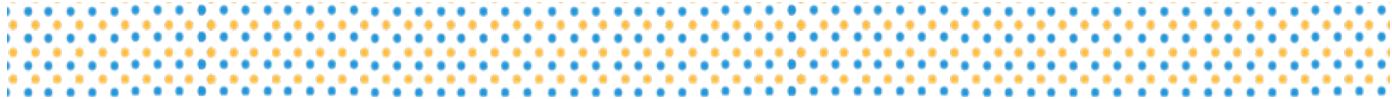
Other resources available to families facing childhood cancer:

- On-Treatment Housing
  - Halo House Foundation
  - Ronald McDonald House
- Transportation Assistance for the disabled
  - Houston Children's Charity
- Grief Support
  - Bo's Place
- Financial Assistance
  - Heroes for Children Rent and Mortgage
  - Houston Children's Charity Prosthetics
- College Scholarships
  - American Cancer Society
  - Cancer for College
  - Cancer Survivor Fund
  - Childhood Brain Tumor Foundation/Brittany Truitt Scholarship
  - Friends of Scott
  - Jack's Ride Scholarship Program
  - Kidsrstrong2
  - Kids 4 Kids with Cancer
  - National Children's Cancer Society
  - National Collegiate Cancer Foundation
  - The Simon Cancer Foundation Scholarship Program
  - Snowdrop Foundation
  - Super Sibs Scholarship Program for brothers and sisters of children with cancer
  - The Pediatric Brain Tumor Foundation
  - The SAMFund for Young Adult Survivors of Cancer
  - The Ulman Cancer Fund for Young Adults



Childhood Cancer Family Alliance, Inc.  
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Stafford, Texas 77477

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*helping families for 25 years*

**25** years

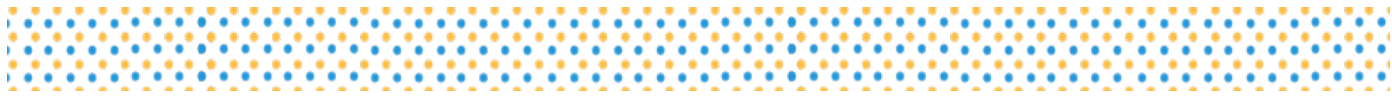
**300** months

**1,300** weeks

**8,800** days

**211,200** hours

**12,672,000** minutes



Follow us on Facebook at Candlelighters Houston

**Candlelighters' mission is to provide emotional, educational and practical support to children with cancer and their families.**



A Special Thank You To  
Southeast Media  
For Producing Our Newsletter  
[www.southeastmediatexas.com](http://www.southeastmediatexas.com)

Candlelighters began in 1989 with two parent support groups from the Texas Medical Center: one at Texas Children's Hospital and one at The University of Texas MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital. The Texas Children's Hospital group sought formal incorporation, and in 1992 Candlelighters was legally formed. In the fall of 1992 they invited the MD Anderson Parent Group to join them and the two organizations merged into one. The Parent Consultant Program was developed to directly meet the needs of families at the treatment centers and to inform them of potential resources. Our programs and services extend beyond the hospital walls with our Family Camp, Adopt-A-Family, Fall Festival, Candlelighters Newsletter and other special events. Over the years, we have learned how critically valuable it is for our Parent Consultants to be able to personally hand parents of children with cancer practical assistance such as a meal pass, parking assistance or gas cards. It is our greatest honor and privilege to bring this type of comfort and hope to childhood cancer families.