In April 2013, Christine and Jason Vonderhaar noticed that their son, Owen, had begun to limp when he walked.

They spent the next two weeks going to doctors and specialists and getting tests and X-rays to finally determine the cause of this unusual behavior.

Owen was diagnosed with Stage 4 Neuroblastoma, a cancer of the central nervous system. He spent the next 15 months in and out of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center fighting to beat this disease.

Owen is alive today because of research. Owen was declared “no evidence of disease” in July 2014. He is a healthy and active boy and he recently welcomed another baby sister into his life!

The doctors and researchers at Cincinnati Children's work tirelessly to make sure stories like Owen’s have happy endings. CancerFree KIDS is honored to support the important work they do as we all look forward to the day when every kid has a chance to grow up.
Grants Awarded to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center

CancerFree Christmas Research Grant: A new therapeutic approach in pediatric AML
Laura Barreyro, PhD; Mentor: D. Starczynowski, PhD
Acute myeloid leukemia (AML) is one of the most lethal cancers in children and because of ineffective chemotherapy, it has a tendency to recur. This project will target an enzyme that controls the body’s first defense against bacterial invaders and could lead to a new targeted therapy for AML.

Night for the Fight Research Grant: Seeking a novel, less toxic therapy for Childhood T-ALL
Chris Evelyn, PhD, Research Associate; Mentor: Yi Zheng, PhD
T-Cell Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (T-ALL) is a cancer in which the bone marrow overproduces a type of white blood cell. This project will target a protein usually found in high levels in T-ALL patients in order to develop a less toxic, more tolerable treatment option for children with this leukemia.

Paxton’s Golf Outing Research Grant: Overcoming Signaling Deficiencies in MPNST
R. Coover (PostDoc); Mentor: N. Ratner
Malignant peripheral nerves sheath tumors (MPNST) are tumors that arise from the cells of the nerves and can evade the body’s growth suppression mechanisms. This project will focus on supplementing the body’s ability to suppress cell growth and improve the treatment of tumors arising from the nerve.

Dear Partner,

We have good news! With your help, we are funding innovative, game-changing research that has the promise of more targeted, gentler treatments and cures for all childhood cancers. We consider you our Partner in this work and this is our report to you.

We are making progress! Since our inception, we have funded nearly $3 million in promising research and many of our projects have led to additional funding, clinical trials, and better treatments for children. In fact, we are extremely excited to share that the very first research grant CancerFree KIDS ever awarded, a $10,000 grant to Dr. Qi in 2004, just received FDA approval this week to initiate a First-In-Human Phase I clinical trial!

Thank you for helping us give hope to children with cancer and their families as we work toward the day when every kid has a chance to grow up. It means the world to us!

Ellen Flannery
Founder & Executive Director

ProMach Research Grant: Identifying novel therapeutic targets for pediatric leukemia
Marie-Dominique Filippi, PhD
Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is the most frequent cancer in children and patients of this type of cancer tend to have too much of a specific molecule in their cells. This project will compare these abnormal cells with cells with normal amounts of the molecule to identify new ways to prevent leukemia.

Jersey Mike’s Day of Giving Research Grant: The lesser of two evils: weakening infant leukemia through forced lineage switch
Benjamin Mizukawa, MD; James C. Mulloy, PhD
Most infants with leukemia have a mutation in a certain gene that results in Acute lymphoid leukemia (ALL). Researchers found that this ALL, when treated with a specific drug, reemerged as a form of acute myeloid leukemia (AML) which then responded well to standard treatment. This project will test the hypothesis that leukemia will become weaker as AML and more sensitive to chemotherapy, offering a better treatment plan.

CancerFree KIDS Annual Dinner Research Grant: A Novel Strategy for Blocking Tumor Angiogenesis
Saulius Sumanas, PhD
Because all solid tumors require blood supply for their growth, inhibition of blood vessel growth is a leading strategy in stopping tumor growth. Using zebrafish, this project will investigate proteins that facilitate blood vessel growth in tumors to lead to new strategies to prevent tumor growth.

Want to learn more? Full descriptions for all of these research projects are available at cancerfreekids.org!
Grants Awarded to Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center

Chard Snyder Research Grant: Novel targets to cure pediatric leukemia
H.L. Grimes, MD
Pediatric leukemia with changes in chromosome 11q23 are problematic because they have a lot of leukemia stem cells, which are resistant to therapy. This project will target leukemia stem cells through a critical tumor suppressor gene to lead to a cure for this type of cancer.

Colleen and Brad Johansen Research Grant: Clinical trial for less toxic treatment in relapsed/refractory pediatric AML
Christine Phillips, MD
Nearly half of children and young adults with Acute myeloid leukemia (AML) will relapse, despite intensive and toxic chemotherapy. This project aims to improve the survival rate of AML by combining a drug used to treat AML in adults with another drug that activates the immune system.

Grants Awarded to Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH

Cancerfree KIDS Annual Dinner Event Research Grant: Targeting the Chromatic Regulatory Machinery Co-opted by EWS/FLI in Ewing Sarcoma
Pl: Emily theisen, PhD; Mentor: Stephen L. Lessnick, MD, PhD
Ewing sarcoma (ES) is a pediatric bone cancer that has a poor survival rate and is caused by a single protein that recruits other proteins to assist it in causing cancer. Previous efforts have failed to identify a drug to target the main protein, so this project focuses on one of the assisting proteins in order to comprise a new targeted strategy for treating ES.

A new clinical trial combining standard chemotherapy and new immune therapy for children with recurrent or non-responding solid cancers
Keri Stroby, MD
Because cancer cells mask themselves as “healthy cells,” they can escape the immune system. This project plans to inject cancer cells with a safe virus that will both kill the cells and tell the immune system that they are unhealthy. The project will also pioneer a new, faster, digital PET scan that uses less radiation and increases visibility of smaller tumors, all of which will bring us into the next era of cancer treatment.

CancerFree KIDS Annual Dinner Event Research Grant, in memory of Bubba Hactor: Leveraging single-cell transcriptomics to identify mediators of lung tropism in osteosarcoma
Pl: Ryan Roberts, PhD
Osteosarcoma (OS) is a bone tumor that strikes children and teenagers during growth spurts and kills patients during metastasis, when it spreads from the bones to the lungs. This project will use a new technology called DropSeq to understand how tumor cells interact with the normal cells of the lung and use this information to develop treatments to prevent and treat metastasis.

Butterfly Walk Research Grant, in memory of Hanna Paribello: Synergistic Inhibition of MYC/MYCNB with small molecules in neuroblastoma
Nilay Shah, MD
High risk neuroblastoma is a childhood tumor that is treated with multiple toxic therapies, but still results in a high mortality rate. Multiple molecularly-targeted approaches have been developed, but have had limitations, such as toxicity limiting the effect of the drug. This project plans to use low doses of a combination of these drugs to yield a greater effect against the cancer cells but with less toxicity.

Butterfly Walk Research Grant, in memory of Hanna Paribello: Targeting the Neuuroblastoma Microenvironment to Activate Immunity and Immune Therapy
Edwin Horwitz, MD, PhD
High risk neuroblastoma (NBL) remains one of the great challenges in pediatric oncology. Immune therapy for NBL holds great promise, yet major advances have not been realized. This project targets a special population of cells that have the unique property of migrating to tumors, making them the ideal vehicle to deliver therapy to NBL and provide a better treatment plan for this type of cancer.
How your Donations Translate into Innovative Research

Our goal has always been simple: raise as much money as possible, spend as little as possible to do so, then give the entire surplus away to promising pediatric cancer research and start over. That's what we have been doing since our inception. You are our partner in this endeavor -- it is because of your support that we are able to fund more and more innovative research every year. The chart here shows the growth in research dollars we have been able to award each year with your help.

Thank you for trusting us to invest your donations in the most innovative research on childhood cancers.

$2.9 million in grants to game-changing research on childhood cancers since 2004