

theVisitor

Spring 2021







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VOLUNTEERS THE BACKBONE OF EDMARC

Seeing the good in people has become a hallmark of working for Edmarc. No matter what is happening in the world around us, Edmarc has people step forward each and every day to help those who need it most. Last year, as a pandemic set in and unrest became normal, this sentiment rang clearer than ever.

March of 2020 marked the beginning of a new normal stretched across an unclear path. Our staff had to adjust the way care was provided in many ways. Telehealth arrived on the scene. Staff alternated days working from home and in the office to limit the number of people in our building.

a note from **EDMARC**



Spring. Renewal. Regeneration. We embrace this season unlike we have in previous years. With new leaves budding on trees and flowers pushing up from the ground, we are reminded of the hope we feel as we are beginning to turn a corner. Last March we entered a world we could

never anticipate. When first faced with COVID, we canceled events and evaluated how to safely deliver the services our families desperately needed. Before the pandemic, many families were barely hanging on. Living through a pandemic, they needed us even more.

Edmarc prevailed through a year of crisis and uncertainty. We prevailed because donors, foundations, and granting organizations came forward with financial support. We prevailed because volunteers rose to the challenge and helped us in new and different ways. We prevailed because staff worked hard to meet goals. Edmarc began over 42 years ago as a grass roots effort by a group of determined individuals. That same tenacity has carried us through this past year.

As we look toward the rest of 2021, we are hopeful. Spring began with a drive-thru egg hunt and chance for families to take pictures with the Easter Bunny. Next, we celebrated our volunteers in our tribute garden as we kicked off National Volunteer Week in April. We are crossing our fingers for a summer picnic on the grounds of Edmarc in July. Our committee is planning an amazing 25th Anniversary Charity Golf Classic in August, our signature fundraising event of the year, and we hope the fall and holiday season will be filled with good things to come.

Thank you for standing by us and being a friend to Edmarc. Most of all, thank you for helping us provide hope for the journey to those who need it most.

Well wishes for a new season,

), blue

Debbie Stitzer-BrameExecutive Director, Edmarc

Communication happened with screen time and phone calls and not in person. And sadly, a very difficult transition happened: limiting our volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers are the backbone of Edmarc. The care and support we give to families are possible because of the efforts of people in the community who simply want to give back. When we had to put a hold on allowing the wonderful souls who want to help our families volunteer in their usual ways, it was crushing...but only for a bit. While we couldn't offer our typical opportunities, that didn't stop people from finding ways to help.

In the beginning, volunteers began checking in with staff through weekly phone calls simply to make sure we were doing okay. Then, as the need for PPE became apparent, others began fulfilling our wish list needs for families and staff. As days became weeks, others began forming fundraisers and collecting items or donations that would help Edmarc continue to provide care for our families, in the home, as safely as possible, when it was more crucial than ever.

Our volunteers were not only showing they were the backbone of our organization, but they were also revealing to us the silver linings in everything. When we couldn't see them in person, they conveyed how sweet a simple phone call could be. When we couldn't have them serve our staff and families directly, they showed how impactful gestures could still be made from afar. They proved that in even in the most trying of times, a community can still come together and provide hope to those who need it.

We never want to experience what the past year brought again; however, we are so thankful to know that even in uncertainty, the people who surround Edmarc will continue to ensure care can be provided to all of our kids and families.



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A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

On November 8, 2020 Edmarc staff and families came together to honor and remember the lives of the children who have died while in our program.

Due to COVID-19, the Day of Remembrance looked a little different this year, but we were happy to still be able to provide an opportunity for our families and staff to come together and remember all these amazing children. While music played throughout the Edmarc garden we remembered those dear to us through our annual slide show of pictures followed by the lighting of candles in remembrance of each child. These candles are a representation of their everlasting light that continues to shine in each of us whom these children's lives have touched. We are grateful to The Chisholm House Fund, a component of the Southeast Virginia Community Foundation and Rocket Media for their generous support in making this afternoon such a special event in the midst of such challenging times.





NOTHING STOPS SANTA

When Santa's involved, nothing can stop spreading holiday magic and hope. As we began figuring out how the holidays at Edmarc would look in the midst of a pandemic, we just knew we couldn't forgo the holiday experience for our families. The spirit of the season had become even more important, so we decided to have a Santa brainstorming session.

First of all, a video conference with a group of jolly, bearded Santas and one sweet Mrs. Claus is an amazing way to spend an afternoon. As we began talking about what would be possible and how we could safely achieve our goals, they made one thing abundantly clear: Edmarc couldn't stop Santa's sleigh from arriving. We knew we could not have all the bells and whistles this year; however, something simple and meaningful might just be what families needed. So we focused on the essentials. Thanks to sponsors from around the community (and some even outof-town), Thanksgiving food baskets, holiday food baskets, and gifts were delivered to over 80 of our active and bereaved families. For those who wished it, Santa even made personal gift deliveries while donning a mask.

And for those who wanted pictures with Santa, a creative and safe way was devised to allow this. Santa, being the carpenter that he is, custom-built a Santa chair and bench covered in vinyl so it could easily be wiped down between sessions. He also created a



plexiglass divider so he and kids could be in the same picture while still being safe. (Some smaller children who would normally be terrified of the bearded man actually preferred this.) Because of his innovations, numerous Edmarc families were able to come out on a Saturday afternoon and have their pictures taken by Sarah Vanderford Photography and Captivated Productions, allowing them to create special memories to treasure forever.

We missed our fire and police personnel driving through the streets with Santa and gifts in tow. We missed our mass of volunteers wrapping gifts at Edmarc while listening to holiday music. We missed throwing a festive party that would allow families and staff to come together to celebrate the season. We missed a lot of things this past year; however, we loved focusing on what was truly important for families and bringing them the magic and joy we could. The season may have looked different, but it was still special and something we'll forever cherish.



LIAM V. (6/17/15-9/26/20)

Liam was an incredible little boy who possessed so much strength during his fight. He will forever hold a special place in the hearts of many. Though his time here was far too short, he was adored by all who had the privilege to meet him. Liam will be greatly missed and lovingly remembered by his parents, Brittnay & Daniel, little sister, Cleo, and countless other family and friends.

NICHOLAS O. (10/3/10-10/11/20)

Nicholas was a very clever, strong, and gentle child. He fought his battle with grace and determination and will always be remembered for his courage. His memory will forever be cherished by his mom, Erica, as well as countless friends, family, and classmates.

JAMYA Y. (8/7/11-10/31/20)

Jamya was a spunky, sweet, and vivacious little girl whose smile warmed the hearts of everyone who was privileged to meet her. She never failed to make people laugh and will be deeply missed by all. She will be tenderly missed and forever remembered by her parents, Javares and Vanessa; brother, Cameron; sisters Makayla and Morgan; as well as many other friends and family.

DAWSON F. (7/16/19-11/8/20)

Dawson was an angelic little boy who had the sweetest face, and most beautiful eyes. He was so deeply loved by his family (including their dog!) and will be greatly missed by them and all who knew him. His memory will be held in the hearts of his parents, Kasey and Alexander, as well as many other family and friends who had the privilege of knowing and loving him.

CARSON M. (2/26/19-11/16/20)

Carson, the spitting image of her daddy, could not have been more loved and adored. She made the sweetest cooing sounds, and her giggle was absolutely contagious. She was the embodiment of strength and grace and will be tenderly missed and remembered by her parents, Genna and Mark, as well as a vast number of friends and family who continue to love her.

EMERSYN S. (10/12/19-11/29/20)

Emersyn was an amazing little girl with beautiful long eyelashes. She touched the lives of many and taught those around her so much, without ever saying a word. Emersyn was adored by all who had the privilege to know her. She will be lovingly remembered by her parents, Marie & James, siblings, Logan, Jordan, Blaike, Elijah, Sophianna, & Landon, and numerous other family and friends.

PARKER G. (12/18/20)

Sweet Parker Primrose was truly and deeply loved far before she was born, and though her time with her family was far too short, her memory will be forever cherished by her parents and everyone who knew her. She will be forever loved by her parents, Pien and Jonathan, as well as many family and friends.

LUKE G. (10/13/04-12/22/20)

Luke was a brave, determined, bright, and kind young man who fought his battle with the utmost courage. He was very involved in his school and community and loved being active. He was an avid cross-country runner, and also enjoyed playing basketball, swimming, and even playing flag football. He had such a big heart and was constantly thinking about how to be of service to others, even (and especially) as his illness worsened. In his time here, he made the world a better place. He will be tenderly remembered and deeply missed by his parents, Annelise and Scot; his brother, Paul; his sister, Sophie; as well as countless other loved ones.

JORDAN R. (12/5/06-3/2/21)

Jordan was a smart, courageous young man that inspired many. He fought a long and tough battle with his illness but never allowed it to define him or hold him back from enjoying every moment. Jordan had an infectious spirit and smile that lit up every room and drew people in. Jordan was an athlete, playing soccer, basketball, and football. He loved sports, music, shoes, and most of all, spending time with his family and friends, who he was very protective of. His sweet memory will be treasured by all who had the privilege to know him, especially his mother and stepfather, Jaime & Matthew, father, Ivan, little sister, Royce, and numerous family and friends.

SETH C. (1/5/03-3/16/21)

Seth was a brave and wise young man who fought a very courageous battle. Seth had a huge heart and lived his life to the fullest, bringing joy to all who had the privilege to know him. His bright smile would melt anyone fortunate enough to be in his company. Even when his days were difficult, Seth maintained a strength and attitude that reflected his sweet, loving spirit. Seth was both an artist and musician, playing the French horn and mellow. He loved collecting shoes, especially Nikes and Vans, and playing video games. Most of all, Seth enjoyed spending time with his family and friends. Seth will be both missed and lovingly remembered by his parents, Shalonde & Sylvester, his siblings, Zaphir, Shalom, Imani, and Josiah, his sister-in-law, Nequel, niece, Zola, and numerous other family and friends.

EVA C. (4/6/21)

Eva Shalom was a beautiful baby girl who touched so many hearts in her short time here on earth. She was deeply loved and adored by her family. Left to cherish her sweet memory are her parents, Stephanie & Max, big sister, Sienna, and numerous family and friends.









After forgoing family events for most of 2020, we were determined that our annual Fall Festival would not take a hiatus. When we learned more about the safety precautions needed, we decided a drive-thru trunk-or-treat was the answer for families to still have an opportunity to dress up for an outing. With the Kiwanis Club of Norfolk's support, families could drive to stations where they were greeted by a giant chicken, a wizard, or the Great Pumpkin, handing them goodies and treats through the window without having to leave their vehicle. They completed the maze by getting a pizza and drinks for the family to enjoy at home. Although families may have been required to stay in their vehicle, it didn't stop their kiddos from transforming into ninjas, superheroes, and even food! It was a fun and unique Fall Fest for all.











SPRING FLING

Spring is the season of new beginnings, and Edmarc's Spring Fling took on a new look this year as well! After having to cancel last year's annual event, we still could not hold this year's event in our traditional fashion. Instead, the Easter Bunny assembled a drive-thru Easter egg hunt. Our mascot Wags showed up to direct traffic (and dance a little) while staff and volunteers ensured the beautiful day would be special for those that came. Families drove to different stations and gathered eggs, candy, and goodies to fill their basket. At the end, the Easter Bunny himself greeted them and handed out Easter baskets! Families were able to hop out of their vehicles while Sarah of Lovell Productions snapped some family photos with the long-eared creature. While different, it still turned out to be a special and funfilled event for all involved.







EASTER BASKETS

Thank you to everyone who contributed to our Easter basket deliveries this year! Thanks to sponsors and volunteers, Edmarc was able to deliver goodies to 230 kiddos this year. We hated forgoing basket deliveries last year, but everyone certainly helped

make up for it this year. We were even able to mail a few baskets out to some of our kiddos who are currently seeking treatment elsewhere. What a refreshing way to welcome Spring!



NEW EDMARC BOARD MEMBERS

Maryanne Persons

New to the Edmarc Board is retired teacher Maryanne Persons. Maryanne grew up on Long Island, where she developed a love for music, learning, and community



service. A graduate of the College of William and Mary, she also studied Computers in Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Maryanne has been married to orthopaedic surgeon Jeff Persons for nearly 40 years. Together they have four children and three grandchildren, though – having been "parents" to numerous exchange

students from seven countries – they consider their family to be much larger. A cellist, Maryanne enjoys music of all kinds, as well as reading, cooking, and travel.

Maryanne is very involved in the Suffolk community, where she taught in both Suffolk Public Schools and at Nansemond-Suffolk Academy (NSA). She has served as the President and a Commissioner of Suffolk Sister Cities International, was Secretary of the Board of Trustees at NSA, and volunteered with the Boy Scouts of America.

Maryanne is an Elder at Suffolk Presbyterian Church, where Edmarc was started. "For 35 years, I've heard stories of Ed Page, Marcus Hogge, and the Spirit-led creation of this wonderful organization", she says. "The church has continued to support and pray for Edmarc, as well as the children and families it serves. It's an honor to work more closely with such a great group of people who put into practice Christ's call to love and serve one another."

Jonathan Arena

Jonathan Arena, the Chief Counsel and Vice President of Newport News Shipbuilding (NNS), recently joined our Board of Directors. Jon earned his Bachelor's

Degree in history from The Ohio State University, an MBA from Washington University in St. Louis, and his law degree from The William and Mary Law School.

After spending 15 years as legal counsel at NASA, Mr. Arena worked as an executive at The Boeing Company where he led the legal team responsible for Boeing Defense's Global



Services business. Three years ago he moved back to the Hampton Roads area to lead the NNS law department.

Jon and his wife Mari are the proud parents of two daughters, Nancy and Mary, as well as a ridiculously pampered Australian shepherd mix named Oreo. In his spare time, he's a newbie runner, really poor golfer, and often disappointed Pittsburgh sports fan.

In discussing his draw to Edmarc, Jon said "[t]he mission is so noble and the work so needed that I'm truly humbled to be part of it. This team is making a difference for Edmarc families every day and that's a responsibility and honor that brings out the best in all of us. I'm looking forward to helping in any way I can. And so is Oreo."

In HONOR of Edmarc gratefully acknowledges the outpouring of support in honor of family members and friends. September 1, 2020 - February 28, 2021

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Thank you ...

Thank you to the many, many individuals, businesses and organizations who make the work Edmarc does possible and bring joy to our families across Hampton Roads by donating food baskets and gifts for the holidays, special items that were hard to find during the pandemic such as paper products and cleaning supplies, items from our Amazon wish list, professional services and more! September 1, 2020 – February 28, 2021

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Celebrating 20 Years of Caring

Laurie Barbaro has been serving as the director of clinical services for the past 20 years. She has provided tender, loving care to hundreds of children in the last days or weeks of their lives. She is a tireless advocate for Edmarc families and will use all of her energy



and resources to fight for a child when necessary. Over the years, she has helped Edmarc children and families achieve some level of normalcy.

Many, if not most, nurses simply cannot tolerate the idea of caring for an ill child. The thought is too painful. Laurie sets her sights on the child and helps them make the most out of each day, working to improve the future for the family. She is committed to seeing that the child gets the very best that our medical system can provide and helps parents to live without regret when the child loses the battle. She puts her whole heart into the love and care of each of the Edmarc children.

She is a wonderful nurse and a wonderful friend. Laurie is an "Everyday Angel" and not just to some. She is kind and caring to everyone. Thank you, Laurie, for all that you do.





Shout Out to Shenay Lewis

When named Ms. Virginia Plus America 2020-2021, Shenay Lewis, daughter of our own Maggie Lewis, chose Edmarc as her platform. When asked what Edmarc had taught her, she responded, "even in the midst of crisis, find time to live bold, live free, and live uniquely. No matter if we are in a wheelchair, walking, talking or hairless, it doesn't matter - we all have a unique purpose." Thanks, Shenay!

Welcome Mallary Jamison

My name is Mallary Jamison, and I am so thrilled to join Edmarc! I have spent the past 15 years as a nurse working solely with children from the Philippines to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, to the past 8 years as an inpatient Hematology/Oncology



nurse. Providing care to these many children and their families has been a great honor of my life, and I look forward to my new role as a Patient Care Coordinator at Edmarc. I am dedicated to getting to know our Edmarc families and bringing the best care possible into the homes of our kids.

When I am not nurse Mallary, I usually go by mama. My twin toddlers keep my life full, active, and definitely unpredictable! My husband, Chris, is my rock. We have traveled the world together, chasing one adventure after the next. This new adventure of parenthood is our most thrilling endeavor yet!

CONGRATULATIONS TO...

... Josh and Stephanie on the birth of Miles 11/29/20 ... Amelia and Jose on the birth of Jahaziel 12/26/20

Edmarc's Laurie Barbaro

for being selected as a member of the Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center (HPCC) Examination Development Committee (EDC). All of us at Edmarc are proud to support her efforts in helping to promote a certification process that advances quality in the provision of care to patients and families facing life limiting illnesses.

Edmarc's Abigail Gellene-Beaudoin

who earned the Registered Play Therapy (RPT) credential after earning her license (LCSW) and completing 150 hours of play therapy specific education, 350 hours of experience, and 50 hours of supervision. Play Therapy is defined by the Association of Play Therapy (APT) as "the systematic use of a theoretical model to establish an interpersonal process wherein trained Play Therapists use the therapeutic powers of play to help clients prevent or resolve psychosocial difficulties and achieve optimal growth and development." Way to go!



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