2019 Annual Report
Every minute, a child is in need of medical care.
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A MESSAGE FROM

John Rosenberg, Board Chair
and Dr. Cara Natterson, Board Vice-Chair

We are experiencing an epic moment in history, one that sits at the epicenter of medicine and social justice. In 2020, people of all ages and backgrounds have faced a new acute—and for some, now chronic—illness in the form of COVID-19. Since Starlight’s founding in 1982, we have served nearly 16 million seriously ill children and their families, making it our mission from the start to bring them happiness during times of stress, pain, and uncertainty. As this year has unfolded before us, we cannot help but to think that the Starlight families know all too well what the rest of the world is learning.

During the pandemic, we have had an opportunity to look back and reflect on Starlight’s past and current trajectories. At this point in 2019, we were reflecting on a long period of programmatic growth, building out a bustling office, and welcoming a new CEO, Adam Garone. Flash forward to today, when our Starlight team is working from their individual homes but pulling together, virtually, to remain laser focus on our promise to deliver happiness. This year saw months when parents couldn’t come into hospitals to visit their children and when pediatric wards were on the cusp of being converted into adult COVID units. Through it all and across the country, Starlight continued to provide comfort to hospitalized kids in the form of Starlight Hospital Wear, distraction through Starlight Virtual Reality, and creativity via Starlight Gaming and gift-in-kind donations from our generous partners. Kids still need to be kids, even when they’re facing procedures or treatments, even when they find themselves in medical facilities for long-term stays, and especially during a pandemic.

Despite the social and scientific challenges that lay ahead for all of us, Starlight’s vision remains strong. In order to deliver the greatest impact at a moment like this, Starlight must ensure that our programs are efficiently run. This is why the team is working hard to solicit feedback from and understand the needs of the kids we serve, and as importantly, they are doubling-down by investing in relationships with families, health care providers, support staff, hospitals and health systems. It is investment in these partnerships that ensures steady growth, which translates into an ability to help more children across more facilities. In the next year, Starlight must continue to seek out new avenues of connection with engaged donors, welcoming them into our fold. The rapidly growing Stream for Starlight program is a great example of success here, with streamers and Starlight team members connecting, building mutual affinities, and amplifying Starlight’s message in order to raise donor dollars.

We have in front of us a tall task which can also be viewed as a massive opportunity; heading into the winter months when coronavirus is predicted to surge, we must continue to meet the needs of our Starlight families and broaden our impact across communities in need. Starlight is committed to increasing diversity and inclusion efforts, both internally on our Board and programmatically by better designing and distributing our programs to serve families of color.

We are proud to be part of this organization that sees no distinguishing trait between any of our beneficiaries beyond ill and well. In a time when that distinction is rapidly shifting, we have ever more clarity about the importance of Starlight’s mission. It is our deepest hope that coronavirus continues to have a minimal impact upon the children we serve. That said, for 38 years Starlight has served entire families, which includes people of all ages. It is not lost on us that the adults who care for sick children are particularly vulnerable to an infection that none of us had even heard of a year ago. Our mission to bring happiness to sick children becomes ever more important when we consider the vulnerabilities of their care takers. Thank you for being a part of Starlight’s vision.
During my first year at Starlight, I visited hospitals and other health care facilities across the country, where I met children and their families impacted by Starlight programs. I met nurses, doctors, and child life specialists who work closely with us to ensure that the kids receiving medical treatments also benefit from the healing power of play, entertainment, socialization, and emotional support.

The impact of Starlight’s programs were reflected back on the faces of those I had the pleasure of meeting. I watched as a child undergoing a procedure, smiling through it while wandering through a virtual world on Starlight’s Virtual Reality headset. I saw kids proudly showing off their super hero and princess themed Starlight Hospital Gowns. I saw comfort on the faces of parents and siblings, who knew that their loved ones’ lives were brightened by the impact of Starlight’s programs.

Playing Mario Kart 8 Deluxe with Starlight Kid Jay, I saw first-hand the joy delivered by our Starlight Nintendo Switch Gaming station. He said I couldn’t beat him, he was the Mario Kart champ. He was right. Jay is nine-years-old with a larger-than-life personality. Diagnosed with non-Hodgkins lymphoblastic lymphoma, Jay’s life now consists of long hospital visits, chemotherapy, feeling good one day and not the next. One thing that stays constant is his love of video games and the fun he has playing on the Starlight Gaming station. Because of the Gaming station, his mom says he’s more relaxed, easy going, and it lets him just have fun.

Seeing the benefit of Starlight’s programs for kids like Jay really brought home Starlight’s mission of delivering happiness. As I write this letter, the world has been shaken to the core by COVID-19. As we navigate this new, ever-changing “normal,” it’s clear we must remain steadfast in our mission. More than ever, seriously ill kids are depending on us to deliver happiness. Thank you for supporting Starlight and our mission. We couldn’t do it without your support.
Seriously ill kids are often scared, lonely, and missing out on all of the things that make being a kid great.

That’s where Starlight comes in.

Starlight supports kids and families at more than 800 children’s hospitals and healthcare facilities in the U.S. We provide fun, state-of-the-art programs such as Starlight Virtual Reality, Starlight Hospital Wear, and Starlight Gaming to thousands of hospitalized kids, at no cost to our hospital partners.

Since 1982, Starlight has brought smiles to over 16 million seriously ill children and their families in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. That’s more than 35 years of delivering happiness to seriously ill kids—because a hospitalized kid is still a kid.
While doctors, nurses, and other hospital staff attend to the medical needs of kids with serious illnesses, Starlight steps in to improve the overall health of hospitalized kids by giving them an opportunity to have fun.

Evidence shows that improving the mental and social well-being of patients can have a positive impact on their physical health. Starlight programs are carefully designed with the input of medical staff, child life professionals, and the world’s top media and technology companies to ensure they entertain, distract, and inspire seriously ill children and their families.

In 2019, thanks to the generous support of individuals, organizations, foundations, and corporate partners, we continued to deliver our state-of-the-art programs and launched the newest iteration to the Starlight Gaming program –Starlight Nintendo Switch Gaming station.

“Starlight provides a sense of normalcy for these patients. By getting in something more comfortable and having a game to play while waiting, this helps kids to feel like regular kids. Starlight programs also provide a whole new level of care, support, and passion for these patients.”

– Lexi Little, Certified Child Life Specialist at CHRISTUS Shreveport-Bossier Health System
To serve more seriously ill children and have the greatest possible impact, Starlight has prioritized three strategic initiatives:

1. Ensure Starlight's programs are delivered with excellence and maximum impact, with the highest level of accountability and transparency.
2. Build the awareness of the Starlight brand such that it becomes a household name.
3. Develop and diversify Starlight's revenue with increased focus on digital fundraising initiatives and community engagement.
We strive to go beyond expectations, always seeking new and better ways to achieve our mission.
Starlight Gaming
Starlight Gaming delivers happiness to seriously ill children by providing them with hours of fun and distraction through their favorite Nintendo Switch™ video games and streaming movies and TV shows, right from the comfort of their hospital bed or in a playroom with a group of kids.

In 2019, Starlight and Nintendo of America announced the newest iteration to the popular Starlight Gaming program: Starlight Nintendo Switch Gaming station.

The new Starlight Gaming station features the popular Nintendo Switch system and is specially designed and manufactured by Nintendo of America for use in a hospital setting. The device can be completely cleaned with disinfectant to meet a hospital’s strict safety infection protocols and includes a mounted playback monitor that can roll anywhere in a hospital so children can enjoy some of their favorite Nintendo Switch™ video games from the comfort of their own hospital beds or in a playroom with a group of other children.

“The Gaming stations are important distraction tools that normalize the health care environment and help kids through difficult experiences.”
Julie Hertzog, CCLS, child life supervisor at Mary Bridge. “They provide choices for kids, motivate them, and give them the opportunity to have fun when it is needed most.”

**In 2019, we delivered 48 Starlight Gaming stations to children at 38 facilities in the US.**

Special thanks to Nintendo of America for its generous support of Starlight Gaming, and to the thousands of Nintendo employees over the years who have volunteered their time to help design, build, ship, and provide technical support for the program.
“Seeing my son in the hospital after surgery was terrifying. But, as soon as they introduced him to the Starlight Wii U Gaming station, his eyes lit up,” said Edwin Sr. “He started talking more. It was great just to see him be normal again.” Right after Edwin Jr. had hip surgery, he and his family knew that the road to recovery was going to be long and painful. But thanks to Starlight Gaming, it didn’t have to be.

“At first, I was kind of in pain, but the Starlight Wii U Gaming station took my mind off of the pain. So, I just started focusing on the game more and I started having fun. I was actually entertained, and I was more calm and happy.” That’s the power of video games.

12-year-old Edwin Jr. was born prematurely at 27 weeks with cerebral palsy. Shortly after birth, doctors say he suffered from a mini stroke. He’s had many hospitalizations and four major surgeries to correct his balance and to improve his quality of life. They included hip surgery, realignment of both knee joints, release of his gastrocnemius muscle on his right leg, and hamstring lengthening. Because of the amazing care of our hospital partner, Hospital for Special Surgery in New York City, he’s able to walk a lot easier, hold pencils and remote controllers.

“We’ve been blessed with a child with a disability. We take it for granted, some of the stuff that we do normally, but for him, everything that he does is a milestone and we celebrate everything,” said Edwin Sr and because of the many hospitalizations, he’s gotten really good at video games. Edwin and his dad play Nintendo games together, their favorites are Mario Kart and Super Smash Bros. Edwin Sr. can’t seem to beat his son.

Starlight has partnered with Nintendo of America for 28 years to deliver Starlight Gaming to hospitals across the United States. Starlight Gaming consoles are designed to roll anywhere in the hospital and are specifically manufactured to meet strict infection safety protocols. They allow children to play video games or stream their favorite movies and TV shows from the comfort of their hospital bed or in a playroom with a group of kids. They provide seriously ill children hours of entertainment and a sense of normalcy while hospitalized.

Ever since Edwin experienced the Starlight Gaming console, his parents wanted to bring that happiness home, so they purchased a Wii U and a Nintendo Switch. And Edwin’s mom, Monique, said her son wants to be a game developer when he grows up, especially to develop games for people with special needs. With Edwin Jr’s determined spirit, she has no doubt in her mind that he’ll do just that.

Video games provide comfort, normalcy, entertainment and so much happiness to seriously ill kids like Edwin.
Starlight Virtual Reality
Starlight Virtual Reality is a state-of-the-art technology program that radically transforms the hospital experience for seriously ill children and their families. Starlight VR is the first general use VR program for hospitals that delivers happiness to children through 20+ pre-loaded, kid-friendly experiences to help distract them during difficult medical procedures or simply relax and have fun while they escape into a virtual world.

Starlight VR is an engaging intervention through a customized, hospital-ready headset that helps decrease anxiety and pain for children. It also provides dynamic content geared toward entertainment and distraction such as virtual snowball fights, immersive field trips to exotic locations, fun video games, and more. The content allows patients with limited mobility to sit up or lay down and control the game using a remote or their head.

“In certain circumstances, Virtual Reality can be used in place of general anesthesia to help tolerate pain, and in fact, it is having a profound impact on the quality of our hospitalized children’s experiences. We are seeing children who used to require general anesthesia during certain procedures, now able to be fully awake with minimal medications.” –Joe Albietz, MD, Medical Director at Child Life, Children’s Hospital Colorado

In 2019, the second year of the program, we delivered 341 Starlight VR headsets to more than 135 hospitals in the US.

Starlight VR is made possible thanks to generous support from our corporate partners, The Walt Disney Company and Niagara Cares.
Starlight Hospital Wear
Starlight Hospital Gowns are high-quality, soft, and colorful hospital gowns that deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families. Starlight Gowns are specially manufactured to meet the needs of hospitalized kids with ties on the side (instead of down the back) for comfort and modesty, plastic snaps on each shoulder that allow for easy access and use during medical procedures, such as during MRIs, and come in a variety of fun designs.

The transition from one’s clothes to traditional hospital wear is one of the highest stress moments in a child’s hospital experience. Starlight Gowns are superior to regular hospital gowns because they are better at supporting both the functional needs of hospital staff and psychosocial and emotional needs of pediatric patients.

“When kids receive a cool hospital gown, it changes their whole experience. I’ve seen parents moved to tears when I hand their child a Starlight Gown and they smile. They didn’t expect their child to smile at all during the hospital visit.”
-Kelsey Davis, Certified Child Life Specialist in the Pediatric Pre-op department at Johns Hopkins.

In 2019, we delivered 39,300 Starlight Gowns to more than 75 hospitals in the US.

Starlight Gowns are made possible thanks to generous support from The Walt Disney Company, Colgate-Palmolive Company, Major League Baseball, and Vonage.
MEET FINN

Finn is a curious, outgoing 5-year-old born with congenital heart defect (CHD). But you wouldn’t know about his condition by the way he lives his life. He started pre-school this year and can name 21 different species of sharks.

When you see Finn smile, you want to scoop him up and hug him. This little guy has had more hospital visits and surgeries than any person should ever experience. That’s the thing about congenital heart defects. There’s no cure, only temporary fixes until the next surgery.

While shopping for Thanksgiving dinner, Finn collapsed at their local grocery store and had a stroke. His brother, who is only a year older than him, stayed by his side while they administered CPR. He was admitted to Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia for a week and had to wear a cardiac monitor for 36 days at home. They also found a brain bleed, which the stroke may have caused.

One constant through all of his hospitalizations is the Starlight Gowns he wears. For the past two years, he’s been wearing our gowns, starting with the astronaut gown! His favorite is the elephant Starlight Gown designed by a fellow Starlight mom, and he thinks it’s hilarious.

“These gowns bring smiles and as a parent walking this walk, I can’t begin to tell you how valuable a smile is on my child’s face and mine especially during our darkest of times,” Kelly, Finn’s mom said.

Besides the smiles they bring, they’re also more breathable for CHD heart warriors. Finn’s heart, like many other kids with heart defects, works twice as hard, which means he can overheat easily. Kelly says Starlight Gowns don’t cause him to sweat so much.
OUR VALUES

**caring**

We are passionate, dedicated, and care deeply about our mission.
Starlight Spaces
Starlight Spaces deliver happiness to seriously ill children by transforming indoor and outdoor hospital spaces into state-of-the-art, interactive, and relaxing environments that can be enjoyed by children and their families. These playrooms, teen lounges, therapy gyms, healing gardens, and playgrounds offer a variety of diversions, including video games, computers, toys, crafts, music, and best of all, the company of other children.

Starlight transforms hospital spaces to improve the psycho-social and emotional wellness of hospitalized kids, teens, and their families by providing a treatment-free space for play, social interaction, and meaningful activities. We re-imagine playrooms, treatment rooms, waiting areas, family kitchens, teen lounges, and even outdoor playgrounds through a simple room refresh, partial renovation, total overhaul, or creating a new space in the hospital where patients and their families can relax and enjoy their time together.

“IT was a blah room, but now it’s a wow factor! It really looks like you’re in a treehouse! Before, this room didn’t get a lot of action. But now, the volume of people coming into the room... it’s just so awesome.”  - Alyssa Luksa, Director of Child Life and Expressive Therapy, Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital

In 2019, Starlight funded, completed, or broke ground on nine new or renovated spaces at nine children’s hospitals or health care facilities in the US.

Special thanks to the Dunkin’ Joy In Childhood Foundation and Northwestern Mutual of Las Vegas for generously supporting this program in 2019.
Starlight Deliveries
Starlight Deliveries offer our more than 800+ hospital and health care facility partners an easy-to-use, free online platform where they can order items directly from our inventory of millions of dollars’ worth of donated toys, books, games, crafting materials, and other urgently needed products that deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families.

Thanks to the generosity of our corporate partners, Starlight Deliveries ensure hospitals receive exactly the items they need, in precisely the quantities they can accommodate, just when they need them, and at no cost to the hospital. Starlight coordinates the delivery of these donated products through a custom and secure e-commerce platform where our registered hospital partners can view, select, or request items that are most useful and relevant for their patients and staff.

“The sight of a Radio Flyer wagon to a patient, parent or a sibling in a hospital is a welcomed sight. Sometimes it’s a sign that your baby gets to leave the ICU and move to the less intensive care floor. There’s a thing called ICU psychosis. It’s real and hard for patients and parents if they can’t leave a room. Getting out of the room in a wagon is huge. It means fresh air and a change of scenery, both of which can be a total game changer. Sometimes Everly was so miserable but, our older son, Jack, loved pulling his baby sister around the hospital hallways in the wagon. He loved taking her outside to get fresh air.” -Lauren Backe, mother of Starlight Kid, Everly.

In 2019, we delivered $2.8 million in toys, books, games, Radio Flyer wagons, and other cool stuff kids love to nearly 600 facilities in the US.

Special thanks to our 2019 Starlight Deliveries program donors including The Walt Disney Company, Radio Flyer and WowWee.
service

We are motivated by a strong commitment to serving seriously ill children.
Thanks to the generous support of corporate partners, Starlight is able to deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families. Whether it’s working with The Walt Disney Company to give children the comfort of their favorite Disney character through our Starlight Gown collaboration, or delivering fun through our 28-year Starlight Gaming program with Nintendo of America, our partners help us to deliver programs that are founded in sound research and focused on bringing entertainment, distraction, and inspiration to help sick kids heal faster.

A very special thank you to our major corporate partners in 2019.
OUR VALUES

We are one team with one goal: to deliver happiness to seriously ill kids.
We're in this together, and can all support Starlight kids, wherever we are, with our own unique gifts. We're incredibly grateful to our individual donors and fundraisers who raise money in creative ways to help Starlight deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families.

Donations, big and small, help deliver happiness to Starlight kids directly, whether it’s to fund an individual Starlight Virtual Reality headset or to help bring a variety of Starlight programs to a facility in your own community.

Just $10 delivers happiness to 10 seriously ill children.
Donate today at starlight.org.
Since 1999, devoted Star Wars fans have camped outside of Hollywood’s TCL Chinese Theatre waiting in line to purchase tickets to see the latest installment of the Star Wars saga. Since the inaugural line, those fans have formed an organization, LiningUp.net, that has raised more than $100,000 for Starlight to help deliver happiness to seriously ill children and their families. They did it again in 2019! Marking their 20th anniversary, and the eighth time they have benefited Starlight, they lined up from December 10 through December 19 in anticipation of the first public showing of Star Wars: Episode IX at the Chinese Theatre, raising funds to deliver happiness to seriously ill kids.

Sheri Sobrato cares deeply about giving seriously ill kids the tools they need to build emotional resilience given all they are going through. Digging Deep: A Journal for Young People Facing Health Challenges is a tool for clinicians to use with their teen and young adult patients. Each page has an exercise for self-reflection, expression, and exploration. Since launching the partnership with Starlight and Sheri Sobrato and the Digging Deep Project in 2016, more than 230 cases of the Digging Deep Project hardcopy journals have been distributed to over 135 hospital facilities. The demand for Digging Deep has not slowed down as the book was moved to a digital format. Another 380+ hospital partners continued to download the journals in English and Spanish.

Thanks to Dave Koz and his incredible network of fans, Starlight was able to make a huge impact on seriously ill kids in 2019. Koz fans enjoyed great jazz and were able to support Starlight through a silent auction on two week-long cruises around Australia. Proceeds provided Starlight Virtual Reality to 100 children’s hospitals and other health care facilities across the US. No matter how busy he gets, Dave makes it a tradition to deliver happiness to seriously ill kids with Starlight during the holiday season. His annual Dave Koz & Friends Christmas Tour around the US included a benefit for Starlight and even a hospital visit. In total, Dave and his fans have raised more than $1.3 million for Starlight. Thank you, Dave!

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In 2019, Starlight launched “Stream For Starlight” (S4S), our first ever campaign inviting the streaming community to support our mission to deliver happiness to seriously ill kids.

MeganPlays is a Roblox player on YouTube with millions of viewers that she inspires every day. As a professional gamer, she participated in last year’s S4S after learning about Starlight Gaming. Megan loves the idea of helping kids escape into a virtual world so much that she decided to support a local hospital with a program that is meaningful to her. During S4S, her generous community raised $5,000 to entirely sponsor a Starlight Gaming station at Cook Children’s Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas!

The8BitDrummer

We guarantee you’ve never seen anyone drum with as much energy or joy as The8BitDrummer. For his Stream For Starlight, he drummed song after song, and without skipping a beat, thanked each donor in real-time. Jerod and his community raised $5,000 to place a one-of-a-kind Starlight Gaming station at MUSC Children’s Health in Charleston, S.C. This hospital is local to Jerod and one where a family member was treated years ago.

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accountability

We are accountable to those we serve and our donors, as well as ourselves.
Thanks to the hard work and generosity of so many, 2019 was an incredible year for Starlight.

In 2019, we raised:

$12.3mil in total

Net Assets:
$12.6mil 2019
$10.4mil 2018

Allocation of Expenses:
- Management & General 9.6% / $982,271
- Fundraising 11.7% / $1,207,506
- Program Delivery 78.7% / $8,103,545

Investment by Program:
- Gaming 4.3% / $329,001
- Spaces 6.8% / $513,832
- Virtual Reality 12.2% / $926,637
- Hospital Wear 28.8% / $2,180,365
- Deliveries 47.9% / $3,624,227
Our Awards

2019 Winner
PRNEWS’ CSR & NONPROFIT AWARDS
BEST ANNUAL REPORT

2019 Gold
4TH ANNUAL SHORTY AWARDS
STARLIGHT VIRTUAL REALITY PROGRAM
OUR VALUES

integrity

We do what we say we will do to make a positive change for seriously ill children and their families.
Starlight Children’s Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) public charity.

Starlight is committed to best governance practices, including transparency, accountability, and responsible financial management in the conduct of its affairs. The activities and affairs of Starlight are conducted under the direction and oversight of its Board of Directors. The Board is skills-based, with members collectively bringing a wide range of expertise and experience.

The CEO is appointed by and reports directly to the Board. The CEO is responsible for managing the overall operations and resources of Starlight in order to have the greatest positive impact on seriously ill children and their families.
Board Committees

Board Committees focus on key areas of governance and report directly to the Board of Directors. These committees include:

Executive Committee
- Acts in a consultative capacity for the CEO
- Reviews, deliberates upon and decides matters of significance
- Handles time sensitive matters that may need speedy action
- Collaborates with CEO in preparation of Board meeting calendar and agendas

Finance Committee
- Provides financial oversight
- Reviews financial statements prepared by management for integrity and timeliness
- Collaborates with management to develop and approve operating and cash flow budgets
- Monitors adherence to budgets
- Formulates and recommends for adoption by the Board Starlight’s investment and reserve policy and oversees compliance with these policies

Compensation Committee
- Recommends to the Board the compensation of the CEO and CFO to assure that such compensation is just and reasonable
- Oversees implementation of Starlight’s compensation policy

Audit Committee
- Monitors Starlight’s system of internal controls
- Recommends to the Board selection of Starlight’s independent auditors
- Specifies the scope of external audits
- Supervises Starlight’s internal and external audits

Nominations & Governance Committee
- Determines the skills and qualities needed on the Board
- Evaluates, recruits and nominates prospective directors for election by the Board
- Takes lead in evaluating the performance of directors
Our Board

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The Constellation consists of generous people who have previously served Starlight as Directors, or in other prominent capacities, or significantly support Starlight’s mission.

Howard Davine  
Brian Gott  
David Hoberman

Warren Kornblum  
Mel Marks, MD  
Kevin Mayer

Hannah Minghella  
Brandon Phillips, MD  
Gary Rachelefsky, MD

Glenn Ross  
Ron Leibow

(Posthumous)  
Roger Shiffman  
Carol Savoie  
General H. Norman Schwarzkopf
Delivering happiness to more than 16 million seriously ill children in the US since 1982. Thank you for your support.