Changes to the Foundation Staff

As the new year approaches, we are excited to share with you some changes to the Foundation’s Staff.

Marisa Hoffmann, who joined the Foundation in 2008, happily steps into the newly created position of Program Director. She will be overseeing the Individual Grant Giving, Summer Horse Camps, Back to School Programs, the Holiday Meals Programs and any future programs. This position will allow Marisa the flexibility to spend more time with her nine month old daughter, Abigail.

As Marisa assumes her new role with the Foundation, it is with great pleasure that we welcome Monica Stevens as the Foundation’s Associate Director. Monica has served on the Board since it’s inception in 2006 and has been actively involved in our day-to-day activities. She will do a great job helping us continue to move forward as she assumes her new role in January of 2013.

Please join us in welcoming Associate Director, Monica Stevens and Program Director, Marisa Hoffmann. With their leadership, the Foundation will surely continue to grow.

The Stephen A. Comunale, Jr. Family Cancer Foundation is a one-of-a-kind organization for so many unique reasons. Our story began in 2006 out of personal sadness and tragedy and continues and evolves because of that kernel. However, what is planted in pain grows alleviating help for many in our community facing a cancer diagnosis.

When the Comunale family tragically lost their son Stephen, they and their friends searched for ways to honor his life, to raise awareness and to find a path to help others. Many ideas were explored. Should we partner with other organizations? Should we raise money for research or just what should or could we do? During theses brainstorming sessions, the family and board kept going back to the people and faces they encountered during the many months of finding the diagnosis, receiving treatment, going from doctor to doctor and hospital to hospital. In too many waiting rooms they met patients and family members struggling with missing work, getting transportation, filling up gas tanks, buying food, getting behind in house or utility payments…making difficult choices while trying to stay positive in light of devastating circumstances. While the Comunale family felt incredibly grateful to be able to deal with the challenges of cancer, without also having the stress of financial burdens, they met too many families who weren’t so fortunate. As we listened to theses stories, a picture began to emerge of a foundation that could help fill the gap.

After many meetings with the board, social workers, oncology doctors and facilitators a plan was carved out. We did our due diligence. Our mission was defined.

The Stephen A. Comunale, Jr. Family Cancer Foundation is a nonprofit organization that endows an outreach program to provide comfort to cancer patients and their families by easing the ancillary financial burdens that confront them. By partnering with social workers, community members, hospitals and other organizations, our efforts empower cancer patients while improving their quality of life.

To get going we hired a director and began to plan a fundraiser. After receiving donations, how were we going to distribute the money and help? How were we going to structure the process? How much were we going to give away? How were we going to reach many people and make them know we were ready and willing to immediately help? We all agreed that folks in turmoil didn’t need to fill out lengthy forms and wait for answers. We wanted to vet the grant requests quickly and respond within 24-36 hours.

How does it work, you may be asking yourself? There are seven board members that comprise the Grant Committee. Twice a week Marisa, our Program Director, emails all grant requests. She has received the grants from our website, from social workers, from Jewell Cardwell’s Beacon Journal column, from Stewart’s Caring Place or friends of the foundation. She follows up by checking facts with patients and their families, referral people or, even, in some cases doctors. Once all the facts are verified the Grant Committee reads the synopsis of information, emails back and forth and votes as to how we can help. This year to date we have helped over 160 families granting over $120,000.

Sometimes we do extra special things with Jane’s Sunshine Fund, a fund named in memory of Jane Comunale set up to go the extra mile by treating families with dinners, entertainment, holiday gifts, tickets to museums or aquarium and such. For instance, one family was driving an ailing child to Disney and we provided a gas card and food gift certificates. This year we have distributed 45 grants through this fund.

Out of the grant giving process, the need for other help came into focus. Kids who have some cancer time have hours of caregiver happiness. We hold 2 sessions of horseback riding camp at Victory Gallop for 20 children. There they are taught to ride, groom horses, participate in making a craft and enjoy snacks and lunch! We heard about the lack of extra money when back to school time rolled around. Now we provide 65 backpacks jammed with school supplies and gift cards for shoes in our Back to School Program. For Thanksgiving and Christmas we will be gathering meals of turkeys, breads, vegetables, stuffing, desserts and all the fixings and delivering 50 “feasts” to families we have helped. The foundation is about to launch a new project to provide Chemo Day Packages to patients at their
Individual Grant Giving
Grants offered twice a week every week of the year! As of December 1, 2012, 180 grants of financial assistance have been provided to local individuals and families in our community who are battling cancer. This program provides day-to-day financial assistance to ensure families continue to have a roof over their head, heat in their home, food on their table, gas in their car, clothes on their back, childcare for children and more. Paying for necessities such as these can sometimes become difficult when faced with a cancer diagnosis.

2012 Summer Horse Camp for Kids Touched By Cancer
In partnership with Victory Gallop, Buffalo Therapeutic Riding Center and many wonderful volunteers, the Foundation was able to send 30 children to horse camp this summer. Horses were a passion of Stephen’s so it is now part of the Foundation’s mission to share that same love of horses with many other children to help foster their growth and development.

2012 Back-to-School with Confidence Program
This past August 65 local children touched by cancer received a new backpack filled with school supplies and a gift card to get a new pair of school shoes. We were able to assist 18 more children than last year and we hope to increase the number of children that we help in 2013.

Holiday Meals Program
This holiday season marks the fourth year of the Foundation’s Holiday Meals Program. We’re providing 100 complete holiday meals to local individuals and families who are battling cancer during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays (50 meals for each holiday). The families are identified by our Foundation, local hospitals, or other cancer related organizations with which we collaborate. With every Christmas meal we also are providing wrapped Christmas gifts for any children that live in the home. The Christmas gifts were hand selected and donated for each and every child by community members and local business Dental Ceramics. Thank you so very much to each of our holiday meals sponsors and to all volunteers who packed meals, delivered meals or purchased and wrapped Christmas gifts! This was a group effort that made so many Thanksgiving and Christmases extra special.

Thank you to our 2012 Holiday Meals Program Sponsors!

2012 Foundation Programs

Individual Grant Giving

2012 Summer Horse Camp for Kids Touched By Cancer

2012 Back-to-School with Confidence Program

2012 Community Events Supporting the Stephen A. Comunale, Jr. Family Cancer Foundation

Thank you to all sponsors and volunteers who organized, participated in and/or donated proceeds in the following 2012 Foundation Community Events:

Thirty One Fundraiser
~ Foundation Night at the Aeros Game, August 18th

PGA Tour’s Bridgestone Invitational
~ Tickets For Charity, August 1st – 5th

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Tel: 330-835-5985 • Fax: 330-835-5978 • www.stephencomunale.org

OUR MISSION
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Our mission is to offer assistance and to invest in our community with our bi-annual fundraising events.

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