

# Fight Back



Robyn Raphael lost her five-year-old son, Keaton, to pediatric cancer in 1998. Soon, she became a fierce champion for kids with cancer, from federal advocacy work to funding research. After losing Keaton to neuroblastoma just nine months after diagnosis, the Northern California mom found solace raising awareness about pediatric cancer on Capitol Hill. "I wanted to get elected officials to understand that kids' cancer needed more research funding," she recalls. At that time, less than 4 percent of the National Cancer Institute's budget went to childhood cancer research. Today, that has more than doubled, reaching 8.24 percent in 2022. With the dedication of advocates like Robyn, St. Baldrick's has played a leading role in making this happen, in solidarity with many others in the childhood cancer community.

In memory of her son, Robyn founded the Keaton Raphael Memorial, now known as Keaton's Childhood Cancer Alliance. Today, it is the longest-standing charity partner of the St. Baldrick's Foundation and the first of many other foundations to join in supporting lifesaving research.

During her early advocacy work, Robyn met the founders of what would later become the St. Baldrick's Foundation. When one of them challenged Robyn to shave her head in 2003, she hesitated: "Then, I just leaned in and did it." Now, she serves as director of corporate relations for the St. Baldrick's Foundation. Robyn says, "I'm grateful to partner with innovative people who are always ready to suggest new ways to support our kids and researchers." Of her decades of St. Baldrick's involvement, she adds, "It's been such a gift. It was part of my therapy and healing after Keaton died. Working with our corporate partners is so fulfilling. Every single

day I get to meet wonderful people who are doing wonderful things in the world."

With the support of generous individuals, foundations, and corporate partners, St. Baldrick's today is the largest charity funder of childhood cancer research grants. "If you know a child who has been treated for cancer, St. Baldrick's has had a hand in that research. Over time, we've moved the needle," Robyn says. "The next dollar donated could unlock a cure and save children's lives."

## Your Gift—Magnified

The St. Baldrick's Foundation offers two great ways to fight childhood cancer—and they won't cost you anything today:

**Matching Gifts**—Many companies have matching gift programs that will match your gift to St. Baldrick's. The impact is tremendous: Through matching gifts, St. Baldrick's has received over \$6.5 million in additional funding for pediatric cancer research. For more information, go to <https://www.stbaldricks.org/matching-gifts>

**Legacy Giving**—Establishing an estate gift to St. Baldrick's is simple, thanks to our partnership with Freewill, an online source for writing your will at no cost. Simply follow the steps, designating the St. Baldrick's Foundation as the beneficiary of your legacy gift. Learn more by scanning the QR code or going to <https://www.freewill.com/stbaldricks>



ISSUE 25



# YOU MAKE AN impact

**Hartwell Dew** first shaved his head to help kids with cancer in 2006. Eighteen years later, he celebrated his retirement by shaving again. This time, it was personal.

## Promise Fulfilled

Hartwell was so inspired after his first head-shaving that he pledged to shave again when it was time to celebrate his retirement from the reinsurance industry. True to his word, last February the managing director of Guy Carpenter & Company LLC planned a retirement party and head-shaving event to mark the end of his successful 46-year career while supporting the St. Baldrick's Foundation.

Raising money for pediatric cancer research has taken on an increased urgency for Hartwell: His 3-year-old grandson, Sal Cassata, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) last summer. Sal is currently undergoing treatment at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and MUSC Shawn Jenkins Children's Hospital. Thanks to people like Hartwell who have supported St. Baldrick's over the past 25 years, treatments for ALL have improved. As a result, kids like Sal have a better chance to live longer, healthier lives.

Thinking about that brings tears to Hartwell's eyes: "I'd like to think that my first time shaving in 2006 did make a difference, not just for Sal, but for other kids with cancer. Pediatric cancer doesn't care about race, religion, socioeconomic status, or gender—it can affect anyone. The fact that friends came out to support Sal made my retirement head-shaving very, very meaningful because this time, it's close to home. We all wanted to give these kids a better chance."

At the event organized by Hartwell—appropriately called Shaving for Sal!—Hartwell was joined by colleagues Bill Allen and Rob McKenzie, who first shaved in 2006 and 2007, respectively, as well as first-time shavers Matt Cohen and Megan Smith. Nine-year-old Joseph Cassata also stepped up to rock the bald in honor of his younger brother. Hartwell and his family plan to raise enough money to name a St. Baldrick's research grant in Sal's honor. Held on Feb. 15 in Atlanta, the event has already raised more than \$198,000 to support promising childhood cancer research.



## 25 Years and Counting

This is the 25th year of St. Baldrick's head-shaving events, and there's so much to celebrate. Since 2000:

**627,333**  
heads shaved

**16,421**  
shaving events

**\$342 million**  
awarded in pediatric research grants

Read on for ways to keep the momentum going.

## Let's Connect



[Stbaldricks.org/distinguished-giving](https://www.stbaldricks.org/distinguished-giving)

[Stbaldricks.org/get-involved/business](https://www.stbaldricks.org/get-involved/business)

[Stbaldricks.org/league](https://www.stbaldricks.org/league)

## Thank you!

Thank you for supporting lifesaving childhood cancer research. Through your gifts, you are helping the St. Baldrick's Foundation fund the best childhood cancer research, no matter where it's being done. With \$342 million in grants funded since 2005, we are the largest charity funder of pediatric cancer research grants. YOU made progress possible!

## Ways to Give

Kids with cancer need cures now, and it starts with you. Donate to fund the most promising childhood cancer research. Give once or monthly. Start today: [stbaldricks.org/ways-to-give](https://www.stbaldricks.org/ways-to-give)



Scan here to help find a cure!

The St. Baldrick's Foundation is a volunteer and donor powered charity committed to supporting the most promising research to find cures for childhood cancers and give survivors long and healthy lives.

# Moving the Needle

**Twenty-five years ago, not many clinics existed to treat pediatric cancer survivors. That's changed as more kids reach adulthood. Yet the work has just begun, says survivorship expert Smita Bhatia, MD, MPH.**



Smita Bhatia, MD, MPH

Dr. Bhatia started her career in pediatric cancer research in the mid 1990s, a few years before the founding of the St. Baldrick's Foundation. At the time, not as many kids survived pediatric cancer and there was little understanding of the long-term side effects that treatments have on developing bodies. As a young investigator, she wanted to learn more.

"We were still in the process of discovering that cancer survivors are at an increased risk for health problems—called late effects—that develop years later and are directly related to the treatment they had received," explains Dr. Bhatia, the director of the Institute for Cancer Outcomes and Survivorship at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. "Now, we know that 95 percent of childhood cancer survivors will have a significant late effect as a result of their treatment by the time they're 45."

While there are still some types of cancer that no child survives, advances in care mean that kids with pediatric cancer are living longer. In fact, 85 percent survive at least five years after diagnosis and many grow into adulthood. But decades of work by Dr. Bhatia and others reveals that pediatric cancer survivors face a lifetime of potentially serious medical issues, including cardiovascular risks, stroke, subsequent cancers, and premature menopause. As a result, Dr. Bhatia says lifetime follow-up is crucial: "This means that survivors need to be followed closely long term. The fact that general practitioners in the community are not well versed with the nuanced needs of pediatric cancer survivors points to the need for survivorship clinics."

The first piece of the puzzle was recognizing that side effects are almost certain to occur within the broad population of pediatric cancer survivors. Now, investigators are



working on a more granular level, leveraging molecular research to pinpoint why late effect complications happen and which kids are at highest risk. Their goal: To make sure that every pediatric cancer survivor has the opportunity to grow into a healthy adult. The ongoing research inspires Dr. Bhatia: "We have shown so much progress in improving the survival rates for children with cancer. These survivors should not lose the battle to the very treatments that cured them. We have to make sure that we make the same progress in preventing or mitigating the risk of long-term complications."

Born in India, Dr. Bhatia arrived in the United States after completing a medical degree and residency at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. She earned a master's degree in public health from the University of Minnesota, where she had fellowships in blood banking, pediatric hematology/oncology, and bone marrow transplantation. Today, she is a national expert on pediatric cancer survivorship, serving with a number of respected organizations to move the research forward.

## **These survivors should not lose the battle to the very treatment that cured them.**

Early in her career, Dr. Bhatia was recognized as a promising young investigator, first by the Conquer Cancer Foundation through the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), and later, with grant funding from the St. Baldrick's Foundation. Fast forward two decades, and now, Dr. Bhatia is a member of the St. Baldrick's Foundation Board of Trustees, serving on the Scientific Program Committee. She has also been a St. Baldrick's donor, as well as a grant reviewer and participant in several research summits sponsored by the foundation. Dr. Bhatia says, "I needed to give back, because St. Baldrick's had helped me tremendously when I received funding to carry out my research."

Dr. Bhatia appreciates St. Baldrick's donors for their longtime support of pediatric cancer research. Looking to the next 25 years, she adds: "We have come a long way in moving the needle with respect to curing childhood cancer. However, we need to focus on the quality of survival to make sure that survivors are living long and healthy lives."

# Together, We've Made Progress

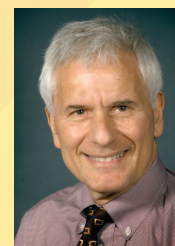
**Thanks to St. Baldrick's Foundation donors, volunteers, and researchers, kids with cancer have better outcomes today than when we began shaving heads 25 years ago. Five experts share their thoughts about the greatest impact they've seen in that time.**



## **Immunotherapy and Precision Medicine**

"Two broad areas of progress over the past 25 years stand out. First, the use of immune-based therapies has dramatically changed how we treat childhood cancer with increased success and, in some cases, less toxicity. Second, determining the genetic characteristics of an individual patient's cancer, in a short timeframe and at an affordable cost, has transformed our ability to diagnose cancer precisely and, in some cases, tailor treatment specifically for a child with cancer."

*Douglas S. Hawkins, MD  
Chair, Children's Oncology Group  
Seattle Children's Hospital*



## **Next Generation of Researchers**

"A shortage of trained pediatric oncology researchers was projected 25 years ago, and the St. Baldrick's Foundation played a major role in averting that. Without its support of the research of young investigators, the pediatric cancer research field may not have grown to be as robust, innovative, and forward-thinking as it is today. Many of the early St. Baldrick's fellows and scholars are recognized today as leaders in the field."

*Jeffrey M. Lipton, MD, PhD  
Founding Member, St. Baldrick's Scientific Program Committee  
Frances and Thomas Gambino Professor of  
Pediatrics in Hematology/Oncology  
Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell*



## **International Impact**

"The progress catalyzed by St. Baldrick's international scholarships and partners like Texas Children's Global HOPE demonstrates the enormous potential impact of research that focuses on expanding access to pediatric oncology care for underserved children globally. Thirty pediatric oncologists have now graduated from the three two-year training programs in Africa and they lead pediatric cancer care and research at nine different centers in six African countries, seeing a total of about 3,000 new children with cancer annually."

*Joseph Lubega, MD, MPH, CPE  
Director, Global Hematology-Oncology Pediatric Excellence (HOPE)  
Texas Children's Cancer and Hematology Center  
Baylor College of Medicine*



## **Taking Better Care of Survivors**

"In addition to finding new cures, research helps improve the lives of patients and survivors. Over the past 25 years, we've gained a better understanding of the dose-dependent association between key therapeutic exposures and chronic health conditions. This information has led to a concerted effort to de-escalate therapy where possible, resulting in a reduction in late effects and improvement in the quality of life for long-term survivors."

*Smita Bhatia, MD, MPH  
Member, St. Baldrick's Board and Scientific Program Committee  
Director, Institute for Cancer Outcomes and Survivorship  
University of Alabama at Birmingham*



## **Federal Advocacy**

"Over the last 25 years, the NCI (National Cancer Institute) has more than doubled its investment in pediatric cancer research, leading to better treatments and improved outcomes for childhood cancer patients. Advocates, researchers, providers, and lawmakers have played a pivotal role in this. The power of advocacy is in uniting many voices. As St. Baldrick's co-chairs the Alliance for Childhood Cancer, we are proud of the leadership role we have played in bringing the broader childhood cancer community together to achieve these goals."

*Kathleen Ruddy  
Chief Executive Officer  
St. Baldrick's Foundation*