

CaringBridge

Historical Timeline

Nearly twenty years ago, Sona Mehring founded CaringBridge when her close friends, JoAnn and Darrin, had a premature baby named Brighid. As a computer programmer, Sona was inspired to create a solution using the Internet to quickly and easily communicate with family and friends during a critical time. The same night their baby Brighid was born, so was the idea that became CaringBridge.

From the day the first CaringBridge website was created to today after more than 550,000 CaringBridge websites have been created, our goal to rally people's communities around a health journey continues. Here is a timeline look at CaringBridge since its creation in 1997.

Timeline

1997

On June 6, 1997, JoAnn Hardegger and Darrin Swanson have a little girl named Brighid three months premature. The website Sona creates receives 1,000 hits in one week. Sadly, after a nine-day struggle against tremendous odds, Brighid dies in surgery.

Sona receives the first donation to support this free service.

Sona repositions her IT company, Beacon Point Technologies, to include CaringBridge, initially known as Patient Internet Link.

By the end of 1997, there are 50 personal websites that have 4,900 visits.

2000

CaringBridge home office takes over Sona's family dining room.

By the end of 2000, there are 1,945 personal websites that have 190,610 visits.

2001

Sona decides CaringBridge is destined to become a nonprofit.

Sona needs to use CaringBridge for her mother.

By the end of 2001, there are 3,800 personal websites that have 372,400 visits.

2002

CaringBridge launches a Board of Directors with 7 members and is granted its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

2003

Until the first employee was hired in 2003, CaringBridge was completely run by 46 volunteers.

CaringBridge moves into first office space.

By the end of 2003, there are 11,522 personal websites that have 10,704,145 visits.

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2004

CaringBridge.org receives 1 million views.

Individual contributions hit \$500,000.

By the end of 2004, there are 19,585 personal websites that have 18,409,496 visits.

2006

CaringBridge moves to their second office space, and has 16 employees, 109 volunteers and 14 board members.

By the end of 2006, there are 50,511 personal websites that have 49,895,742 visits.

2007

CaringBridge celebrates its 10th Birthday.

CaringBridge is featured on the NBC Nightly News.

Local website use hits home when 35 W bridge collapses in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

By the end of 2007, there are 81,355 personal websites that have 69,026,126 visits.

2008

CaringBridge moves to their current office space in Eagan, Minnesota and has 28 employees and 13 board members.

CaringBridge is ranked 35 out of the top 100 social networking sites.

CaringBridge receives \$1 million in donations in first quarter of 2008.

CaringBridge begins offering a printable version of a family's CaringBridge website.

By the end of 2008, there are 132,060 personal websites that have 127,155,279 visits.

2009

CaringBridge reaches 1 billion visits and has 185,264 personal websites.

The first unsupported, unassisted American expedition to the North Pole raised funds and awareness for CaringBridge.

CaringBridge is used in all 50 states and more than 225 countries/territories around the world.

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2010

A 2010 survey conducted by Forrester Research on behalf of CaringBridge revealed 91 percent of respondents facing a health event said that using CaringBridge to stay connected with family and friends helped make their individual health journey easier, while 88 percent said using CaringBridge positively impacted their healing process.

A CaringBridge video is featured in Times Square.

By the end of 2010, there are 246,690 personal websites that have more than 1.3 billion visits.

2012

CaringBridge celebrated its 15th Birthday by breaking 2 world records for the most signatures on the world's largest greeting card at the Mall of American in Bloomington, Minnesota.

2013

Sona writes her first book, *Hope Conquers All: Inspiring Stories of Love and Healing from CaringBridge*.

2014

CaringBridge hires its first Chief Operating Officer.

By the end of 2014, there are 522,371 personal websites that have more than 1.8 billion visits.

2016

In 2016, after nearly two decades as CEO, Sona Mehring transitioned into the role of founder and chief ambassador. As chief ambassador, Sona will focus on raising awareness about CaringBridge, as well as speaking about the healing power of social support and its effect on health outcomes for patients and their families.

Liwanag Ojala is the newly appointed CEO of CaringBridge. As CEO, Liwanag leads management and ensures that all CaringBridge operations contribute toward its mission.

2017

CaringBridge marks its 20th year by embarking on a mission to uncover the various ways in which people heal during a health crisis. Along with National Geographic photographer, David McLain, we launched a new series called [*How We Heal*](#).

In June, CaringBridge founder, Sona Mehring, retired, after two decades as the leader of CaringBridge.

By the end of 2017, there are 743,516 personal websites that have more than 2.1 billion visits.