



CARING  BRIDGE.

2020 Year in Review

In an Unforgettable Year, Your Generosity Will Always be Remembered Most Kindly

If ever there was a year to believe no one should go through a health journey alone, it was 2020. With the pandemic separating patients from their loved ones—directly or indirectly because of COVID-19—people used CaringBridge to stay connected in ways no one had ever imagined.

The need was tremendous, and so was your support. Thanks to you, CaringBridge kept people together when physical-distance requirements were inconvenient, stressful ... or heartbreaking. It's the work you've always invested in, only more urgent when visitor restrictions and lockdowns left fewer ways to communicate safely and securely and to coordinate help.

All year long, you stepped up to ensure using CaringBridge stayed easy, when nearly everything else seemed hard. You also enabled extra outreach to hospitals, care facilities and senior communities where CaringBridge could help reduce the devastating effects of isolation.

And through continued research and stories of patients and family caregivers who faced COVID—or its related disruptions—you showed, at a time when it was good to be reminded, that healing is possible, and valuable.

I am grateful for your generosity in 2020, when so many needed so much. As you review what your support provided, and ways in which your help is still needed, I thank you even more.

Liwanag Ojala
Chief Executive Officer,
CaringBridge Author, Donor



During socially-distant filming of the fifth annual Giving Tuesday event to show gratitude to supporters like you, Liwanag talks with journalist Cathy Wurzer about the role of a digital health nonprofit in a world that had become more online-only because of the pandemic.

*On the cover:
Brenda DeAnda of Sioux City, IA, with her dog, Bella, is thankful for the support she feels through CaringBridge as she lives with long-haul effects of COVID-19.*

NOTE: To read, watch or listen to stories of patients and family caregivers using CaringBridge, scan with your mobile device the QR Codes that appear throughout this report, or visit CaringBridge.org/resources.

Returns on Your Investment

More than 2.5 billion visits

to CaringBridge have been made since 1997, when our founder, Sona Mehring, launched a website to support her friends, Darrin Swanson and JoAnn Hardegger, whose daughter Brighid was born prematurely.

A total of 1,233,287 donors like you

have made 1,529,012 gifts to CaringBridge since 2002, the year we became a nonprofit. Every single gift is appreciated—and needed.

Nearly 90% of gifts to CaringBridge

have been made by individuals like you, who have found in CaringBridge a place of help, hope and healing.

44 team members

all of whom switched to working remotely and safely, as per pandemic guidelines, kept CaringBridge up-and-running for people using it in every state and 236 countries and territories around the world.

2020 Highlights

43.5 million unique users visited CaringBridge, either to provide health updates or to show love and support to patients and family caregivers.

153,652 donors like you made a total of 177,416 gifts to CaringBridge, up 24% and 26% respectively. In a year of such tremendous need, your generosity was astonishing.

1,900 messages of support were posted on CaringBridge sites every hour, offering an antidote to isolation when people could not be together.

307,243 acts of help came through CaringBridge, from requests made and accepted in the CaringBridge Planner and delivery of MealTrain meals to GoFundMe donations.

300,000 people came to CaringBridge, on average, every day, to give and receive love, hope and compassion.

Our Vision reflects how patients, caregivers, family and friends see the power of CaringBridge:
A world where no one goes through a health journey alone.

You've Brought Forward Advice & Inspiration From Real-Life Experts

When it comes to knowing “what to say,” “what to do,” and getting through things no one should ever go through, the best source of advice and inspiration for CaringBridge users is often other CaringBridge users.

Since 2017, your support of storytelling has brought forward wise words from patients and family caregivers across the country. Hoping to help others, these CaringBridge users have shared practical tips based on their experiences, ranging from what to say to someone with cancer and how to support a friend in the hospital to finding hope during the pandemic.

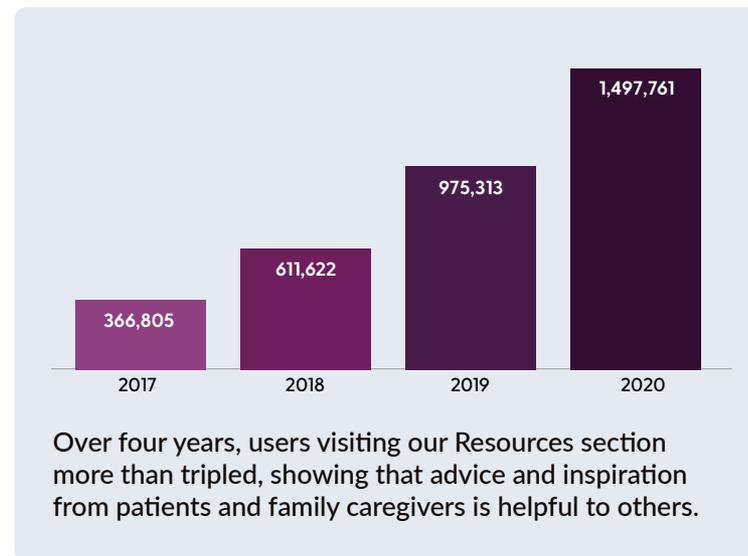
And through the *How We Heal* project—an ongoing collaboration with *National Geographic* photographer David McLain—CaringBridge users continue to help each other by showing the many ways in which healing is possible, regardless of health outcome.

This was especially true in 2020, with so many people brutalized by COVID-19, dealing with delayed diagnoses and procedures due to lockdowns, and facing the effects of isolation. CaringBridge users needed hope, and found it in the stories of other CaringBridge users.

The return on your investment in storytelling shows in a 300% increase in visits to the Resources section of CaringBridge between 2017 and 2020. (The section is soon to be aptly renamed “Advice & Inspiration.”) Such growth signals that a need is being met.

As patients and caregivers share more stories, and more people find help, hope and healing on CaringBridge, know that none of this could happen without you.

Hoping what they have been through might make your path easier, CaringBridge users share their personal perspectives and practical tips.



Michael Bischoff of Minneapolis, MN, started a CaringBridge site on the day he was diagnosed with brain cancer in 2015. He shared his story generously over the years, and never stopped believing healing was possible. In a podcast interview shortly before his death in 2020, Michael reflected on his path to healing, which was grounded in love. Michael remains a guiding light of the How We Heal project.



Through Research, You're Helping CaringBridge Become More Helpful

With the goal for CaringBridge to always be as useful as humanly—and technologically—possible, you are supporting research to identify more ways to deliver help, hope and healing through CaringBridge.

What did that look like in 2020? The work of a research collaborative among CaringBridge, the University of Minnesota and Mayo Clinic hit a stride, with studies of:

- the impacts of emotional and spiritual support during health journeys
- how writing can help reduce stress
- the benefits of expressive writing and emotional disclosure
- how patients and family caregivers connect on CaringBridge with those in similar situations.

While Jake Rodriguez, left, of Brainerd, MN, endured grueling effects of cancer treatment, his twin, Ben, faced trauma, too, in watching his sibling suffer. The brothers lost their mom to cancer when they were toddlers, but a resilience based on faith and family shines through on Jake's CaringBridge site.

Research like this adds to a growing body of knowledge about what is important—and helpful—to CaringBridge users. Having data to inform future projects can help ensure that what CaringBridge offers is what patients and family caregivers need.

For example, a gratitude practice and a loving kindness meditation were made available to CaringBridge users in 2020, after research showed these interventions could help decrease stress and increase wellbeing.

More 2020 Research Grounded in Experience of CaringBridge Users



A study of female CaringBridge users with cancer by Dr. Ayo Yetunde and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities showed opportunity for improvement in the spiritual-care continuum.



The PhD dissertation of Dr. C. Estelle Smith of the University of Minnesota computer science department was on the topic of spiritual support in online communities, and based on her work with CaringBridge.



Dr. Mary Jo Kreitzer and University of Minnesota researchers found reduction in stress and increase in emotional wellbeing among CaringBridge users who participated in a Loving Kindness Meditation.



Because of You, More People Recognize CaringBridge as a Resource

CaringBridge has always been a safe haven, a place for community. And when you're going through a health journey, you really need your community...your people. That's the kind of connection CaringBridge has always provided.

But with the virus restrictions on visitors at hospitals, care facilities and senior communities, people depended on CaringBridge in 2020 in ways that had not been imagined.

Families used CaringBridge when no one could be at the hospital with COVID patients, and everyone was desperate for news. And when surgeries were delayed, caregivers had no respite, and those in places closed to visitors felt isolated, CaringBridge was there for people.

As everyone looked for ways to be together while apart, you supported extra outreach to hospitals, care facilities and senior communities. Many hospitals, in fact, reached out to CaringBridge for help in keeping families connected. The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore was among those naming CaringBridge as a communication solution during the pandemic.

You also supported work to help parents know how CaringBridge can help when kids are going through health journeys. This is part of our organization's DNA, as CaringBridge started in 1997 to support the parents of a baby girl born prematurely.

By late 2020, a series of articles featuring advice and inspiration from parents who have used CaringBridge was showing value in helping other parents see CaringBridge as resource should they ever need it.

Advice & Inspiration for Parents

Parents who have used CaringBridge through health journeys shared their experiences to help others.

- **18 Best Books for Families With a Sick Child**
- **8 Tips to Care for Siblings of a Sick Child**
- **How to Help Your Child Through a Medical Procedure**
- **How to Explain Heart Disease to Your Child**
- **10 Ways to Entertain Your Child During a Hospital Stay**
- **How to Tell Your Child They Have Cancer**
- **How to Cope When Your Child Has Cancer**
- **How to Prepare your Child for an MRI**
- **12 Tips to Prepare Your Child for a Hospital Stay**
- **10 Tips to Cope With Your Child's Chronic Illness**

With the hope of helping other families whose children have been through cancer, Mariko Haug and her husband, Jon, of Fargo, ND, shared the story of their daughter, Reina, who was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at 5 months.



Thanks to You, the CaringBridge Platform is Stable and Secure

When you depend on a car to get from Point A to Point B, you rely on what's under the hood to be working. It's like that for people using CaringBridge, too. Everything needs to be kept running ... no matter what.

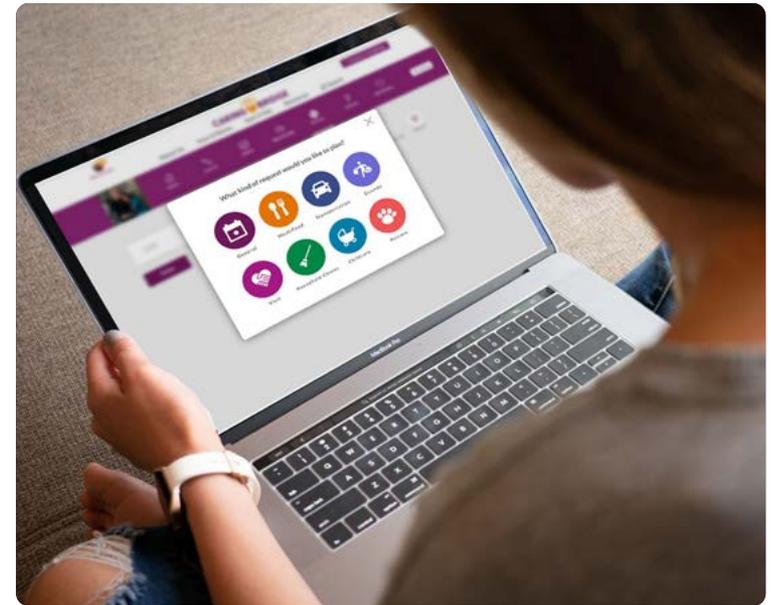
Technology drives CaringBridge, so improvement is constant. Your generosity makes that possible, so thank you for ensuring CaringBridge continues to work the way people need it to work.

That meant in 2020, when nearly everything was hard, CaringBridge had to be easy. It had to be simple to add photos and videos to Journal updates, and to save a draft to review and publish later. And the experience on mobile devices and desktops had to be equally smooth.

But you also added extra ease. Many families using CaringBridge also use MealTrain, GoFundMe and/or Zoom and you helped pull together these threads. So now, more help is accessed more easily through CaringBridge.

You also helped launch an updated version of the CaringBridge Planner, something users had been asking about for a long time. Again emphasizing ease, patients and family caregivers simply list what they need—help with driving, chores, walking the dog—and loved ones accept the requests for specific days and times.

Growing response to the CaringBridge Planner and use of MealTrain, GoFundMe and Zoom through CaringBridge confirm that you've created more ways to help. And what's more gratifying than that?



The CaringBridge Planner closes gaps between those who need help but hesitate to ask, and those who wish to help, but don't know what's helpful.

When our founder, Sona Mehring, launched the first CaringBridge site in 1997, she hand-coded it in her home office in Minnesota. (She's a software engineer.) Technology complexities are different today, but our work still ensures CaringBridge is always available to everyone who needs it.



Statement of Activity: Strong Through Pandemic and Invested in Future

Revenue and Other Support

Contributions	\$10,166,823
Donated services	\$749,972
Investment income	\$47,878
Other income	\$202,178
Revenue and Other Support	\$11,166,851
*MACP Grant & PPP Loan Forgiveness	\$1,050,212
Total	\$12,217,063

Expenses

Program expenses	\$8,556,702
Management and general	\$1,074,959
Fundraising	\$866,071
Total Expenses	\$10,497,732

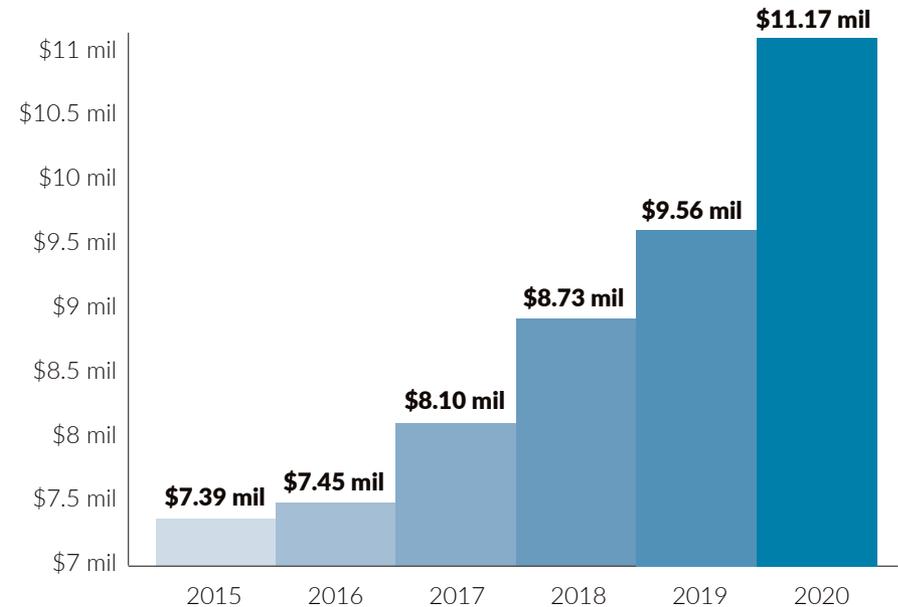
Net Assets

Change in Net Assets	\$1,719,331
Net Assets at the End of 2020	\$4,546,266

*Reflects final months of an 18-month grant from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies as well as proceeds from a forgiven PPP loan, used to pay salaries and some operating costs during the pandemic.

Independent auditors: Baker Tilly VirchowKrause, LLP.
To review the complete audited CaringBridge financial statement, visit CaringBridge.org/about-us/financials-ratings.

Revenue Growth



Bernie and Leslie Goldblatt of Minnetonka, MN, were separated for four months in 2020, as COVID-19 tried to take Bernie's life. Having survived the devastating effects of isolation, the couple shared their story at our Giving Tuesday event hosted online on Dec. 1, the international day of philanthropy. Your gifts to CaringBridge on that day were doubled, up to \$100,000, through a generous matching gift by the Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation.



Your Support Remains Greatly Needed—in 2021 and Beyond

More than 43 million unique users visited CaringBridge in 2020. And who made that possible? You. But there is always one more family to help, and always more work to be done. Here is where your support is truly needed most in 2021:

Outreach. When people have a certain level of awareness about CaringBridge—what it does and how it helps—they are much more likely to use it should there be need. So work must continue to make sure people do know about CaringBridge.

Storytelling. It's unclear how the pandemic will continue to play out and what life will be like for those living with the long-haul effects of COVID. But as CaringBridge users continue sharing their stories, with the hope of helping others, even more people may be inspired to find their paths toward healing.

Research. To ask is to learn, so research will continue to identify ways in which CaringBridge can be more helpful and also to explore the science of healing.

Technology. The design and user experience on the CaringBridge platform depend on your support, as does ensuring stability and privacy controls. As CaringBridge is 100% digital, this work will always be essential.

Thank you for all you did for CaringBridge in 2020, and also for your continued support in the year ahead.

“**Our Mission** shows how your support helped patients and family caregivers:

We build bridges of care and communication providing love and support on a health journey.”

Areya Borsellino was born prematurely during the pandemic, and spent months in a Minneapolis NICU near the site of George Floyd's death. Social-distancing made it hard to share the joy of a new baby, but Libby Raduenz and Dante Borsellino chose hope, starting with their daughter's name: "Areya" is short for "a ray of light."

Your Legacy

We're so honored by donors who designate CaringBridge as part of their planned giving. If you have included CaringBridge in your legacy, or are thinking about it, may we thank you?



Senior Leadership Team

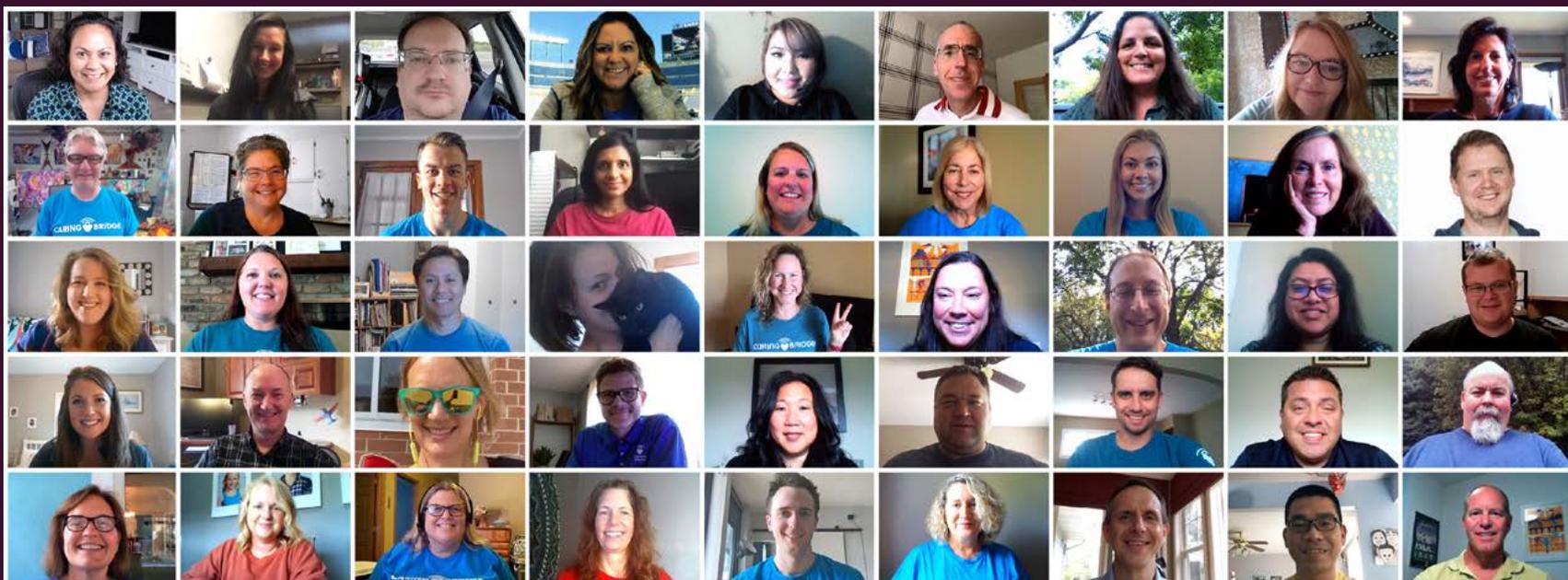
Liwanag Ojala, *Chief Executive Officer*
Brigid Bonner, *Chief Experience Officer*
Elizabeth Olson, *Chief Financial Officer*
Mike Thyken, *Chief Technology Officer*

Board of Directors (as of December 1, 2020)

Our dynamic board has a commitment to doing extraordinary work and a vision for what's possible when compassion and technology unite.

Dr. Sharon Berry	Jodi Hubler	Dr. Véronique Roger	Pete Sommerness
Paurvi Bhatt	Molly Jungbauer	Cris Ross	J. Scott Spiker
Jim Cuene	Don Liu	Pete Segar	Andy Thieman
Berit Francis	Kevin O'Leary	Adrian Slobin	Solome Tibebe
Dr. Archelle Georgiou	John Orner	Bruce Smith, <i>Chair</i>	John Wernz

With gratitude, as always, to CaringBridge founder Sona Mehring, and JoAnn Hardegger and Darrin Swanson, parents of Baby Brigid, for whom CaringBridge is named.



***From all of us at CaringBridge—who worked safely and remotely in 2020
—thank you for your generosity in a year of tremendous need.***

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