



SUN DEVIL

*Family Charities*

2012 Annual Report



## Key Highlights in 2012

- More than \$29k in Total Receipts, driven by a successful tailgate season.
- Highest payout for Patient Services since inception.
- Salary and wage expenses of \$0.

## Board of Directors

- Jonas Berglund
- Jennifer Brooks-Stang
- Joe Cajic
- Christie Demas-Crossley
- Robert Gramhill
- Todd Hanley
- Scott Holland
- Thomas Idczak
- JP Patchett
- Anne Resnick
- Ben Van Horn
- Brian Zavislak

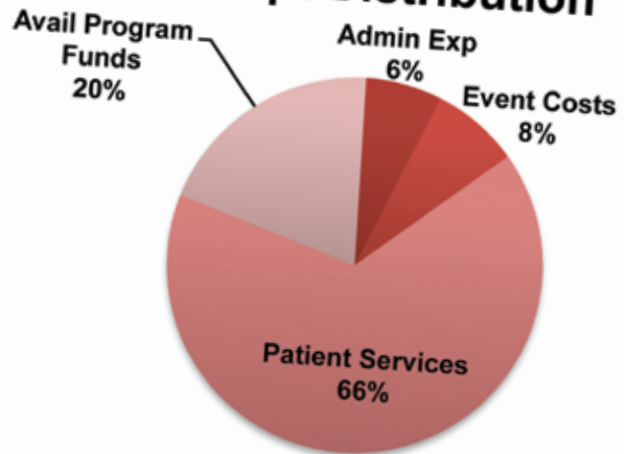
2012

## Key Financial Highlights

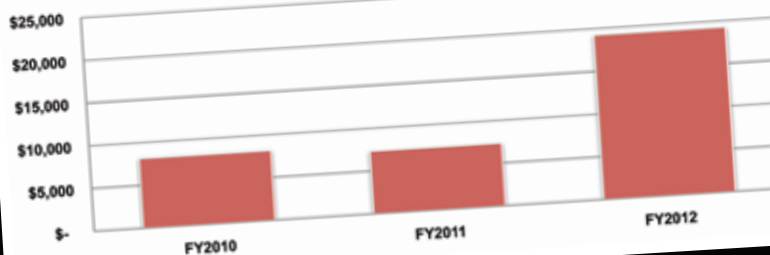
*Administrative & Event Costs totaled 14%, leaving 86% of Total Receipts available for Patient Services giving. ▶*

*Low overhead supported by volunteers and donate materials/services. ▶*

## FY2012 Receipt Distribution



## 3-Year Trend: Patient Services Giving



◀ *Patient Services giving increased by 162% YoY, driven by higher awareness and medical professional referrals.*

## The Sun Devil Family...

This is the tie that bonds us all together. We believe, like any other alliance, there is strength in numbers and the fantastic thing about being a Sun Devil is the “family” keeps growing. The ever continuing growth in alumni, faculty and students at ASU is reflective of the growth of the supporters and benefactors of Sun Devil Family Charities (“SDFC”). We not only continue to add board members, volunteers and donor supporters, but we also continue to add a number of individuals and families to the list of those who we have been lucky enough to help.

When asked to become a part of SDFC in 2008 I, like a lot of people, was very fortunate to never have been stricken with a serious illness or injury, or have anyone in my immediate family or close friends experience the same. Due to this, I had never been faced with some of the very difficult and costly challenges many people are faced with each and every day. However, like every one of our board members, donors and volunteers, the thought of helping people resonated with me and the tie in with the Sun Devil family was a natural fit; I was absolutely not prepared for, nor expecting, the personal satisfaction of simply helping people that has since come with my involvement in SDFC. The stories of people in need and the letters of thanks is a never-ending proverbial shot in the arm that drives us all to make more of a difference.

Stepping into Joe Cajic’s shoes as President of Sun Devil Family Charities last year has been an honor and a challenge. As the catalyst for the creation of SDFC, Joe has contributed countless hours and energy into the formation of this vehicle for doing good. Having personally

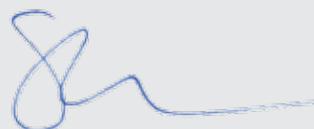
experienced a serious illness and the financial and mental stress that come from situations such as his gave him a uniquely accurate perspective into all the problems that can occur when someone gets seriously sick or injured outside of the sickness or injury itself. His goal, my goal and the mission statement of SDFC is to help people focus on the most important part of a situation like this - RECOVERY - and try to relieve some of the financial burdens that unfortunately are routinely as much of an all-consuming factor as the illness or injury itself.



In the pages that follow, as in past annual reports, we provide not only a summary snapshot of our fundraising successes this past year and how we utilized those funds but also have included a couple of stories about the fellow Sun Devils we have assisted, in addition to highlighting an SDFC volunteer. Typically, this volunteer highlight focuses on a specific person but this year we have selected the entire Patient Services Committee as a group. Raising funds and cutting checks is the easy part of the process.

Vetting the applications and making recommendations for how much to give and to who is the painstaking process. On behalf of the entire Sun Devil Family Charities board I want to personally thank the Patient Services Committee for their thoughtfulness and dedication to our cause.

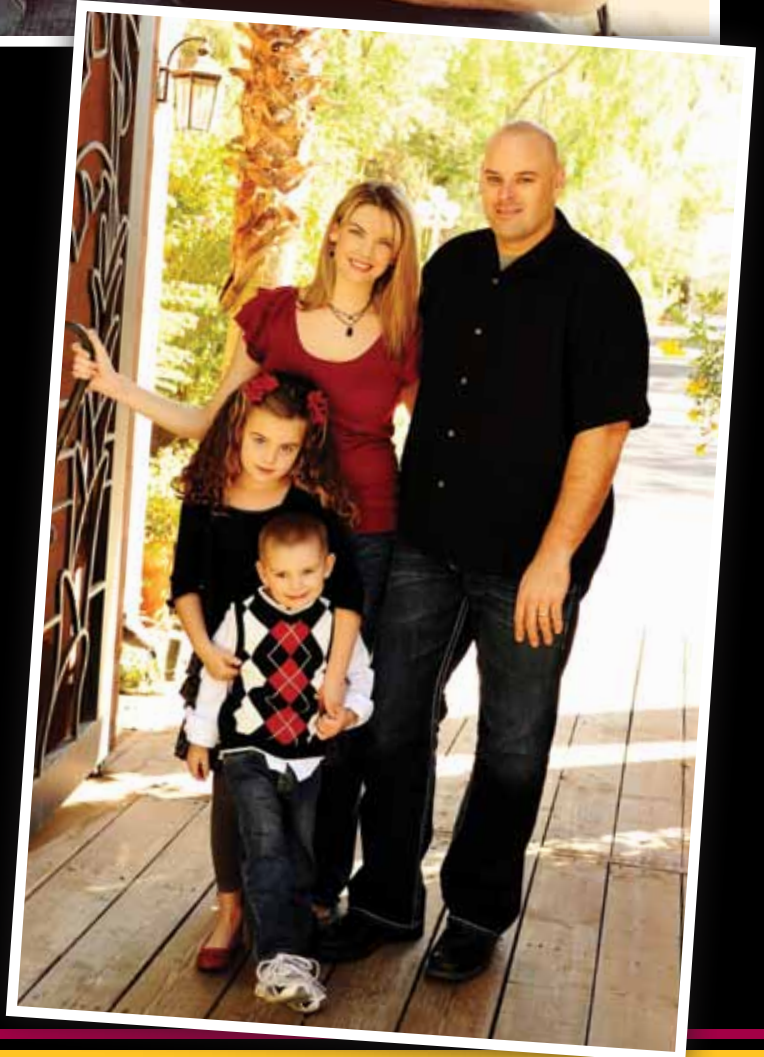
Thank you and GO DEVILS!!!



Scott Holland



**“ Thanks to the help of charities such as SDFC, we knew we had enough to pay the next month’s bills; we had enough for the day to day. ”**





## Brody Blagen

**A** string of fevers told Brody Blagen's mom, Kelli, that something was very wrong. After insisting on blood tests, Kelli was proved correct: Brody was very ill with leukaemia. The extended Blagen family, friends and charities like SDFC rallied around them allowing the family to focus on Brody's treatment and the long process of him getting well.

A normal two and a half year old, Brody Blagen was an energetic, stubborn and loving boy. With his older sister, Brooke and parents Bob and Kelli, the Blagens enjoyed a full life with financial security and the promise of a happy future.

### **"IN MY HEART I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG."**

In November 2010, signs began to show that something wasn't quite right with Brody. He was plagued by high fevers, often up into the 104-105 degree range. Each time he showed no other symptoms except the high fever and doctors were convinced he was experiencing a bad strain of flu that was going around. The doctor didn't seem worried and Kelli followed his advice, but it wasn't sitting right with her. Says Kelli, "In my heart I knew there was something wrong."

The following February, as the family began a road trip to San Diego, Brody once again had a very high fever. This time he was so ill that he wasn't eating or drinking and his listlessness was at a worrying degree. They turned around and headed home and Kelli sprang into action insisting the doctors do some blood tests. While Kelli knew something was wrong, she had no idea how terribly wrong things were.

### **"AND THAT STARTED OUR NIGHTMARE."**

The afternoon of the blood tests, Kelli rang the doctor for the results. Her stomach dropped when the doctor told her to sit down and listen carefully. Brody had leukaemia. In an instant, everything in the Blagens' life dramatically changed. What Brody was suffering from was a rare form of the AML strain of Leukaemia. Because of the rarity of his illness, doctors struggled to offer a reliable survival rate but they rested on the chances of Brody's survival

being approximately 40%.

What followed were six months of a new type of existence for the entire family. As Brody underwent four rounds of chemo and multiple surgeries, Kelli and Brody would live at the Children's Hospital for approximately 30 days followed by 10-15 days at home before beginning the cycle all over again.

### **"WE FOUND WE HAD TO ESSENTIALLY MANAGE AND FUND TWO HOUSEHOLDS WITH NO INCOME."**

At the time of Brody's diagnosis, Kelli, a real estate agent, earned the larger portion of the family's income while dad Bob, a Fire Captain, worked shift patterns. Overnight, they had to form a plan that would allow them to take care of Brody at the hospital as well as take care of five year old daughter Brooke at home. Kelli immediately stopped working and with it, 75% of the family's income stopped. The Blagens had good health insurance and had saved for a rainy day but despite this, the financial implications were at times, harrowing.

What was most important to the Blagens is that at all times there would be a parent with each of their children. They knew that it wasn't just Brody who needed their attention but Brooke, too. Bob used his accrued sick and vacation time. In order for Bob and Kelli to ensure they could be with both of their children, eventually Bob went on FMLA leaving the family with no income at all.

The drastic loss of income and mounting medical bills added a new worry to the Blagen family. All told, Brody's medical bills totalled over two million dollars. With the 80/20 split of insurance versus patient copays, the family's financial obligation was daunting. However, Kelli says it's not just the medical costs which impact families who are going through this, "It's the added costs people forget about it. The extra gas bills of daily trips to the hospital plus eating 1-2 meals a day when at the hospital. It all adds up quickly." The Blagens were forced to short-sell their house taking a staggering loss and had to move into a rented house to try to cover their costs. But they weren't alone; friends, family and charitable support allowed them to get by month to month.

### **"SDFC WERE WONDERFUL. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE RARE CHARITIES WERE**

### **THERE WAS NO RED TAPE."**

Although they tried to get financial assistance through the state, their middle-class income deemed them ineligible. Despite the financial setbacks, Kelli found people were very gracious and wanted to help. Kelli first heard about SDFC through another mother at the Children's Hospital whose family had had SDFC support. And because both of Bob's parents were ASU alumnus, the Blagens decided to apply. Kelli says she couldn't believe how simple the SDFC process is, "The application was one page, maybe two at the most. And then we simply submitted receipts, SDFC confirmed they'd do what they could and then they would cut a check...it was just the easiest process." Continues Kelli, "SDFC were wonderful. It was one of those rare charities where there was no red tape."

When asked what impact SDFC's help had on her and her family, Kelli becomes emotional with gratitude, "Not only did I have Brody sick in the hospital, but I had a healthy child at home who needed to feel safe and secure. Thanks to the help of charities such as SDFC, we knew we had enough to pay the next month's bills; we had enough for the day to day. It wasn't a lot but it meant my husband could stay home with my daughter and this meant she could have some normalcy."

### **"WHAT I'VE LEARNED IS PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH JUST A LITTLE BIT CAN IMPACT."**

The Blagens are grateful for all the help the donors at SDFC have made possible. Explains Kelli, "To help people even a little bit helps so much. Even if it's only \$5 or \$10, it's more than they had 5 minutes ago."

Now in remission, Brody has checkups every three months and continues to show NED (No Evidence of Disease). Although Kelli and Bob have both recently experienced medical setbacks themselves, they decided when Brody was diagnosed they would focus on a positive attitude. "Some people are just negative. But we made a pact that as soon as we walked in that room, we'd put on a smile and act happy." Not only did that help Brody, says Kelli, it pushed them through and made them strong. And that continues to carry them through their recent difficulties. According to Kelli, "We just keep a positive attitude every day. Good things are on our horizon."



**“ The words ‘thank you’ simply aren’t adequate enough to express the way that I feel. ”**

## Jason Taylor

***The last thing Jason Taylor wants is for anyone to feel sorry for him. Almost two years since a catastrophic injury left Jason near death, his amazing story of recovery is one of positivity, achievement and gratitude. With support from people and organizations such as SDFC, Jason has worked tirelessly to recover physically, mentally and emotionally and is now looking forward to what's in store.***

It was the end of a lovely date night. Leaving their young daughter Alivia at home, Jason and his then wife Mandy had enjoyed VIP tickets to a Suns basketball game, a nice dinner out followed by drinks with friends. At the end of the night as Jason waited outside a local bar for the cab, a chance encounter with another young man ended in tragedy. The other man inexplicably pulled out a gun and shot Jason through the back of the head with a hollow-tip bullet. The bullet lodged in the back of his cerebellum and exploded leaving Jason in a deep coma. Emergency staff held out little hope he would survive.

But survive he did! For the following seven days after delicate brain surgery, Jason remained on life support and in a deep coma until against all odds, he awoke. On a ventilator and therefore unable to speak, Jason relayed what had happened to the police using a dry-erase board. But it was what he wrote next that epitomized Jason's state of mind, "My Cardinals season tickets are

due April 15, make that payment!" To his family, this left little doubt he was going to be just fine.

**"TO GET BACK TO NORMAL WASN'T ENOUGH, I NEEDED TO GET BACK TO 100%."**

An outgoing and passionate public speaker, Jason has always been a "glass half full" type of person. But according to him, this entire experience has taken him to a new level. "I went from a JV version to the Varsity version of appreciating things and finding the positive." And Jason would need all the positivity he could muster.

Jason says it's as if the brain injury hit a master reset button and he had to relearn everything from scratch. He's had to learn how to walk, talk, stand; even how to breathe again and this required every type of therapy possible. For several hours a day for months on end, Jason took part in neuropsychology therapy, brain therapy, physical therapy and emotional therapy and all of these came at a high financial cost.

**"SDFC WERE REALLY PRETTY AMAZING THROUGHOUT IT ALL."**

Thankfully, SDFC was able to provide assistance to cover some of Jason's out-of-pocket costs. His wife at the time was an ASU alumna and heard about the charity through a mutual friend. Jason says the process of working with SDFC was very simple, "Anytime anybody experiences a tragedy like this, there's a definitive financial burden that accompanies it. That was one thing SDFC alleviated; they allowed us to spend our energy on other things like getting better. We trusted SDFC would take care of what they could as far as financial help.

It really freed us up to focus our energy elsewhere."

Having the mental, emotional and physical energy to fuel the effort required to recover has been a monumental task. This is why Jason is brimming with gratitude to the donors that make SDFC's support possible. Says Jason, "The words 'thank you' simply aren't adequate enough to express the way that I feel. The donors of SDFC allowed me to focus on these other huge tasks on hand: from learning to walk, talk, stand, breath to healing the damage to my personal relationships and focus on returning to work. To not have the financial burden draining my limited energy has been such a blessing."

**"IF YOU FEEL SORRY FOR ME, YOU'VE REALLY MISSED THE POINT."**

While others around him may see loss, sadness and negativity regarding his experience, Jason couldn't see it more differently, "I have the most beautiful family, friends and daughter. I feel like the luckiest and most blessed guy in the world." Jason continues, "Bad things happen which you can't control. But here's what you do control: you control your attitude and your effort. Make sure those two things are on point." Jason enjoys each and every day, has returned to public speaking and loves spending time with his daughter, who's now three. Jason now says he's 97% of the way fully recovered and thanks to the generous help from groups like SDFC's donors, is focused on finishing the remaining 3% of his recovery and carrying his message of hope and positivity to others.





**DENISE LINK**



**GARY WEEMAN**

**“ It feels terribly good to have money to provide someone who is struggling to meet medical expenses or basic needs because they have had the misfortune of contracting an illness or experiencing a traumatic accident. ”**  
- Anne Resnick





## Patient Services Committee

***From insurance copays, mortgage payments, to travel expenses related to medical treatment and a multitude of things in between, SDFC's Patient Services Committee has been disbursing funds to needy ASU students, staff, alumni and their immediate family members since inception.***

During the creation of SDFC in 2008, founder Joe Cajic knew what he wanted: an objective, experienced and skilled committee who would be responsible for determining applicant eligibility and disbursements of funds. He also knew where he needed to start: Anne Resnick. Joe had volunteered for Anne at the Leukaemia and Lymphoma Society and believed she brought the right amount of experience and skills. Joe explains, "I have known Anne since I was a diagnosed in 1997. She was important to my recovery and most important in finding financial resources for myself. She is well respected in the Patient Services arena and had been working with Hospice of the Valley at the time. I approached Anne for some insight on how we should design the program. She is very well respected in the community and her providing her time is valuable."

An SDFC Board member couldn't agree more with Joe's choice, "Anne not only formed the committee but is also a SDFC Board member. She has extensive experience in the hospital and health care industry as well as non-profit organizations. We are very lucky to have Anne in this role with her particular skill set."

In forming the committee, Anne sought to bring together a group

which combines social work, non-profit and medical backgrounds. Joining Anne on the Patient Services Committee are:

**Lilly Pérez-Freerks**, LMSW, who joined the committee from ASU College of Public Programs, School of Social Work. Lilly is a professionally trained, master's level social worker, with extensive experience serving vulnerable populations in Maricopa County.

**Jean Wortman**, LBSW, who spent many years as a hospital social worker. Her last 24 years have been at John C. Lincoln Health Network where she was instrumental in developing the Domestic Violence program. She brings extensive understanding of health insurance coverage assisted patients, as well as medical staff, with decision making regarding care.

**Gary Weeman** who brings to the committee experience from two other non-profit organizations. He volunteered from 1999-2003 at The Leukaemia & Lymphoma Society, holding positions on the Board of Trustees as well as Chairman of the Patient Services Committee. Since 2004, Gary has volunteered with the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Arizona as a Wish Granter, Trainer, and member of the Mission Delivery Committee.

**Denise Link**, PhD, WHNP-BC, FAAN who is a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Associate Professor of Nursing at the ASU College of Nursing & Health Innovation. Denise has been a nurse since 1975 and a nurse practitioner since 1979. She is board certified in Women's Health and served as the Advanced Practice member of the Board of Nursing in New Jersey and Arizona.

Together the committee of five focus on two key areas: the first and perhaps most crucial is their responsibility to review applications and make determinations on the disbursement of the money. Their mission is to be fair, balanced and objective. Explains Anne, "We set and follow key parameters in order to be judicious in our decisions; we work to be really good stewards of the money."

The second area the committee works on is getting the word out that SDFC exists and that funding is available. Working with patient groups, liaison officers, ASU and other key contacts, they work to raise the level of awareness to encourage patient applications so that SDFC may be of maximum service.

From its inception, Anne, who has spent many years working in the social service sector, has been impressed with the professionalism of SDFC and the dedication of its Board of Directors. "I go to a Board meeting and am amazed to see all these high-powered businessmen taking time out of their personal lives to do our fundraising. It's one of the reasons that I stay involved."

However, it's the patients and their families that truly make it meaningful for Anne and the other committee members. Anne explains, "It feels terribly good to have money to provide someone who is struggling to meet medical expenses or basic needs because they have had the misfortune of contracting an illness or experiencing a traumatic accident. The emails that come back thanking us for the difference we make feel very rewarding for all of us. It doesn't take away anyone's pain for their situation, but providing assistance in a way that really helps them makes it so worthwhile."

# How To Help

**W**hen families are stricken with serious ailments the first and most important task is to fight the diseases. But sometimes the ailments require that one member of the family leave work to help the other get better. Then the families find themselves fighting two battles, the second being to keep the steady wave of bills at bay.

That's how many of the Sun Devil Family Charities' honor patient families feel when they reach out to us for financial assistance. Sadly, there are many more people still feeling overwhelmed, isolated and scared because they haven't heard of Sun Devil Family Charities

or they don't understand the simplicity of our service or the difference it can make.

Sun Devil Family Charities is more than a united network of ASU Alumni, Students and Faculty trying to fill the financial needs of these families. It is also a unified group of Sun Devils that support families in finding additional resources to help win their battle.

Please help us in spreading the news about Sun Devil Family Charities. We'll continue our outreach but we know the most effective introduction to Sun Devil Family Charities comes through a personal recommendation.

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## SDFC OFFERS MULTIPLE DONATION OPTIONS INCLUDING:

- ▶ Become a Sun Devil Family Charities fan on Facebook
- ▶ Support our mission with a monetary donation by sending a check or money order made payable to "SDFC" and mailed to:  
**Sun Devil Family Charities**  
One East Washington Street, Suite 1400  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004
- ▶ Donation of items for auction or raffle at fundraising events. For more information, please contact us at [donate@sundevilfamily.org](mailto:donate@sundevilfamily.org).
- ▶ Provide in-kind services, please contact us at [donate@sundevilfamily.org](mailto:donate@sundevilfamily.org).
- ▶ Volunteer your time to help fundraise or run events, please contact us at [volunteer@sundevilfamily.org](mailto:volunteer@sundevilfamily.org).



# Special Thanks

To reduce the overhead costs associated with the production of its charity fundraising events, SDFC relies on local businesses committed to community involvement for underwriting up to the full costs of such events. Some of the sponsors and volunteers that have been vital to the success of our events in fiscal year 2011 include:



*BellaCreative*  
print design • layout  
illustration • web design  
[bellacreativearizona.com](http://bellacreativearizona.com)

**SUPPORTING THE NEEDS  
OF THE ASU FAMILY...**

...Both Past and Present



**One East Washington Street, Suite 1400  
Phoenix, Arizona 85004**

For donation inquiries, please email us at [donate@sundevilfamily.org](mailto:donate@sundevilfamily.org).  
If you'd like more information about volunteering, please email us at  
[volunteer@sundevilfamily.org](mailto:volunteer@sundevilfamily.org).