
2025



SEASON IMPACT SUMMARY

**THE MINI
STICKS** *co*

The MiniSticks Charitable Organization
www.theministicksco.org

The Mini Sticks Charitable Organization (aka The Mini Sticks CO) is a nonprofit organization that aims to support kids and their families affected by cancer with a simple vision: provide an escape from cancer.

The organization was founded in 2022 by Tucker Shedd while he was playing for the Omaha Lancers in the United States Hockey League at the age of 18. When Tucker was a 9-year-old, his mother was diagnosed with cancer, but “still made sure she was there to drive me to practice and come to games and tournaments no matter how tired or sick she felt”. Tucker’s teammates and the support of his team were what helped him manage the challenge of his mom’s illness.

To better share the full scope of our work, we’ve shifted our impact reporting from a 'season-based' schedule to a full calendar year. This change ensures our community sees the total impact of your support from January through December, capturing every milestone without the overlap of a traditional hockey schedule.

INTRODUCTION

WHY IT MATTERS



In 2025, it is estimated that 2,041,910 new cancer cases will be diagnosed in the United States (1). Of those, approximately 15,000 are expected to be children and adolescents aged 0 to 19, and tragically, an estimated 1,700 will die from the disease (2). These figures underscore the harsh reality that cancer affects the most vulnerable among us, regardless of age, income, or location.

While overall cancer mortality rates continue to decline, significant disparities persist. For example, Hispanic children now have the highest cancer incidence rates in the U.S., and non-Hispanic Black children are nearly 30% more likely to die from certain pediatric cancers than their white peers (2). Furthermore, children in rural or economically disadvantaged areas face severe barriers to specialized care and clinical trials, often resulting in poorer outcomes (2).

The Critical Need for Funding in 2025

The need for community support has reached a critical tipping point due to substantial federal funding shifts. In early 2025, the federal government implemented approximately \$2.7 billion in cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), resulting in a 31% decrease in cancer research funding compared to the previous year (3).

While recent executive actions have attempted to redirect some funds toward AI-driven pediatric research, the overall "axe" taken to the NCI budget—which faces a proposed 37.2% reduction (\$2.7 billion) for the upcoming fiscal year—means that private non-profits must now bridge a widening gap (3, 6). Federal cuts have put the future of pediatric medicine at risk, making our work as advocates more vital than ever. We are shining a spotlight on this funding crisis to ensure that progress doesn't stop and that the need for modern, life-saving treatments remains at the forefront of the national conversation.

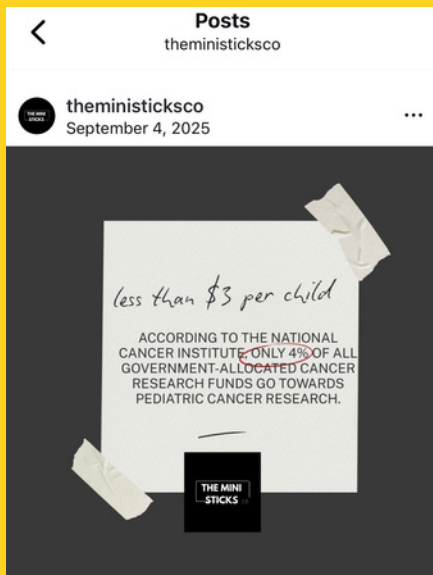
Citations:

1. [American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2025.](#)
2. [American Association for Cancer Research \(AACR\). Pediatric Cancer Progress Report 2025.](#)
3. [OncLive. Federal Funding Cuts Hit Cancer Research Despite Public Support \(Reporting on May 2025 Senate Minority Staff Report\).](#)
4. [The Cancer Letter. FY25 paylines drop to 4th percentile—a historic low—as NCI braces for FY26 budget cuts.](#)
5. [CureSearch for Children's Cancer. Federal budget cuts threaten pediatric cancer research.](#)
6. [American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network \(ACS CAN\). Future Cancer Cures in Jeopardy as President Proposes Massive Cuts to National Cancer Institute.](#)
7. [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\). HHS Doubles AI-Backed Childhood Cancer Research Funding.](#)

SCORE FOR AWARENESS

In 2025, we strategically leveraged the global momentum of September's Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to amplify our mission. Our '30 Days of Advocacy' campaign on Instagram achieved record-breaking visibility by bridging the gap between clinical research and community engagement. Rather than relying on generalities, Mini Sticks CO curated content grounded in the latest pediatric studies, providing our followers with a 'masterclass' in the realities of the current funding crisis. This evidence-based approach ensured our messaging was both emotionally resonant and scientifically sound, reinforcing our position as a credible voice for children who are often sidelined in the national budget conversation.

While September remains our most concentrated month of advocacy, the impact of our Childhood Cancer Awareness Month campaign serves as the engine for our work throughout the entire year. As we transition to our new calendar-year reporting cycle, our goal is to ensure that the informed community we built in September stays engaged through December and beyond.



In 2026, we plan to leverage this momentum by:

- Quarterly Advocacy Briefs: Providing our followers with 'Research Check-ins' to track how federal budget cuts are impacting local pediatric trials.
- Expanding Our Digital Reach: Taking the evidence-based model that succeeded in September and applying it to key dates throughout the winter and spring.
- Mobilizing the Informed: Moving our audience from 'aware' to 'active' by providing clear, data-backed calls to action that reach beyond the hockey rink and into the national conversation.

The fight for our kids doesn't have an off-season, and with your continued support, we will ensure their voices are heard every single day of the year.



TOP POSTS IN 2025

September was our 'power play,' but we are committed to staying on the ice for all three periods of the calendar year.



In 2025, our top Instagram post was on September 8, noting our third anniversary



On September 11, we shared our continued commitment to Alex's Lemonade Stand and invited others to join us in this important fundraising event.



Our third most-viewed Instagram post, "Treating childhood cancer is about more than the cancer," resonated by highlighting the "whole-child" reality of a diagnosis. By translating psychosocial research into accessible content, we educated our audience on how cancer impacts a child's development, mental health, and social well-being far beyond the clinical setting. This post was a key driver for our 2025 growth, proving that our community is deeply invested in advocacy that prioritizes a child's quality of life. This insight directly fuels our 2026 goal of returning families to the rink, where we can provide the joy and normalcy that medical treatments alone cannot.



Digital Advocacy & Audience Expansion

In 2025, The Mini Sticks CO strategically utilized Instagram and Facebook as the primary engines for our evidence-based advocacy. Our digital strategy peaked during September's Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, where a dedicated 30-day campaign of daily, research-backed posts served as our most significant visibility driver of the year.

The core of our success was "translating the science"—taking complex findings from research journals and turning them into accessible, high-impact content. A standout example was our September 9th post, "Siblings are affected by a cancer diagnosis too," which drew upon psychosocial research to highlight the often-overlooked impact on the entire family unit.

Breaking Through the "Echo Chamber"

Our 2025 social media strategy was designed specifically to reach beyond our existing follower base and inform a broader public:

- **September Instagram Surge:** Our focused month of advocacy reached 6,358 individuals, with an impressive 34% of that audience being non-followers. This highlights our ability to break through the "digital noise" and educate a brand-new demographic on the pediatric funding crisis.
- **Facebook Outreach:** Facebook served as a vital tool for new audience acquisition. During our peak month, the platform reached 356 viewers—the highest of our calendar year—with 33.4% of those being non-followers.
- **Evidence over Anecdote:** By anchoring our posts in peer-reviewed data, we have established The Mini Sticks CO as a credible, trusted authority in the pediatric cancer space, ensuring our message carries weight with both families and medical professionals.

 **34%**

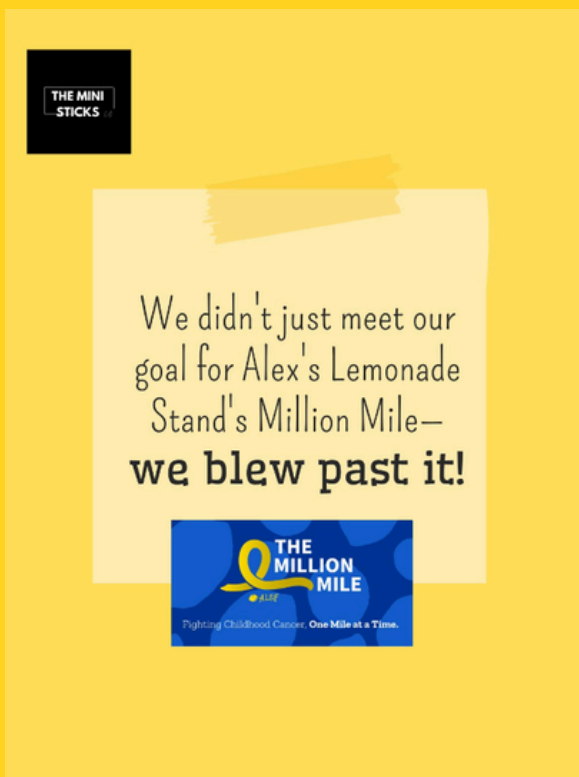
34% of Instagram views in September
were from non-followers

BEYOND THE SCOREBOARD

Fundraising for pediatric cancer research continues to be a cornerstone value of the MiniSticks CO. These donations represent our commitment to making a tangible impact in the lives of children and families facing cancer. In September 2025, The Mini Sticks CO community proved that our commitment to pediatric cancer isn't just digital—it's physical. We set an ambitious goal to log 500 miles during Childhood Cancer Awareness Month to raise visibility and funds for research. Not only did we meet that mark, but we also shattered it, logging an incredible 910 miles—nearly doubling our original target.

The momentum didn't stop on the pavement. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our donors, we exceeded our fundraising goal for this annual event by 1.5x, providing critical resources at a time when federal funding for pediatric research is facing unprecedented cuts.

For Mini Sticks CO, these miles and dollars represent more than just statistics; they are a tangible extension of our advocacy. Every mile logged and every dollar raised represents a community that refuses to stay on the sidelines, transforming awareness into real-world action for children and families facing a cancer diagnosis.



LOOKING AHEAD: 2026--A YEAR FOR RECRUITMENT

As we transition into 2026, The Mini Sticks CO is moving from a season of broad awareness into a dedicated "Recruiting Year." Having spent 2025 building a credible, research-backed digital foundation and shattering our physical milestones, our focus now shifts to mobilizing that audience into an active roster of supporters, partners, and advocates.

In the coming year, we are doubling down on our founding mission: bringing families back to the rink. Despite the challenges of a shifting federal landscape, we remain committed to the healing power of community. Our primary goal for 2026 is to expand our signature program of hosting families at games, providing children diagnosed with cancer and their siblings a much-needed "breakaway" from the rigors of treatment. By recruiting new donors and corporate teammates, we will ensure that more families than ever can experience the joy of the game from the best seats in the house.

The "September Surge" proved that the world is watching. Now, it's time to get them on the ice. Together, we will continue to turn views into voices and miles into memories, ensuring that no family faces this journey alone.



THE MINI
STICKS CO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Behind every mile logged, every dollar donated, every research-backed post, and every family hosted at the rink is a dedicated team of volunteers and advocates. We want to extend our deepest gratitude to the "Mini Sticks Team" for their tireless work throughout 2025. Whether you were translating complex medical data, managing our digital platforms, or pounding the pavement during our 910-mile September surge, your dedication is the engine of this organization. You aren't just volunteers; you are the teammates these families.

Contact

The MiniSticks Charitable Organization

www.theministicksco.org

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