OUR MISSION
Friends of Karen provides emotional, financial and advocacy support for children with a life-threatening illness and their families to help keep them stable, functioning and able to cope.

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(1938–1990)

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(212) 308-1378

WWW.FRIENDSOFKAREN.ORG

Friends of Karen is a registered 501(c)(3) charity established in 1978. All contributions are tax-deductible. Friends of Karen is committed to the highest standard of public accountability and transparency. We are recognized for achieving this goal by two independent organizations that monitor U.S. charities, Charity Navigator, which evaluates the financial efficiency and responsibility of more than 8,000 charities, has given Friends of Karen 9 consecutive 4-star awards, their highest possible rating. This indicates that Friends of Karen “adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way.” According to Charity Navigator, only 1% of the charities they evaluate have received at least 9 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Friends of Karen outperforms most other charities in the U.S. The Better Business Bureau includes Friends of Karen in their Charity Seal Program, affirming that we have met 20 rigorous standards for charity accountability, including program expenses, audit reporting, accurate expense reporting, truthful materials, website disclosures, donor privacy, etc.
Dr. Jeffrey Lipton, Chief of Hematology/Oncology at Cohen Children’s Medical Center of New York, in speaking at one of our events earlier this year, posed the question, “What would happen if there were no Friends of Karen?” He answered by saying that “without Friends of Karen there would be untold psychic and physical distress and a truly measurable reduction in our cure rates.” Further, Dr. Lipton explained “Friends of Karen provides the support to the families as well as the advocacy that insures that ‘our science’ is translated as cutting edge care for our patients.”

For the past 39 years, Friends of Karen has been dedicated to supporting families who face the heartbreaking reality of having a child battling cancer or another life-threatening illness. Our unique program model has evolved considerably since 1978 when Sheila Petersen rallied the community to help “our” first child – Karen – and her family. In the intervening years, there have been significant, life-changing advances in medical science so that today, according to the American Cancer Society, about 80% of children with cancer are cured. What hasn’t changed is the profound impact the illness has on a family’s life. Friends of Karen’s commitment to keeping a family stable, functioning and able to cope at this very difficult time is as steadfast as ever.

Like Sheila Petersen did so many years ago, we continue to depend on the generosity and good will of our diverse community to keep Friends of Karen vital and cutting edge in our support for families. You contribute the financial resources and volunteer assistance that enable our professional team of social workers, child life specialists and expressive arts therapists to provide the breadth of support that a family so desperately needs when their child is ill. Friends of Karen’s approach has proven effective time and again because we blend strategic financial assistance with attention to the psychological and social impact of the child’s illness on the whole family. Our individualized plan of assistance exemplifies the recently adopted standards of psychosocial care for children with cancer and their families. Ours is a model that demonstrates the crucial role a community-based organization plays in helping a family stay strong even in the midst of a health crisis.

In the pages of this annual report, we proudly present Friends of Karen’s accomplishments over the past year and evidence of our impact on the children and families we serve across the New York Tri-State area. It is with the support of all of our valued contributors – both small and large – and the dedication of scores of volunteers that make our work possible. Thank you for standing with us, giving us the capacity to provide assistance to so many in need, and sharing our belief that no family should have to face their child’s life-threatening illness alone.
A look-in at the families that Friends of Karen served in Fiscal Year 2017.

**FAMILY LOCATION**

- New York City (5 boroughs) .................. 49%
- Other New York (9 counties) ................. 33%
- Southern Connecticut (3 counties) .......... 9%
- Northern New Jersey (5 counties) .......... 6%
- Other* ............................................. 3%

*Families living outside of service area but being treated in NY area hospitals

**FAMILY INCOME**

- Under $20,000 ............................ 33%
- $20,001-$35,000 ......................... 20%
- $35,001-$50,000 ......................... 14%
- $50,001-$75,000 ......................... 10%
- Over $75,000 ............................. 21%

*Unknown income 2%.

**ETHNICITY**

- Hispanic .................................. 36%
- African American ....................... 29%
- Mixed Descent ......................... 15%
- Caucasian ................................ 10%
- Asian/Pacific Islander ............... 10%

**AGE OF ILL CHILD**

- 0-3 Yrs. .................................. 18%
- 4-11 Yrs. ................................. 46%
- 12-18 Yrs. ............................... 28%
- 19-21 Yrs. ............................... 8%

**ILLNESSES SERVED**

- Cancer (leukemia, lymphoma, brain tumors, etc.) ............ 86%
- Sickle Cell ................................ 2%
- Organ Diseases (heart, kidney, liver, lung, etc.) .............. 2%
- Anemias .................................. 1%
- Disorders (blood, congenital, genetic, metabolic disorders) 8%
- Other Illnesses ......................... 10%

“Hope...sometimes that is all you have when you have nothing else. If you have it, you have everything.”
$1,431,220
The amount of money, and gifts-in-kind, Friends of Karen utilized to cover basic living and illness-related expenses and needs, enabling families to remain stable, functioning and able to cope.

14,921
The total number of children that Friends of Karen has helped since our founding 39 years ago.

4,997
The total number of hours our volunteers dedicated to helping Friends of Karen achieve our mission.

1,508
The number of children whose lives we touched through emotional, financial and advocacy support.

325
The average number of families Friends of Karen helped each month.

203
The number of siblings supported one-on-one by Friends of Karen’s child life specialists and expressive arts therapists.

79¢
The portion of every dollar raised that directly supported Friends of Karen’s children and their families.

38%
The percentage of our Friends of Karen families whose income falls below the poverty line.

30%
The percentage of our Friends of Karen families who are single parent households.

22
The number of counties and boroughs in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut served by Friends of Karen.

20
The number of hospitals we partnered with that have a pediatric oncology department and/or pediatric transplant unit, including Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, Yale-New Haven Children’s Hospital, Cohen Children’s Medical Center, Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital, and Children’s Hospital of New Jersey.

9
The number of consecutive years Charity Navigator, an independent charity evaluator, has awarded Friends of Karen their highest 4-star rating, recognizing that we “adhere to sector best practices” and execute our mission in a “financially efficient way.” Only 1% of charities they evaluate have received this distinction, indicating that Friends of Karen outperforms most other charities in the U.S.

1
How it all began… with one child and one caring neighbor.
A financial summary from Fiscal Year 2017 (April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017).

**SUPPORT AND REVENUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals, Businesses, Organizations</td>
<td>$1,818,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>$829,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Events (Net of Direct Costs)</td>
<td>$1,051,124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Operating Revenue: $3,699,198

**EXPENSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Services</td>
<td>$3,016,526</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management and General</td>
<td>$300,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$521,711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Operating Expenses: $3,839,043

Change in Net Assets Before Other Changes: ($139,845)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>$451,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain on Disposal of Fixed Assets</td>
<td>$14,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>$326,981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Net Assets Beginning of Year: $5,963,108
Net Assets End of Year: $6,290,089

**Total Support and Revenue**

- Individuals, et al.: 49%
- Grants: 28%
- Special Events: 13%

**Total Operating Expenses**

- Programs: 79%
- Management & General: 13%
- Fundraising: 8%
One Family’s Story

When Friends of Karen social worker, Natalia, first met Lida and Dany and their young daughter, Alanah, the family had already been through so much. Almost six years before, Lida and Dany were expecting their first child. It was a time of great happiness and wonderful expectations for the future. But, they suffered a terrible loss when Lida lost the baby girl they had named Genesis just 6 months into the pregnancy. A year later, Lida became pregnant again and gave birth to Dana Sofia. All was right in their world again, until the baby was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy at 3 months old and died just 4 months later.

Heartbroken, Lida and Dany persevered...and, while it took them some time before they could even consider having another baby, they eventually did. In October 2013, little Alanah Sofia was born...a healthy and happy child who brought the family such joy and an enormous sense of gratitude for life. But, in June 2016, before Alanah was even 3 years old, she was diagnosed with leukemia and started chemotherapy immediately.

Just two weeks into chemotherapy treatment, Alanah fell while playing and ended up with a little scratch on her leg which initially didn’t seem serious. Quickly, though, her symptoms worsened and she was diagnosed with a flesh eating bacteria. In just a matter of hours, mom and dad found themselves waiting outside of the operating room where the medical team was amputating Alanah’s leg from the knee down. They were devastated. “One second she was playing and the next thing we know she is losing part of her leg,” her dad said.

Lida had to stop working right after Alanah’s diagnosis with leukemia and Dany had missed work during the crisis of her bacterial infection. Meanwhile, the bills kept coming in...rent, electricity, cell phone, car payment, car insurance, food. It became overwhelming. Everything was happening so quickly and they were losing hope.

That’s when Lida and Dany were referred to Friends of Karen and we were able to step in to help. Each Friends of Karen family is assigned an experienced social worker who works with every member of the family and provides emotional, financial and practical day-to-day support.

With the help of Natalia, their bilingual Friends of Karen social worker, Lida and Dany received financial assistance to cover their car payment, car insurance, cell phone and electricity bills. Friends of Karen also helped pay for transportation to frequent medical appointments.

That helped ease the financial burden on the family, but they also needed emotional support and desperately needed some hope to help them carry on. Little Alanah also needed an emotional boost. Our Friends of Karen social workers are all passionate and dedicated professionals who always go the extra mile to make the cancer journey a little easier for parents and, of course, for the children. So, when Natalia saw a news story about a prosthetics services company who will customize American Girl Dolls for children who have lost limbs, Natalia jumped right on this opportunity. Friends of Karen purchased the American Girl Doll and Natalia delivered the customized doll to Alanah when it was ready. This came at just the perfect time for Alanah as her medical team had been using dolls to help her understand and embrace her physical changes. The doll was the perfect gift!

Natalia says, “It’s truly amazing to be able to work with these families. As a social worker, I have the opportunity to assist in so many ways. Friends of Karen doesn’t limit the assistance to financial help, which is, indeed a huge need for these families. It’s the advocacy, sharing of resources, encouraging and motivating them, and listening and empowering the parents to help them to focus on their strengths and their willingness to do whatever is needed for their children.”

“A couple of weeks ago, I was on the phone with Lida. She was explaining how well Alanah was doing. Suddenly she stopped and her voice broke a little bit and she said, ‘thank you!’ I asked why she was thanking me and she said, ‘Gracias por jalarme las orejas, por estar pendiente de nosotros y por motivarme a luchar’ - ‘thank you for your words, your motivation, for being always here for us’.”

Alanah is continuing her treatment and fighting her cancer, but now, in addition to her family, medical team and Friends of Karen, she also has her new doll always by her side. Today Alanah is doing well and a light of hope is returning to her family.
Friends of Karen gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the many individuals, foundations and corporations who help us provide the services our families need. Each gift is deeply appreciated and greatly valued. We wish there was enough space to thank each individual who has made a gift or donated a gift-in-kind.

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Holly and Michael Zimmerman
Jane and Ronald Zimmerman
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COMMUNITIES IN ACTION
We are so grateful for the individuals, businesses, schools and many other groups in the communities we serve who have organized fundraising events and designated Friends of Karen as the recipient of the monetary proceeds. We wish there was enough space to thank every group for their time and dedication. The involvement of so many is essential to the work we do.

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Special thanks to our thoughtful donors whose contributions of gifts-in-kind, including school supplies, toys, gift cards, auction items and other needed items (valued at $1,000 or more) or important services, help make life more manageable for Friends of Karen families.

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Debbie O’Connor
Park Hyatt New York
Silvana and Christopher Pasucci
Pequenokanck Elementary School
Debbie Perry-Lynott
Precious Moments
Purdy’s Farmer and the Fish
Arthur Rabin
Nancy and Gilbert Raker
The Ridge Street Country School
The Ritz-Carlton New York, Westchester
Rosary Altar Society
The San Carlos Hotel
Mitsu Sato
Mireille Schiano
David Seidman
Shearmar & Sterling LLP
Mary Sipp Green
The Somers Lions Club
Somers High School Cancer Research Club
St. Vincent Ferrer High School
STERIS Corporation
Sterling Equities
Martha Stewart
Virginia and Donald Strauch
Suite Snaps
Ellen and Joseph Tessitore
Washingtonville High School
Westchester County DA’s Office and F.B.I. Rye RA Squad C-26
Westchester Mixed Martial Arts and Fitness
Zurich

SHEILA PETERSEN LEGACY OF GIVING CIRCLE
We gratefully acknowledge the following members of the Sheila Petersen Legacy of Giving Circle who have thoughtfully remembered Friends of Karen in their charitable estate plans.

Anonymous
Joanne and Stephen Auerbach
Louise M. Bastedo
Frances Drake
Judith Factor
Jackie Gambardella
Mr. and Mrs. Gennaro Gelardi
Bette Greenwald
Pamela S. Hervey
Trish Labenfeld
Joan and Fred Lowenfels
Robyn and David Rosenberg
Neil Shyman
Robert Wechsler
Sharon L. Weiner
Raymond Allio Fund
Caleb Stillman Bacon Fund
Lauren Costanzo Fund
Richard P. Eisenberg Fund
Corey Hewitt Fund
Richard LaVilla Fund
Jason Mariano Fund
Amanda Brooke Rosenberg Fund
Eileen Walsh Fund
Jonathan Weiss Fund
Other special purpose funds –
Joshua Tredwell Memorial Fund
The Adina’s Angels Fund

Please let us know if you have added Friends of Karen to your estate plans and we will be sure to recognize you and thank you for becoming a member of the Sheila Petersen Legacy of Giving Circle. You can help ensure that Friends of Karen’s mission will continue for generations to come. Please use this sample bequest language to be written into your will. “I give, devise, and bequeath ______ (a certain sum, a percentage of the estate, or the remainder of the estate) to Friends of Karen [Tax ID #14-1612290].”
HELPING SIBLINGS COPE WITH ILLNESS

As soon as a child is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness, a family’s world is turned upside down and it affects the entire family. Brothers and sisters can have a variety of reactions to their sibling’s illness and the dramatic changes in their family, and may have difficulty coping with the situation and their feelings.

Each day, Friends of Karen helps siblings understand their brother or sister’s illness and build personal strength. At the hospital or in a family’s home, our experienced child life specialists and expressive arts therapists work one-on-one with the ill child, their siblings and their parents to help them cope.

These are a few examples of art projects our child life specialists and expressive arts therapists do with our children to help them express their feelings about the illness and changes in their family life.