The mission of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital® is to advance cures, and means of prevention, for pediatric catastrophic diseases through research and treatment. Consistent with the vision of our founder, Danny Thomas, no child is denied treatment based on race, religion or a family’s ability to pay.

ALSAC — American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities — is the fundraising and awareness organization for St. Jude. ALSAC is dedicated solely to raising the funds and awareness to operate and maintain St. Jude, now and in the future.

After several years of chemotherapy at a pediatric hospital near her home, a relapse would lead doctors to refer Luna to St. Jude where her treatment consisted of bone marrow transplants, chemotherapy, and immunotherapy. “For us, St. Jude has been a blessing,” said Luna’s father. Scan the QR code to learn more.

This page: St. Jude patient Luna, blood cancer, pictured with her dad
Cover: St. Jude patient Pepe, cancerous tumor, pictured with his mom
Juan Sebastián stood before his computer during a video conference call to the United States and enthusiastically showed his black school jacket given to final-year students at his high school in Colombia. The year 2022 is stitched in one arm.

Months before he graduated high school in July, the 18-year-old was preparing for graduation and the start of college. He was looking forward to the final months of high school when he would go to Cancun with his classmates for a final school trip. A few days before his graduation ceremony, he attended a formal dinner celebration with his parents and close friends to commemorate the big milestone.

The activities are a culmination of years of long hours of studying, but also a reminder of all the hurdles Juan Sebastián has overcome. The teenager battled leukemia for years as a child, forcing him to miss school. When he had a relapse, he was treated in the U.S. at St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and missed nearly a year of school as well as birthday parties, soccer games and a school trip to Canada.

“It’s quite incredible to think there was a point in my life when I didn’t know if I was going to get to graduate,” he said. “Now a new stage of my life begins. There are so many stories, so many times when I couldn’t go to school, so many moments that I could not go to class because I was in the hospital. But now I’m moving forward, that’s all behind me. And that’s something very beautiful and special.”

Juan Sebastián, who ranks third in his graduating class, has been accepted to the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, where he will study medicine. His dream is to become a doctor and one day work at St. Jude.
"St. Jude is hope, it’s light and everything to me,” he said. “They saved my life. I don’t know how to explain what St. Jude means to me, but it’s just hope to be alive and to continue to grow.”

Juan Sebastián was 10 years old when he was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the most common type of childhood cancer. He received grueling chemotherapy in Bogotá, which often left him weak and tired. At times, his parents didn’t think he was well enough to go to school, but a dedicated student, Juan Sebastián did not like to be absent.

On some tough days, his father, Luis, recalled, his son would mix water with baking soda and lemon juice in a container that he would carry with him in school to help him through headaches and bouts of nausea.

Juan Sebastián was in remission for a few weeks before an analysis on his bone marrow showed that his leukemia had returned. Doctors in Colombia began a new round of treatment, but his prognosis was poor, his parents said. While Juan Sebastián organized a fundraising concert to help other children with cancer, friends urged his family to look elsewhere and to seek help at St. Jude because of its work with childhood cancers. Eventually, he was referred to the research hospital and traveled to Memphis.

When they arrived, it was cold and gloomy, Juan Sebastián recalled. But as soon as they entered the hospital with its bright lights and colorful wall art, they felt a sense of ease and hope that he would get better.

“They welcome you with a smile,” he recalled. “My dad told us that here at St. Jude they were going to save his son’s life.”

He received a bone marrow transplant as well as chemotherapy and radiation therapy. The relapse, though, didn’t stop him from learning. Juan Sebastian attended the St. Jude Imagine Academy by Chili’s to stay on track with his studies during treatment. He also continued his piano lessons in Memphis, an activity which he started earlier to help reduce the neuropathy in his hands caused by earlier chemotherapy. When he returned to South America, he studied extra hours to fill in learning gaps and remain in the same grade as his friends.

“Despite all the difficulties of his illness, he managed to get excellent grades,” Luis said. “He is very excited about his academic achievements, but the biggest emotion for us is to have him with us.”

A few months ago, Juan Sebastián and his mother, Maria Clara, went to a tattoo artist and got matching tattoos on their left arms. The tattoos are of the St. Jude logo. Juan Sebastián said the tattoo is his constant reminder to not get too hung up on little things.

“There are times in life when one forgets a bit of what happened and everything they suffered and the really hard moments they lived through, and one begins to worry about things that are not worth it,” he said. “It’s also a reminder of that goal that I want to reach of trying to help and give other people opportunity, like St. Jude gave me the opportunity of life.”

“They saved my life. I don’t know how to explain what St. Jude means to me, but it’s just hope to be alive and to continue to grow.”

— Juan Sebastián
**Research Highlights**

**Pushing T cells down “memory lane” may improve cancer therapy**
Scientists at St. Jude identified a molecular mechanism that in a preclinical study unlocked the promise of CAR T-cell therapy for the treatment of solid tumors.
June 2022 | Nature

**Research reveals surprising inactivation mechanism for a voltage-gated ion channel**
Scientists at St. Jude are studying voltage-gated ion channels (VGICs). Their work revealed a previously unknown mechanism of inactivation for one such channel that plays an important role in how neurons and muscles respond to electric signals sent by the nervous system.
May 2022 | Molecular Cell

**Study finds jumping junk DNA is a novel cause of childhood brain cancer**
Scientists have found a novel cause of aggressive pediatric brain cancer. The St. Jude study is the first to document how a transposon, a piece of DNA that “jumps” around the genome, can donate its promoter to drive the expression of an oncogene.
April 2022 | Acta Neuropatholica

**CAR T cells target AML, spare bone marrow**
Scientists at St. Jude have developed the first GRP78 targeted chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T cell. Their GRP78 CAR T cell successfully targeted and destroyed acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) cells in the lab.
January 2022 | Nature Communications

**Immune responses support COVID-19 vaccination regardless of when people were infected**
Scientists at St. Jude have evaluated how vaccination against, and infection with, SARS-CoV-2 affects the immune system. The results confirm that immunity by infection is not better than vaccination because both mount similar T-cell responses. In individuals who have already experienced COVID-19, getting vaccinated still expands T-cell memory and immune activation.
September 2021 | Nature

**Comprehensive clinical sequencing opens door to the promise of precision medicine**
St. Jude investigators have demonstrated that comprehensive genomic sequencing of all pediatric cancer patients is feasible and essential to capitalize on the lifesaving potential of precision medicine.
July 2021 | Cancer Discovery

**Discovery shows how tuning the immune system may enhance vaccines and ease disease**
Immunologists at St. Jude have identified a biological pathway that selectively controls how key immune cells, called T follicular helper cells, mature into functional components of the immune system.
July 2021 | Nature

**Cell-free DNA identifies early signs of relapse in pediatric medulloblastoma**
Scientists at St. Jude have shown that cell-free DNA from cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) can be used to detect measurable residual disease (MRD) in children treated for the brain tumor medulloblastoma. The researchers developed a test to detect MRD, and thus the risk of relapse, earlier than a recurrent tumor would be identified using a traditional imaging scan.
October 2021 | Cancer Cell

**Phase separation underlies leukemia caused by NUP98 fusion oncoproteins**
Scientists at St. Jude have a new understanding of how a group of well-known fusion oncoproteins causes leukemia. The findings show the importance of liquid-liquid phase separation (LLPS), a process cells use to organize proteins and other molecules. LLPS is a key part of the mechanism driven by NUP98 fusion oncoproteins that transforms blood stem cells into leukemia.
December 2021 | Cancer Discovery

**The PANoptosome: a new frontier in innate immune responses**
St. Jude immunologists have identified how immune sensors in infected cells organize and launch a multifaceted innate immune response to infections with live viruses and bacteria.

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At St. Jude, a collaborative approach takes scientific research FROM BENCH TO BEDSIDE

On the campus of St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis, where buildings with labs stand alongside buildings with clinics, Giles Robinson, M.D., shares samples of tumor cells from his patients with Paul Northcott, Ph.D., who leads a lab that studies how those tumor cells behave at a molecular level and how patients respond to different therapies.

What Northcott finds about the differences within medulloblastoma helps inform how doctors like Robinson treat their patients. Their close collaboration has spawned new, more effective treatments for medulloblastoma, the most common malignant brain tumor in children.

“It turned a light on for me,” Robinson said. “On one hand it’s overwhelming, and on the other hand it’s fantastic because we can come up with multiple different treatments that suit these categories of medulloblastoma.”

Robinson and Northcott shared their discoveries and the benefits of collaboration at the St. Jude Partner Summit event, which hosted representatives of corporations that support St. Jude. The partners had a chance to listen to the doctors and also tour labs to learn more about the research that happens at the hospital.

Visitors explored parts of the recently constructed Inspiration4 Advanced Research Center, a 625,000-square-foot facility that features state-of-the-art equipment and technology in laboratories for the research of Developmental Neurobiology, Immunology and Cellular and Molecular Biology.

Scientists showed visitors how small dishes that fit in the palms of hands contained tumor cells for various cancers to be studied for their features, strengths and vulnerabilities to devise treatment and cures.

In one dish, cells of a cancer that affects the muscles and soft tissue, called “rhabdomyosarcoma,” float like harmless specks of dust. When allowed to flourish over a week in conditions similar to the human muscle, images from the microscope show the cells grow, no longer spheres but a dense mesh spreading and filling the plate. The solid tumor lab is focused on learning how these cancers grow and spread and what it takes to stop them.

“When first-hand visibility into the labs was eye-opening to understand the amount of time, technology and resources needed to detect and understand the impact of one genetic cell in a billion that can impact a child’s life,” said Carmen Murillo, Senior Director of Marketing for Melting Pot Restaurants, which has raised over $13.9 million for St. Jude since its partnership began in 2003. “As tedious as the research may be, it is the most important, groundbreaking work.”

The work in his brain tumor lab is “very challenging,” Northcott admitted, and the answers he and his fellow scientists seek lead to more dead ends than discoveries.

“It’s a 90 percent failure rate, maybe 95 percent,” Northcott said. “But I’m driven by the fascination and curiosity and possibility for discovery. That’s what gets me up in the morning.”

Jill Maness, Manager, Community Relations for AutoZone, which has raised more than $51 million since its partnership with St. Jude began in 2006, called the work the doctors, researchers and entire staff do every day at St. Jude “nothing short of remarkable.”

“I can’t imagine the gambit of emotional strain parents face upon learning that their child has been diagnosed with cancer or any life-threatening disease,” Maness said. “St. Jude does everything possible to make sure that children have the best possible outcomes and that families are comforted and alleviated of as much stress as possible.”

The lab also tracks elusive cancer cells that survive treatment in some patients. These rogue cells, few in number, remain hidden sometimes for years but then unexpectedly mount a resurgence causing difficult-to-treat relapses. St. Jude scientists are working with doctors to improve survival rates for recurrent cases – rates that have been largely stagnant for more than two decades.

“Having first-hand visibility into the labs was eye-opening to understand the amount of time, technology and resources needed to detect and understand the impact of one genetic cell in a billion that can impact a child’s life.”

— Carmen Murillo
Senior Director of Marketing for Melting Pot Restaurants

— jiggy Ketchum
Spurred by the mission and inspired by a trailblazer, MISSISSIPPI DOCTOR GIVES TO SUPPORT ST. JUDE

For the longest time, Dr. Vernon Rayford didn’t understand his father’s love of running. But then in his 30s, when his body reminded him it needed new ways to get strong, he laced up his sneakers and began jogging some of the same routes his father had: past quiet neighborhoods with neat brick homes, prayerful Methodist churches and kudzu draped North Mississippi hills.

Running brought him closer to his father. And then one day in December 2016, as they ran the St. Jude Memphis Half Marathon together, running unexpectedly brought him cause and purpose, too.

“It’s my favorite part of the race, going through campus,” Rayford said. “Seeing the patients there, knowing who you’re [running] for, it just really spoke to me.”

Over the last six years, Rayford has run marathons in New York, Chicago and across the country in support of St. Jude.

As he learned more about St. Jude — how it had opened as an inclusive hospital in 1962 at the height of civil rights strife in the South and welcomed children regardless of race, and how it employed and promoted doctors, scientists and staff of color, as well — Rayford knew this was a cause that deserved his support.

Rayford’s support for St. Jude grew even more as he began to feel kinship with a renowned African American physician who helped St. Jude become a leader in care and research for sickle cell disease. This year, Rayford made a $10,000 commitment toward the campaign honoring the late Dr. Rudolph Jackson, one of the first Black doctors at St. Jude.

Rayford learned that in the 1960s, Dr. Jackson’s care for patients with conditions such as rampant anemia, parasitic infections and growth impairments led him to help develop a program under which St. Jude enrolled thousands of local infants and mothers to receive nutritional assistance, medicine. Ultimately, that program served as a prototype for WIC, the federal initiative for women, infants and children.

Rayford himself has spent his years as a primary care physician in North Mississippi helping improve the health of families in rural, often marginalized communities of color.

“I wish I’d known him, because that would’ve been an incredible (lesson) of the challenges of being the first, of being someone who started work when things were about as bad as it could be in terms of civil rights,” said Rayford.

Rayford said he’s particularly moved by the pioneering work Jackson did in the treatment of sickle cell disease at St. Jude. Jackson ventured into low-income neighborhoods in Memphis to enhance the education and treatment of children and families affected by the debilitating, painful and often deadly disease. By the early 1970s, Jackson had built the program to such a stature that he was hired to lead the federal government’s efforts to fight the disease. “Hearing about his dedication, persistence, innovation, and hearing how that led to 40 years of lives saved, improved quality of lives… it’s inspiring,” Rayford said.
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The members of the ALSAC/St. Jude Boards of Directors and Governors are volunteers who serve without compensation. They come from across the country to support the lifesaving work of St. Jude, and many represent the second and third generations of their families to serve on the Boards. An honorary body of emeritus members recognizes the distinguished service on the Boards by those unable to continue to actively participate.

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St. Jude patient Eliza, eye cancer
# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Years ended June 30 (in thousands)

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<th>2022</th>
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St. Jude patient Rinoa, brain cancer

To read more inspiring St. Jude stories, visit stjude.org/inspire

To view the 2022 St. Jude Annual Report online, visit stjude.org/financials

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