GEORGE MARK CHILDREN’S HOUSE

focuses on quality of life and continuity of care for children with illnesses that modern health care cannot yet cure, or for those who have complex chronic medical conditions. The goal of pediatric palliative care is to relieve the symptoms, discomfort, and emotional stress of illnesses for a child and his/her family.

We support our families unconditionally.

We cannot change the outcome, but we can change the journey.
To provide the highest quality of care, and to minimize discomfort, by addressing the physical, emotional, spiritual, and psychological needs of the entire family.

2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS
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Audrey Foster-Barber, MD
Kathy Hull, Psy.D, MA
Dear Friends,

I think we can all agree that 2020 was a year like no other. Our staff, supporters, and funders rose to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic, proving once again how special our community is, and how devoted it is to the George Mark Children’s House mission of caring for, and enhancing, the lives of children with life-limiting conditions.

Our adaptation, from operations as usual to implementing new COVID-19 protocols and safety procedures, was flawless and commendable. Thanks to the tenacity and creativity of staff and the generosity of suppliers, we quickly acquired the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), and offered formerly in-person services on a virtual platform to our patients and their family members. Music and pet therapy, storytelling, counseling, and grief therapy sessions provided

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comfort during this difficult period. Additionally, I am delighted to inform you that our esteemed Medical Director, Dr. Joan Fisher, was recognized and honored for her vision and dedication with the Pediatric Palliative Care Leadership Award from the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California in 2020.

Although we experienced a reduction in reimbursement income after our brief suspension of respite services, we were able to make up for the loss because of the contributions of many generous individuals and foundations, resulting in a strong fundraising year. Philanthropy provided critical support for patient and family care. Seventy-five percent of our operating budget is funded by donations and grants.

Our successful application to the Federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) allowed us to retain all of our staff, and subsequently, our loan was forgiven under the PPP.

Even as they were responding to a plethora of new challenges, our staff was busy preparing for our second West Coast Summit on Pediatric Palliative Care. The Summit will be presented in two parts in 2021: the first, in February, featured a virtual half-day of accomplished speakers; the second will be a two-day in-person program offered November 8-9, 2021.

George Mark Children’s House was founded in 2004 to offer unique and compassionate care to children with the most complex medical challenges. With the sustained support of our community of friends, volunteers, and donors, we have been able to continue to provide extraordinary services for 17 years. My deep and profound appreciation to each of you for all that you do to make George Mark the Center of Excellence in Pediatric Palliative Care.

**In gratitude,**

**Linda Ashcraft-Hudak**

“Philanthropy provided critical support for patient and family care. Seventy-five percent of our operating budget is funded by donations and grants.”
Dear George Mark Community,

It comes as no surprise that the word *unprecedented* was selected by the committee of judges at Dictionary.com as “word of the year” for 2020. It is an adjective that means, “without previous experience or unparalleled.” As I write this letter to each of you, the unprecedented COVID-19 saga continues, though the arrival of the vaccine has given our staff and patient families a lovely sense of hope for a return to lives less fraught with worry, financial challenges, and isolation. Linda Ashcraft-Hudak’s informative letter details GMCH’s response, from an operational perspective, to many pandemic-related challenges. I, on the other hand, have the privilege of sharing an update on one of the most positive projects undertaken in 2019 and 2020, our new restorative garden, Hummingbird Hill.

“It comes as no surprise that the word *unprecedented* was selected by the committee of judges at Dictionary.com as ‘word of the year’ for 2020.”
Gardens come with an intrinsic message that says slow down, look around you, believe, hope. For our staff, watching the gradual transformation of the last portion of our property from underutilized space to a thoughtfully landscaped, healing garden has offered a sense of optimism and hope throughout the year. As the parcel gradually took shape, our dream of an outdoor spot usable by everyone — our fragile patient population and their families, as well as George Mark staff, volunteers, and friends — was turning into an inspirational reality. It was also fun to watch the curiosity and delight on the faces of our special kids as they sat mesmerized by all of the heavy machinery in action!

Hummingbird Hill will include wheelchair accessibility, shaded seating, raised planting beds, a sensory garden, an outdoor kitchen, and art and water features. Frosting on the cake is the sweeping view of San Francisco Bay from the seating area at the top of the knoll...breathtaking and magical. The wisdom of an unknown author captures our enjoyment as the project nears completion: “Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.” Over fifty contractors and suppliers have donated their expertise, labor, and materials to this project; the monetary value of their generosity exceeds half a million dollars. To each of these individuals and firms we extend an enthusiastic and enduring thanks. Their belief in the importance of the care that George Mark provides played a large part in our staff remaining hopeful in the midst of new difficulties almost daily during the pandemic. With their support, and Hummingbird Hill nearly complete, we can say wholeheartedly...let the sun shine in.

Warmly,

Dr. Kathy Hull

“Gardens come with an intrinsic message that says slow down, look around you, believe, hope.”
OUR SERVICES

Celebrating and improving the lives of medically fragile children and their families at George Mark Children’s House

**TRANSITIONAL CARE**

Staying at George Mark with their children after a discharge from an acute care hospital, families are taught how to improve their children’s health.

**RESPITE CARE**

Children bask in attentive medical care and playful activities while their parents, siblings, and other family members have a break from the nonstop care routines.
Leading-edge pediatric palliative care in the comfort and warmth of a home-like setting

**END OF LIFE CARE**

Patients’ families stay close to their children, in their own family suite, so they can surround their child with love and support, and receive compassionate care from our palliative care team.

**BEREAVEMENT CARE**

Long-term support is provided prior to, and following, the death of a child, including individual counseling and memory honoring activities, such as the opportunity to design a tile for the George Mark tile wall.

**PERINATAL COUNSELING**

We offer expertise, resources, and support for mothers, and their partners, with at-risk preterm births. Education is provided about the prognosis and prospective complications, establishing continuity of care for infants and parents.

98% OF FAMILIES GAVE GMCH THE HIGHEST RATING FOR MEDICAL CARE

99% WOULD HIGHLY RECOMMEND GMCH TO OTHER FAMILIES WHO HAVE CHILDREN WITH LIFE-LIMITING ILLNESSES
ALL AROUND THE HOUSE

24 HOURS, 7 DAYS A WEEK
SPECIALIZED NURSING CARE

25,560 HOURS
OF NURSING CARE

1,664 HOURS
OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

61 STAFF
• 38 NURSES (RN, LVN, AND CNA)
• 12 CLINICAL AND PROGRAM SUPPORT STAFF
• 11 ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF
“My daughter’s respite visit was like a magical adventure for her.”

6,000 HOURS OF DEDICATED SERVICE BY 350 VOLUNTEERS

234 HOURS OF PALLIATIVE AQUATIC THERAPY

215 HOURS OF PET THERAPY

67 HOURS OF MUSIC THERAPY
**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

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**Year in Review**

**Population Served**
96 children with life-limiting illness

**300 Family Members**

**Ages**
- 0-3: 45%
- 4-12: 32%
- 13-17: 9%
- 18 and above: 14%

**Ethnicity**
- African American: 9%
- Asian: 10%
- Caucasian: 41%
- Latino: 28%
- Other: 12%

**Admissions**
206 admissions

**In FY 19/20**
GMHC provided 1,206 days of care

**Average Daily Census**
3.3

**Who We Serve**
- 77% Bay Area
- 23% come from elsewhere in California
HUMMINGBIRD HILL

Hummingbird Hill, our restorative garden, will soon be the newest feature of George Mark Children’s House. Landscape architects, contractors, and suppliers have generously donated to the project, and thanks to them, and other dedicated supporters, it will shortly become a reality. The garden will add accessible winding paths, raised beds, shaded areas, a fountain, and an outdoor kitchen. Much of the construction has been completed, with only a few projects remaining. Look for an announcement of its completion soon!
On February 2, 2021, we kicked off our second annual West Coast Summit on Pediatric Palliative Care, with the theme of “Reframing Hope.” More than two hundred pediatric palliative care professionals gathered virtually for Part I of the Summit to hear our distinguished speakers and learn about the George Mark model. Part II of the Summit is planned to be held in-person – following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols and guidance to insure a safe meeting for all attendees – on November 8-9, 2021, at the Hayes Mansion in San Jose.

GMCH first offered the ground-breaking Summit, in partnership with Stanford University, in October 2019. It was a resounding success among our audience: clinical staff, social workers, psychologists, chaplains, and other professionals engaged in pediatric palliative care. We look forward to continuing this valuable forum of learning and networking for all of our stakeholders.
“Through George Mark, I’ve learned that it’s okay to let other people help you on your journey.”

Emelyn – Mom to Mia

“There are no words to express the enjoyment and happiness you feel. From a human kindness point of view, George Mark offers extreme help.”

Vikash – Dad to Shub
“From the moment we entered our room at George Mark Children’s House, we were finally a family. We knew immediately that we had come to the right place; we knew that we were in Ruthie Lou’s home.”

Amie – Mom to Ruthie Lou

“When we went to George Mark, it was the first time that anyone had asked us about Jeffrey as a person and not just about his condition.”

Tarassa – Mom to Jeffrey
We are looking forward to resuming in-person tours at George Mark when it becomes safe again to do so. In the meantime, we developed a virtual tour of George Mark, which we are using to help different groups get to know us. The tour has been helpful to supporters of GMCH, referrers and other partners, and participants in our Medical Education programs.

Together with our promotional video, which was supported by the Frederick J. Isaac Philanthropic Fund in 2019, we are reaching out in new ways to share our caring mission.

Click links to view
https://tinyurl.com/GMCH-Virtual-Tour
https://tinyurl.com/GeorgeMarkPromo
REMEMBERING OUR CHILDREN

Throughout the year, George Mark Children’s House holds events to honor patients who have died and provide their families an opportunity to remember and celebrate their lives.

Our memorial fountain provides a serene setting for remembering every George Mark child who has died.

Families place photos and items honoring their children who have died on the Día De Los Muertos altar in our Sanctuary during their Walks of Remembrance.