





EMILY AND CLAIRE RATLIFF

Claire's Army started long before a cancer diagnosis. It started on August 30, 2009, the day Claire Ratliff, our first daughter was born. Kevin and I grew up in Charlotte, which allowed us to build an incredible and wide-reaching group of friends and colleagues. This group stepped up, jumped in, took action, and rallied behind our family from the moment Claire was diagnosed with Stage IV Neuroblastoma in May of 2011. These loving people became known as Claire's Army. They did everything possible to take care of our family, allowing us to focus on Claire's treatment and soak up every moment with her. She knew no boundaries when it came to her all-inclusive spirit. Her empathy, unconditional love, and ability to connect with anyone was unprecedented. She was a light to everyone she touched, even on her hardest days. Her new "friends" were her nurses, doctors, child-life specialists, and fellow patients.



When we started the journey with childhood cancer, we had no idea how short our time would be with her. Claire's Army helped us make it from day to day – from diagnosis to her death on January 17, 2012, through our grief and healing. While Neuroblastoma stole her body from us, her vibrant soul remains and is why we continue her legacy of unconditional love and encouragement.

Claire's Army became a 501 (c) (3) organization in 2013, and we are amazed at how quickly we have grown to serve childhood cancer patients and their families with tangible, timely, and direct support. Claire's Army is unique, intentional, and consistent in the ways we help. We meet patients and families at multiple pain points in their journey with childhood cancer. Childhood cancer tries to kill our children, but we're not going to let it destroy our families.



Our first Claire Package was given to a newly diagnosed patient in November of 2013 at Novant Health Hemby Children's Hospital (where Claire was treated) and today we are running 3 powerful programs at Hemby Children's Hospital and Atrium Health Levine Children's Hospital, impacting hundreds of patients from around the country.

This year has been one like no other. Families we serve were already facing the financial stressors that accompany a cancer diagnosis, now they are coping with the hardships and changes that came with Coronavirus. Requests for assistance from our hospital pediatric oncology social workers multiplied overnight as parents lost their jobs. Access to masks, hand sanitizer and groceries became a challenge. Families couldn't be together in hospital rooms.

Thank you for answering the call to action; to respond to these families in crisis, no matter what. Claire's Army responded with more financial support than ever, helping more families than before. I hope Claire can see all of us pushing forward, amidst this pandemic, to make a difference for children like her and families like ours.

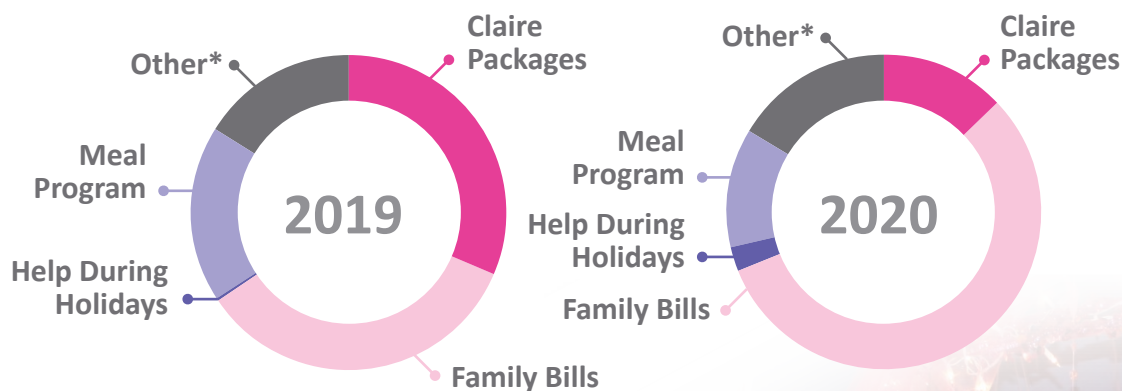
Emily Ratliff, Claire's Army Executive Director



CLAIRE'S ARMY RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

- ▶ Increased the quantity and dollar amount of grocery gift card assistance to families
- ▶ Tripled our financial assistance to families in crisis through our emergency assistance program
- ▶ In the first weeks of the pandemic, we purchased 1,500 medical grade masks for caregivers at Levine Children's Hospital
- ▶ Identified supplier and distributed hand sanitizer to both outpatient clinics at Levine Children's Hospital and Hemby Children's Hospital when faced with supply shortages
- ▶ Shifted multiple in-person fundraising events to virtual platforms to stay engaged with our donors and ensure Claire's Army maintained the resources to assist families throughout the pandemic

FAMILY NEEDS BREAKDOWN:



	2019	2020
Claire Packages	\$23,515 ⁻⁸²	\$26,576 ⁻²¹
Family Bills	\$25,520 ⁻⁹⁵	\$114,911 ⁻³¹
Help During Holidays	\$235 ⁻⁸⁹	\$4,853 ⁻⁶¹
Meal Program	\$13,542 ⁻³²	\$25,178 ⁻¹⁵
Other*	\$11,928 ⁻⁹⁴	\$33,064 ⁻⁶⁰
TOTAL Program Service Expenses	\$69,273⁻⁰³	\$190,051⁻³⁵

*(Bereavement, Clinical Staff, and Miscellaneous Support)

our mission

Claire's Army strives to act as God's hands and feet for families fighting childhood cancer by supporting their daily responsibilities, allowing them to put time and focus on their child.





Claire's Army is there at diagnosis, just when parents have received the difficult news. Their nurses enter the child's hospital room with a Claire Package – a tote filled with hospital essentials, gift cards, and a note of hope and encouragement from one family to another – assuring them they are not alone.

ISSUE: Families receiving the shocking news of diagnoses are full of fear, despair, and worry. They are quite often admitted to the hospital or clinic unexpectedly, leaving them without basic supplies, and not wanting to leave their child's side at such a critical time to obtain these items.

ACTION: Claire's Army provides a Claire Package, a utility tote filled with hospital essentials such as a bathmat and towels, journal for taking notes, beverage tumbler to feel more like home, gasoline/grocery gift cards (\$200) to financially support them from day 1 and an encouraging note.

IMPACT/RESPONSE: Every child/family is comforted and loved in their time of need.

“My husband and I have entered the world we never dreamed of – parents of a child with cancer. I just wanted to write to tell you what an incredible impact you have already made on our family. There are no words. We received the most well thought out gift tote (Claire Package) filled with so many things we needed. I ate for the FIRST time since Sunday following a meal delivery from Midwood Smokehouse that smelled just good enough that I found a small appetite hidden deep inside. Claire's Army has also provided a hotel for us so that we can bring our older son to be closer as he will be receiving the news tomorrow that his little brother, his best friend in the world, has cancer. I want you to know that you have made our life much better during this horrible week. Thank you for what you're doing. We're going to focus on getting our boy better, but after that we want to help Claire's Army continue the mission and help families in the future. – **Brittany, mom to son in treatment**



CPI Security team members prepare Claire Packages

Approximately 200 children are diagnosed each year between Charlotte based hospitals Levine Children's Hospital and Hemby Children's Hospital.



WHAT'S INSIDE A CLAIRE PACKAGE

5



Claire's Army is there during inpatient stays for treatment or emergencies at the hospital. We partner with local restaurants and amazing volunteers to deliver dinners to Hemby Children's Hospital and Levine Children's Hospital, at **NO CHARGE**. This year presented many challenges due to the COVID shutdown. While focused on keeping patients safe, however we worked around obstacles to serve families with 1,101 meals. Since 2014, our volunteers have delivered almost 6,000 meals.

ISSUE: Hospital food is generally the only reasonably available, convenient, and cost-effective option for many families and often require family members to leave their child's room to pick up.

ACTION: Claire's Army partners with local restaurants and dedicated volunteers to deliver warm, delicious, dinners right to the family's hospital room, at no charge.

IMPACT/RESPONSE: Families have access to quality foods and have healthier options. Not only is it free but it is also convenient, giving families the chance to eat together. These meals not only provide fuel for the body, but they provide choices, moments of normalcy, comfort and quality time with family.

“When our toddler was diagnosed with cancer, being fed 4 times per week by Claire's Army was the exact gesture that we needed so that we could focus on the new world that we were living in and the fight we were up against.”
— **Lauren Palmer**, mom to Jennings' Palmer



Kevin Ratliff and Sue Johnson Delivering Dinners to patient families at Hemby Children's Hospital.

HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR RESTAURANT PARTNERS:

- ♥ Rooster's Wood Fired Kitchen
- ♥ Midwood Smokehouse
- ♥ Paco's Tacos & Tequila
- ♥ Hawthornes NY Pizza
- ♥ Mama Ricotta's
- ♥ Dilworth Grille
- ♥ Yafo Kitchen

94
volunteers delivered
1,101
meals this fiscal
year



Kelcie Johnson,
Krista Larsen, and
Julie Nale - Meal
Program Volunteers





We are there during crisis. Parents and caregivers are forced to adapt their lifestyle and often quit their jobs to care for their sick children. Research shows 72% of families report losing more than 50% of their income after a cancer diagnosis. When our parents are finally forced to ask for help, they are usually **facing disconnection and sometimes eviction**. Claire's Army works hand-in-hand with the patient's healthcare team, specifically their pediatric oncology social workers, to quickly pay bills on behalf of families.

ISSUE: Families of children facing diagnosis may not have the support to sustain them financially, emotionally, and physically over the course of treatment which can last anywhere from 1-5 years. Parents are forced to quit work or cut back on hours due to treatment regimens.

ACTION: Pediatric Social Workers at both Hemby and Levine contact us with specific financial requests based on the patient's diagnosis, treatment plan, family support, etc. They provide us with statements for mortgage, rent, utilities, vehicle insurance and more to quickly pay on behalf of families and bills are paid directly to the utility provider, landlord, or lender.

IMPACT/RESPONSE: No family has been turned away. Meeting families in the pain point of their financial crisis by helping them with their financial obligations. Providing tangible, immediate relief, sometimes within less than 24 hours' notice. Claire's Army's has developed a unique ability to respond quickly, with minimal red tape to help a family in need. Sometimes this entails making payments for multiple months of past due utilities and reconnection or to secure temporary housing for a family who just left their home to come here for specialized treatment.

 **Children** FROM HIGH-POVERTY AREAS relapse earlier than children in low-poverty areas and have a lower chance of survival.

 **1 in 3** FAMILIES with a child in active cancer treatment are unable to afford basic needs.

“ *This organization means everything! Being a single mother, with a child that has cancer, can be overwhelming on top of having three other children. They have helped me with bills, unexpected expenses, and it has meant the world. They have been in our shoes and know what families go through. They are so humble and go the extra mile by providing meals, in addition to everything else they do to support. They are a Godsend!* – **Tracy, mom to Noah**

82 families have received emergency assistance this fiscal year



Levine Children's
Hospital Social
Work Team

\$122,694
in assistance





ROBIN GARDNER, Licensed Clinical Social Worker

“ As I think back to 7 years ago when I met Kevin and Emily Ratliff and had our first discussion about the needs of patients and families at Novant (Blume now St Jude Clinic), I could never imagine that I would be part of such an amazing organization. I have watched it grow from an idea into helping hundreds of families in our community. Claire packages provide some of the comforts of home along with gift cards to families when they have been bombarded with the worst news of their lives. Prior to COVID, the meal program had grown into such a success that families in the hospital had a great meal to look forward to 5 nights a week. Their mantra has always been “whatever it takes” to help a patient and family along this journey. They are always my emergency resource for a unique or urgent need. They have provided flights for family members needing to go to St Jude Children’s Hospital in Memphis to discuss treatment options, provided wigs for teenage girls struggling with the loss of their hair due to treatment and saved families from losing their home or having their utilities disconnected due to the financial burden that often comes along with a pediatric cancer diagnosis.

Most recently Claire’s Army has been part of helping a special family in our community who is in the midst of trying to survive the unimaginable. In the spring of last year, their four year old was diagnosed with ALL/Leukemia. They chose to travel to Memphis for a few months to enroll in a clinical trial. Upon their return to Charlotte for local treatment, within 48 hours their 2-year-old son was diagnosed with a brain tumor. After surgery here, both kids and parents headed back to Memphis for a trial to treat the brain tumor. All was going well until a few months ago when the 4-year-old was subsequently diagnosed with AML requiring a Bone Marrow Transplant. Prior to the transplant two weeks ago, they discovered that younger brother’s brain tumor was not responding to chemotherapy, so he would need another surgery. Parents have been torn trying to each manage a child but not being able to visit each other due to COVID restrictions and caring for the needs of each child. Thankfully, the surgery and transplant both went well and both boys are recovering... but they have a long road ahead of them with many more months in Memphis for radiation and close transplant follow up.

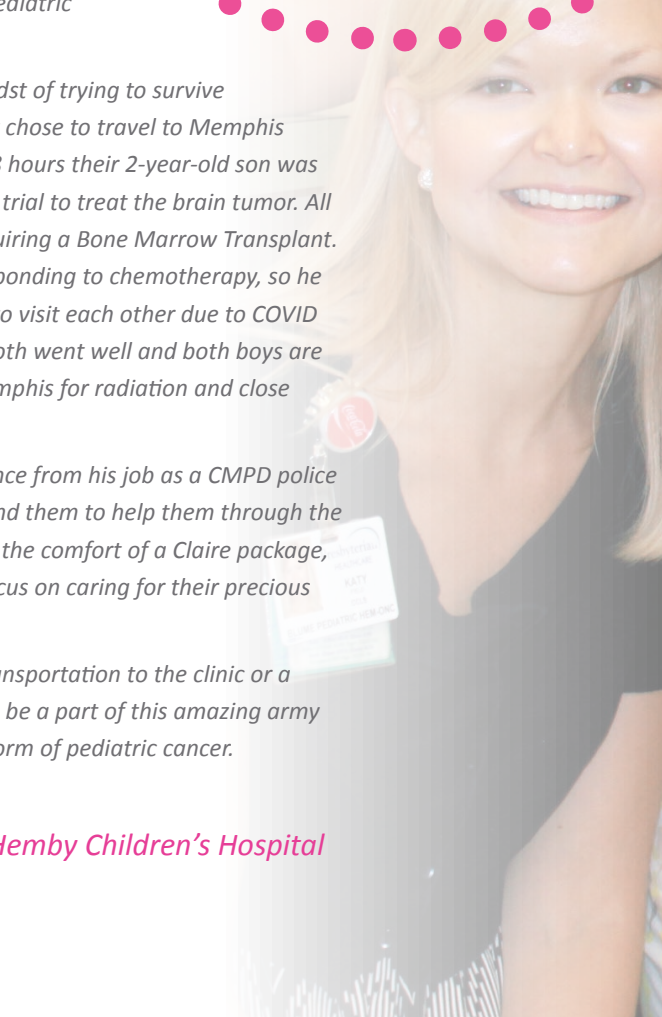


Mom has obviously not been able to work, and dad has had to take a leave of absence from his job as a CMPD police officer. The police community, family, friends and strangers have been rallying around them to help them through the past 16 months. Claire’s Army has been there for them from the beginning providing the comfort of a Claire package, meals while both children were hospitalized and financial assistance so that they can focus on caring for their precious boys. They are so grateful to have this support which wouldn’t be available without each of you.

There are countless other stories which could share the impact of a simple \$25 gas card to help with transportation to the clinic or a Target gift card to help with diapers or other necessities. Every donation helps!! I am forever grateful to be a part of this amazing army of people who will continue to be the safety net for all of the families in our community battling some form of pediatric cancer.

Thank you on behalf of each and every one of them.

– **Robin Gardner, St. Jude Affiliate Clinic at Novant Health Hemby Children’s Hospital**





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CORPORATE SPONSORS

- ▶ **FS Food**
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 - **Yafo Kitchen**
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- ▶ **One Blood**



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Claire's Army is an exempt organization as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, EIN 46-3056024.