

2022 Annual Report



GRAHAMTASTIC
CONNECTION

www.grahamtastic.org



JoyAnna, our 2,600th Superstar!

ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Grahamtastic Connection ended 2022 proudly supporting a record-breaking 280 children. This is the highest annual number of children supported since our nonprofit organization was launched in 1998. Our front report cover photo displays sweet JoyAnna receiving our 2,600th gift. Since that photo was taken, an additional 24 children were supported in 2022 ending our year with an overall number of 2,624 children supported since our organization's inception.

The last two years have had a profound impact on our entire world, especially for families of children battling serious illnesses. At the onset of 2022, we asked ourselves: how can we best be of service to children battling cancer and other serious illnesses and their families? We knew we had to find a way to adapt to this changed pandemic world in order to successfully overcome the new and unexpected challenges presented by the virus. With direct referrals for our services decreasing due to medical staff being overwhelmed by the pandemic in their hospitals, we reinvented our referral system. A new online portal was created on our website allowing parents to directly request our services. This new system eliminated much of the paperwork for the medical social workers/child life specialists. Now, we simply loop back to the child's medical team only to vet their application once we receive a request by a child's parent/guardian. This newly

introduced portal system has worked fabulously as demonstrated by our highest annual number of children supported ever. Regrettably, the success of this portal has led to the creation of a rolling waiting list for children in need of devices.

We remain thankful to those individuals, corporations and foundations for their funding in support of the 280 children sponsored as we faced a challenging financial environment in 2022. Despite these difficult challenges, Grahamtastic Connection proudly ended 2022 financially secure.



Leslie with David of Southern Maine and NH Wireless Zone

We are grateful to Attorney Dan Cummings for his donated legal advice and to Heather Thomas who provides complimentary website management and design to our organization; Heather and her volunteer work are featured later in this report on page 7. We are likewise grateful to the many volunteers who arrive into our office weekly to assemble our Backpacks Full of Joy. A sweet

story to share: While our teenage volunteers Gabby and Maddie were assembling a child's Backpack, they read on Joe's referral form that he enjoys sour candy. That afternoon, they went to the store and purchased bags of sour candy for him with their own money to include in his Backpack. We call these the "magical moments" – *those moments when our teen volunteers experience great empathy while helping others.*



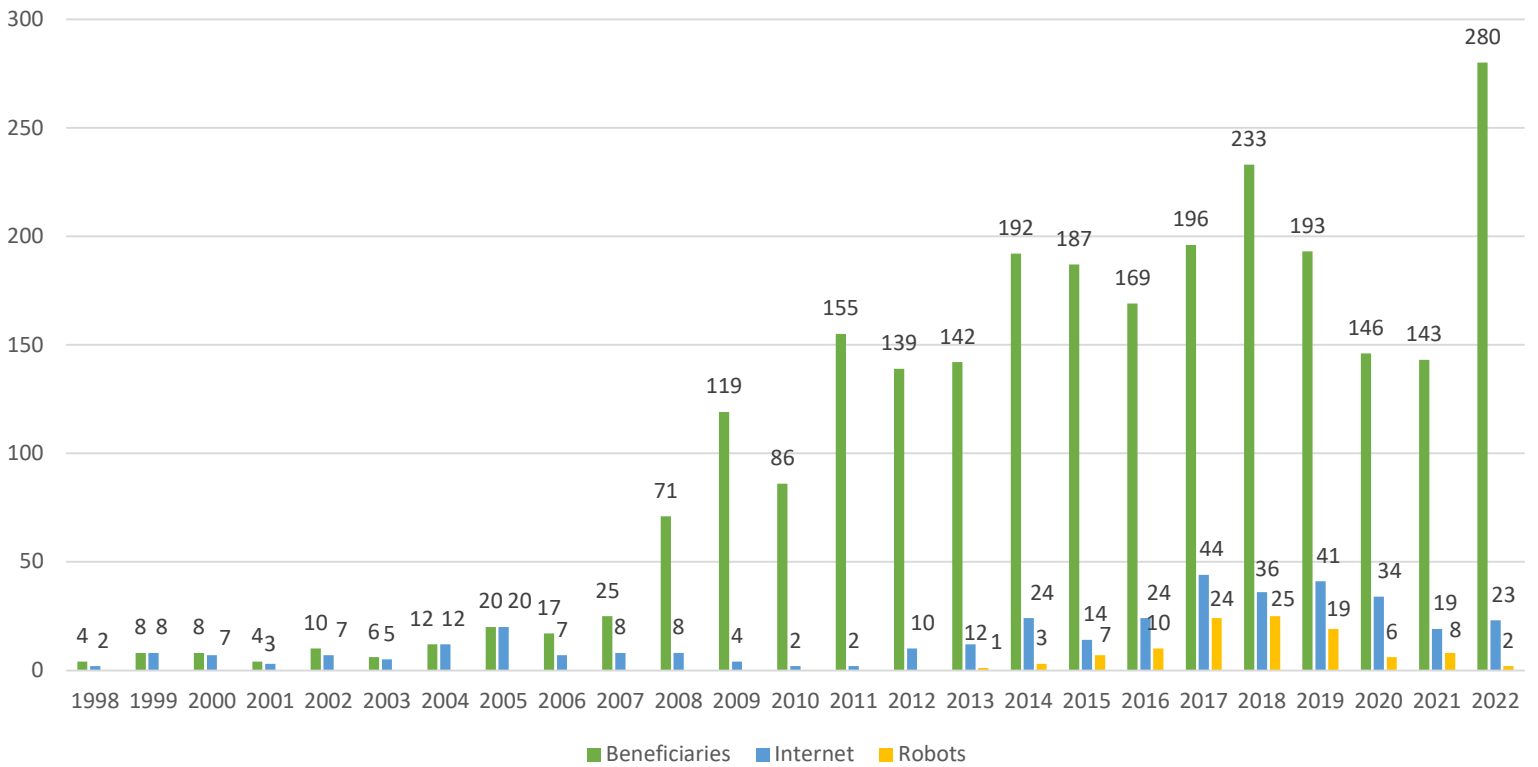
Volunteers Gabby and Maddie

As we look forward to 2023, we remain strong in our mission of keeping kids connected despite their medical or financial state. A social worker, who had just handed her patient our Backpack Full of Joy including an iPad, protective case, stuffed animal and joyful book and games wrote, "Thank you, Joseph screamed in delight when he opened it..." No further words needed to know there is still, after 24 years, so much value to our work here at Grahamtastic Connection.

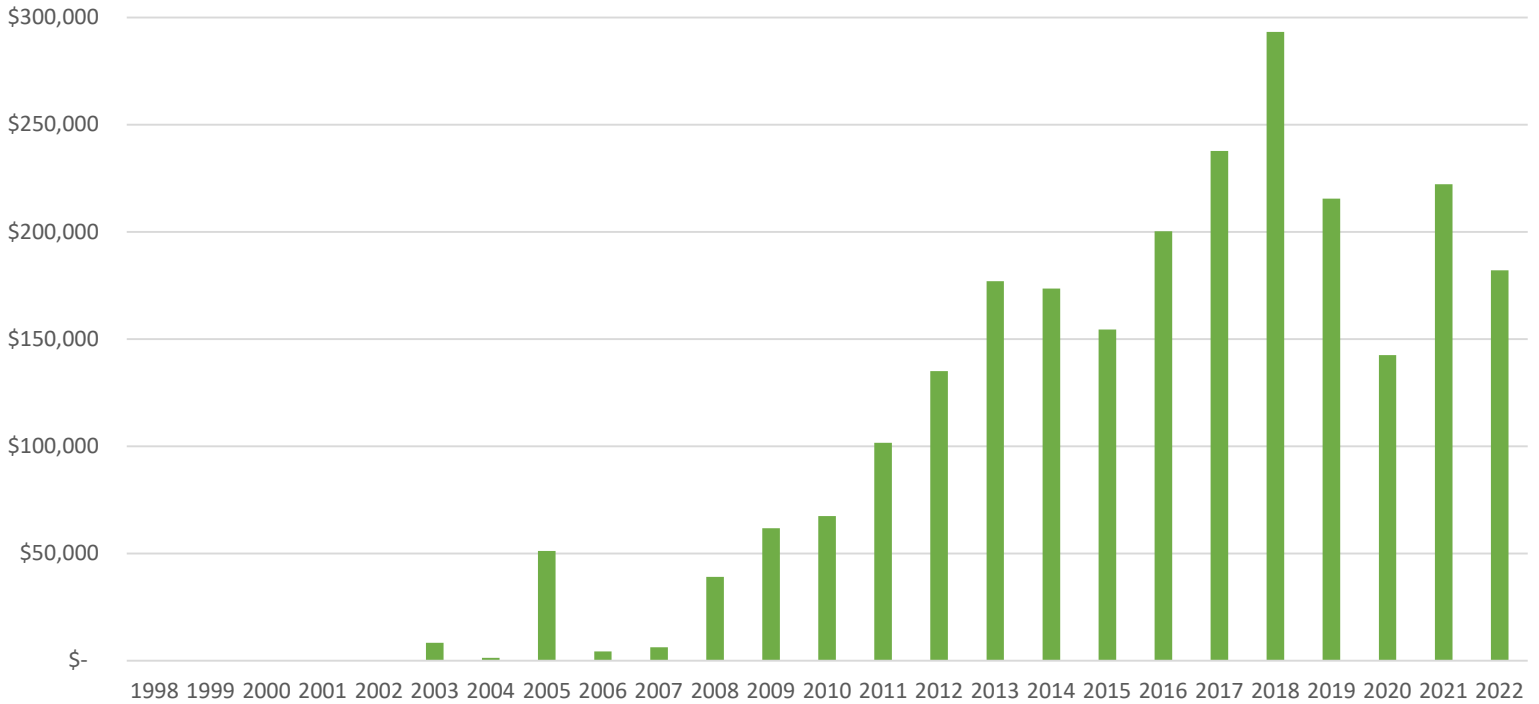
Leslie Morissette

Leslie Morissette,
Founder/Executive Director

Beneficiaries, Internet & Robots Supported



Revenue



ABOUT GRAHAMTASTIC CONNECTION

Our mission is to provide free technology to children with cancer and other serious illnesses to support their education, as well as their social and emotional well-being. Technology, including iPads, laptops, robots, and internet access, enables our children to continue their education during treatment while also remaining connected to family, friends and medical providers. This technology is virtually bringing them to the places they want to be and connecting them when their world is out of reach.

During this year, we supported 280 children with free technology; our highest annual number ever! Each child supported receives a Backpack Full of Joy containing a laptop or iPad with OtterBox case and wonderful accessories such as stuffed animal, a homemade quilt, toy, art supplies and a book.

This year marks the 10th year that we have provided free tele-presence robots for hospitalized or homebound children with 2 children utilizing our robots this year. We have had a total of 67 children using them since our first robot acquisition. We remain an early leader in providing this service to sick children.

The organization was founded in 1998 by Leslie Morissette in honor of her son, Graham, who sadly lost his battle to cancer in 1997 at the age of 8. Leslie learned first-hand what it was

like to spend months at a time in the hospital while her son was in cancer treatment at Maine Children's Cancer Program and Boston Children's Hospital. One of the key needs during such times, and the inspiration behind Grahamtastic Connection, is for a child to remain connected to school, family and to friends during extended periods of isolation. Often this access is out of reach due to medical and financial limitations.

The program started by supporting six qualified children in 1998, providing them with computers and internet access. This enabled them to continue their education while being treated and to communicate with family members and friends. Today, we are proud to have supported 2,624 children with cancer and other serious illnesses, with 376 children receiving internet access as well. Additionally, thousands of ill children have utilized our computers placed in shared areas of hospitals and clinics.

MEET SUPERSTAR JOHNNY, OUR 2022 FEATURED CHILD!

When you see #johnnystrong on social media, you'll clearly see where the word STRONG originates from. Johnny is not only showing us his Superhero strength, but also his courageous bravery. Sweet Johnny has been battling Stage 4 High-Risk

Neuroblastoma most of his life, (Neuroblastoma is a tumor of nerve tissue that can appear in various parts of the body.) Johnny, who is now seven and a half, was first diagnosed at just seven months old. With hundreds of days hospitalized, four relapses, and numerous aggressive cancer treatments, Johnny retains his bright smile and adventurous spirit. Johnny loves to play with his big sister Madi and dog Oakie at their home in Massachusetts between cancer treatments in both Boston and New York City. Grahamtastic Connection has supported Johnny with an iPad. His mom Colleen states, "The iPad has been a life-saver and is always with him." Colleen went on to say, "Johnny enjoys Baby Einstein and other learning apps, creating a mixture of photos and art, learning his colors and numbers, he has become quite a little techie."

We feel very fortunate to be in Johnny's caring circle, offering him a device that is helping him navigate through his continued treatment for Neuroblastoma. Please show Johnny and his family love by following @jmoc2a11 on Instagram or John Morris on Facebook. We are all #johnnystrong together.

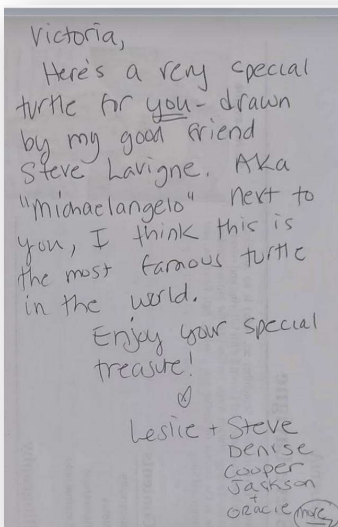


OUR CURRENT PRIMARY ACTIVITIES

- Providing laptops or iPads to individual patients for contact with clinics and interactive learning with schools.
- Placing computers in medical facilities where they are accessible to hundreds of children.
- Providing high-speed Internet access to families with seriously ill children.
- Supplying robotic technology in patients' schools, allowing seriously ill children to move around their classroom, walk up and down the school hallways, attend assemblies and field trips and interact with their teachers and peers from their hospital room or home in real time.
- Sponsoring our "Kids Helping Kids" Program, in which children of all ages support Grahamtastic Connection while learning valuable skills and the importance of helping those who are less fortunate.
- Advocating, proactively, at the local, state and federal level for critical measures and action plans focused on closing the Digital Divide and ending Digital Inequality for all children across our country.

THE TALE OF TWO TURTLES

When we received an iPad request from Victoria, a sweet 7-year-old who is bravely battling Leukemia, we learned her nickname is Turtle. Knowing the famous artist Steve Lavigne, aka "Michelangelo", illustrator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT), we reached out and asked him if he would create a special drawing for Victoria featuring all of her favorite things to include in her Backpack Full of Joy. Steve is a longtime friend of Graham and Grahamtastic, having been Graham's art teacher until Graham sadly lost his battle with Leukemia in 1997. After Graham's passing, and Grahamtastic being founded in his honor, Steve designed our logo which is a depiction of his young friend Graham and his dog Finely. Steve readily agreed to our request as you can see from Victoria's smile in the photo below:



Learn more about Steve and his studio Shellback Artworks:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steve_Lavigne

Follow Victoria's Journey on Facebook, "Turtle Will Triumph"
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/930114003796720>

RECOGNITION

2020: FCC Digital Opportunity Equity Recognition (DOER) Award
2019: Down East Magazine Giving Back Issue featured Non-profit
2019: On the Marsh Golf Course Charity Give-back Month of June
2019: Turbocam Laptop Drive & Charity Spotlight Month of July
2019: Marc Motors Charity Spotlight Month of August
2019: Prime Motor Group Charity Spotlight Month of October
2018: Today Show Mother's Day Special featured guest
2018: Tourist & Town "Local Heroes" featured story
2018: Woman's World, Redbook, Good Housekeeping & Woman's Day articles published
2017: Top 10 CNN Hero
2017: Huffington Post, "5 Innovators Creating Human Connection Through Technology"
2017: Maine's 20 Outstanding Women, Maine's Coast 93.1 and Hannaford Supermarkets
2014: Town and Country Federal Credit Union "Good Neighbor Award."
2012: Toyota 100 Cars for Good. Winner of a Toyota Highlander.
2011: Parent's Magazine, August issue "Power of Parents."
2009: John Baldacci, Maine Governor "Exemplary Service Award."
2008: Guest on CNBC's "The Big Idea" with Danny Deutsch
2006: WCSH, United Way and TD Bank's "Six Who Care Award."



Crafts by Sandy



Volunteers Mary Frances and Sue



Burns Quilting

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

HEATHER THOMAS



Heather met our founder Leslie, a colleague, at Renaissance Greeting Cards in 2004. At that time, Heather asked Leslie, "What can I do to help your program?" She probably never imagined 25 years later she would still be volunteering for our organization. Heather is an extremely talented designer both in print and web graphic design. Heather has helped us with numerous projects, design composition and has provided technical assistance free of charge to Grahamtastic Connection over the years. Our website [grahamtastic.org](https://www.grahamtastic.org) is maintained and designed by her, including our, new in 2022, online application portal. The online portal has worked fabulously for our program. As this year wrapped up, 200 parents or social workers submitted their applications through this newly created portal system.

Heather has over 25 years' experience as a Graphic Designer, earning her BFA at Savannah College of Art and Design and MBA at University Central Florida. When Heather isn't busy working on the adorable Raggedy Ann Dolls she hand-makes and retails on Etsy <https://www.etsy.com/shop/fettuccinedesigns>, she works as a Project Manager at Purple, Rock, Scissors, LLC – a creative agency located in Orlando, Florida. During her free time, she enjoys traveling, visiting Disney World, gardening and the great outdoors with her husband Mark and two dogs, Rollo and Freya. Thank you, Heather, for all your volunteerism over the many years; we are so grateful to have you on our team!



Heather with Rollo and Freya



Heather and her Gram who taught her how the art of doll making

2022 FUNDRAISING EVENTS



December – Prelude for Kids, Gift Wrapping & Raffle Event

Event held by Board Member Gwen Genest and the Sand Witches of Kennebunk \$2,447 was raised

December – Dennis Family House Lighting for Grahamtastic

The Dennis Family lit their home with Max, a Grahamtastic Superstar, activating the lights! \$935 was raised along with many toys and games donated.



November – the Sanford Lions Club made a donation through proceeds received from their various events \$4,400 was donated. Additionally, the **Kittery Lions Club** donated \$900 in August from their proceeds of their events.

October - Virtual Challenge Event

Virtual Event: Run, Walk, Bike, Hike, Swim \$10,992 was raised



October – Jason Bigoni’s Run for the Kids

Jason competed at the Backyard World Championships running 219.60 miles in 54 hours helping Team USA take the Gold! \$260 was raised



September - Cornhole Tournament & Auction

Hosted by Jane & Dan Archambault of Pine Ridge Camp Ground \$11,581 was raised



August – Summit at Eastwyke Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser

\$800 was raised



June – Sanford Mainers for Grahamtastic with Home Runs sponsored by Partners Bank

\$223 was raised with an additional \$1,000 donated by Partners Bank, “HomeRuns That Count!”



April - Dennis Family Easter Egg Hunt for Grahamtastic

Countless toys and games were collected and donated!



March – St. Martha’s Knights of Columbus made a donation through proceeds raised through their Tootsie Roll Drive of \$361.60 while the **Knights of Columbus Maine State Council** donated \$750 from their event proceeds.

In January of 2022, the **Springvale Knights of Columbus** donated \$1,040 raised through their event proceeds.



STAFF AND SUPPORT

Staff:

Leslie Morissette, Founder and Executive Director
Kathy Tranchemontagne, Program Director

Volunteer Board of Directors:

Executive Committee:

William Frank, MD, President, Director
Lien Fajardo, Treasurer, Director
Denise Pepin, Secretary, Director

Directors:

Jennifer Clarke-Burke
Gwen Genest
Kimberly Lachance
Lawrence O'Bryan
Susan Roberts
Adam Quinlan

Advisory Board:

Robert Caron
Dan Cummings
Melody Martin-Robie
Vanessa Nason
Bruce Wooding

Additional Volunteers:

Caron Family
Dennis Family
Christine Beaudoin
Sue Matthews
Heather Thomas
Carol Matheson
Bobbi Macrum
Tessier Family
Mary Frances Frank
Priscilla Parisien
Darlene Burns
Favolise Family
Morissette Family
Teens Gabby & Maddie



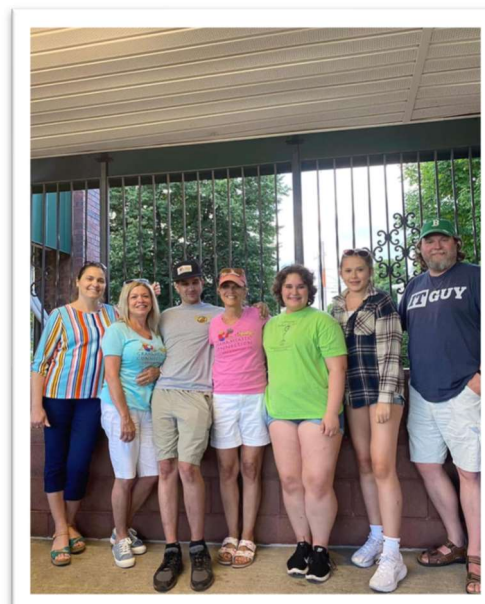
Leslie Morissette, Founder/Executive Director, (R) with Kathy Tranchemontagne, Program Coordinator (L) & the Child Life Specialists at Dana Farber



Denise Pepin, Treasurer with Beth Brown, former Board President, participating in the Virtual Challenge Director



Dr. Frank, Board President, kayaking in the Virtual Challenge event



Gwen Genest, Director with Leslie, Executive Director, at the Prelude Wrapping Event