

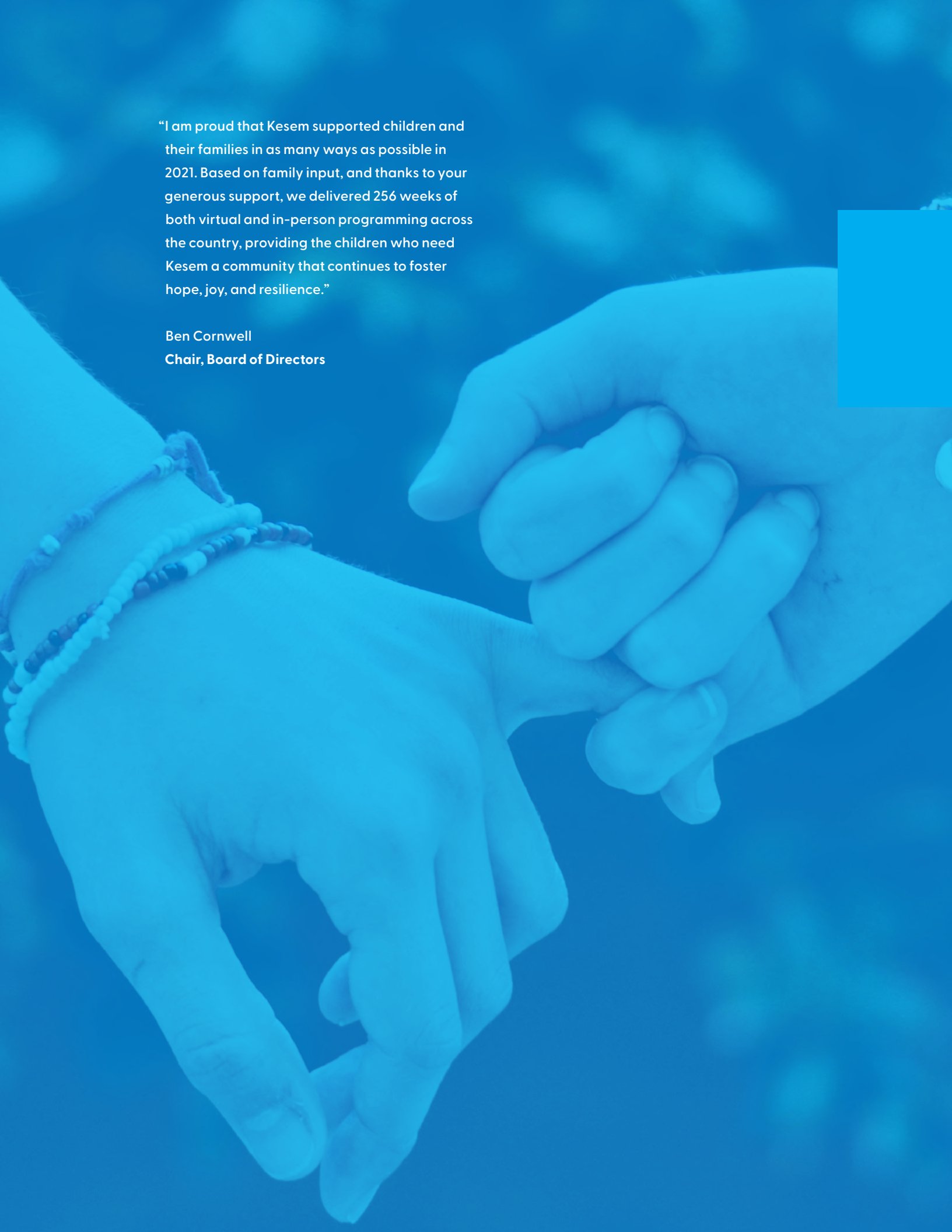
The background of the cover is a photograph of two women lying down and laughing joyfully. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The top left corner features a solid blue rectangle containing the Kesem logo and title. The bottom right corner features a solid blue rectangle containing the year and report title.

kesem.

# A COMMITMENT RENEWED

2021

DONOR IMPACT REPORT



“I am proud that Kesem supported children and their families in as many ways as possible in 2021. Based on family input, and thanks to your generous support, we delivered 256 weeks of both virtual and in-person programming across the country, providing the children who need Kesem a community that continues to foster hope, joy, and resilience.”

Ben Cornwell  
Chair, Board of Directors

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Kesem Friends and Family,

Thank you for being a part of our community and for your support. Thanks to you, Kesem continued to provide thousands of transformative experiences for children impacted by a parent’s cancer. In another year when Kesem mattered more than ever, we showed up for families, providing both virtual and in-person programming. We connected children and teens to their peers, increasing their confidence and ability to navigate their parent’s cancer diagnosis.

One camper this year reflected, “To be able to be with kids that have been through things that I have is incredible, and everyone is so nice. This will truly help me and I feel that just being myself and having fun is awesome.”

With cautious optimism, we intend to return to full in-person camp programming for Summer 2022. We plan for this return with conviction and promise to create experiences that can be carried forward for a lifetime.

Kesem remains the nation’s largest community dedicated to serving children impacted by a parent’s cancer, and we know that families need more from us. Kesem is about to embark on setting its next strategic plan, determining how we can best scale to serve more children in impactful ways. I am excited for the next Kesem chapter we all build together.

As always, thank you for your steadfast support.



Alicia Kabir  
Chief Executive Officer



“  
MY SON WOULD NOT BE  
AS CONFIDENT AND  
HAPPY AND KIND IF IT WEREN'T  
FOR THIS CAMP AND THE  
AMAZING COUNSELORS.”  
—KESEM PARENT



## WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Childhood is an important time. Parents know the courage it takes to guide their child through this formative moment in the human journey, and share in the simple hope that their child will feel supported, loved, happy, and unburdened in these cherished days.

Unfortunately, over 5 million children are experiencing a painful interruption to their childhood. Cancer affects the whole family—extending parental worry and fear and introducing a host of potential obstacles that you would never wish on anyone, let alone a child. Anxiety, emotional isolation, loss of social interest, and feelings of hopelessness are all commonly experienced by children whose parent has been diagnosed with cancer, and they can last well into adulthood. No parent should have to choose between fighting for their life and fighting for their child's joy, or their future.

## ALLEVIATING THE HARDSHIP

The **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology** found that grieving children may show one or more of these signs:

- loss of interest in daily activities
- inability to sleep
- loss of appetite
- fear of being alone
- acting much younger for an extended period
- withdrawal from friendships
- drop in school performance or refusal to attend school

Kesem is the largest national organization dedicated to creating the space, community, and resources necessary for this unique, far-reaching, and vulnerable population of children affected by a parent's cancer. Harnessing the power of our student leader model, and the generosity of our thousands of supporters, Kesem remains focused on scaling responsibly to serve more children, and change more lives, every year.



## IT ALL STARTS WITH OUR STUDENT VOLUNTEERS

Kesem serves our community by first mobilizing empathetic and passionate college student leaders from diverse identities and backgrounds to commit to volunteer in service of children affected by a parent's cancer. They channel their energy, skills, and commitment into directing a Kesem chapter on their college campus. This experiential leadership opportunity presents students with a robust training curriculum and practical experience in critical thinking, teamwork, public speaking, problem-solving, project management, and financial management. Students who run chapters and lead committees receive full-time support from Kesem's professional staff. Our national staff aims to cultivate and nurture students' talents, preparing them to better serve as influential leaders in their future endeavors.

In addition to camp, Kesem chapters offer multiple services, including year-round support, that address the unique psychosocial needs of the children we serve. This support empowers them to find their voice, establish supportive relationships, builds resilience, and transforms their experience with a parent's cancer and its impact on their life.

At our 130+ chapters across the country, these efforts yield enduring community connections that last through and beyond a parent's cancer.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER SUPPORT ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH:

Kesem offers children the opportunity to connect with peers who can truly empathize with their situation. Peer support offers a level of acceptance, understanding, and validation not found in many other relationships.

### Peer support is demonstrated to:

- Improve an individual's quality of life
- Improve an individual's whole health (including chronic conditions)
- Help people realize that they are not alone
- Build confidence and an understanding that better days are ahead
- Reducing the overall cost of service
- Serve as a resource for people seeking additional levels of care to complement their treatment within healthcare settings

## THE NEXT GENERATION OF COMPASSIONATE LEADERS

Student leaders commit to a year-long volunteer position at Kesem. During their term, they create and manage every aspect of Camp Kesem. They specifically plan a dynamic week of camp activities and help build a community that helps children find relief from stressors at home. Thanks to these leaders, children have a meaningful, fun, and safe experience at Kesem.

Throughout the year, Kesem provides extensive training and interpersonal skill development to these student leaders. The outcome: these students emerge as uniquely well-rounded young professionals and enter the workforce able to make critical decisions with compassion and empathy.

In addition to managing both their peers and a professional health and wellness team, Kesem student leaders serve as caring, trusted, and positive role models who campers look up to. They thoughtfully lead creative activities, games, and songs, and also take the time to listen, talk, and reflect with campers and support their well-being and personal growth. These young adults make a significant difference for children and, in the process, change the trajectory of their own lives.



Arizona State University  
Auburn University  
Augustana College  
Ball State University  
Bellarmine University  
Berkeley  
Boston University  
Bradley University  
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Case Western Reserve University  
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Clemson  
Colorado State University  
Columbia University  
Cornell University  
Dartmouth College  
Denison University  
DePaul University  
Dixie State University  
Duke University  
East Atlanta  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
Florida International University  
Florida State University  
Fresno State  
George Mason University  
George Washington University  
Grand Valley State University  
Hamline University  
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University of Virginia

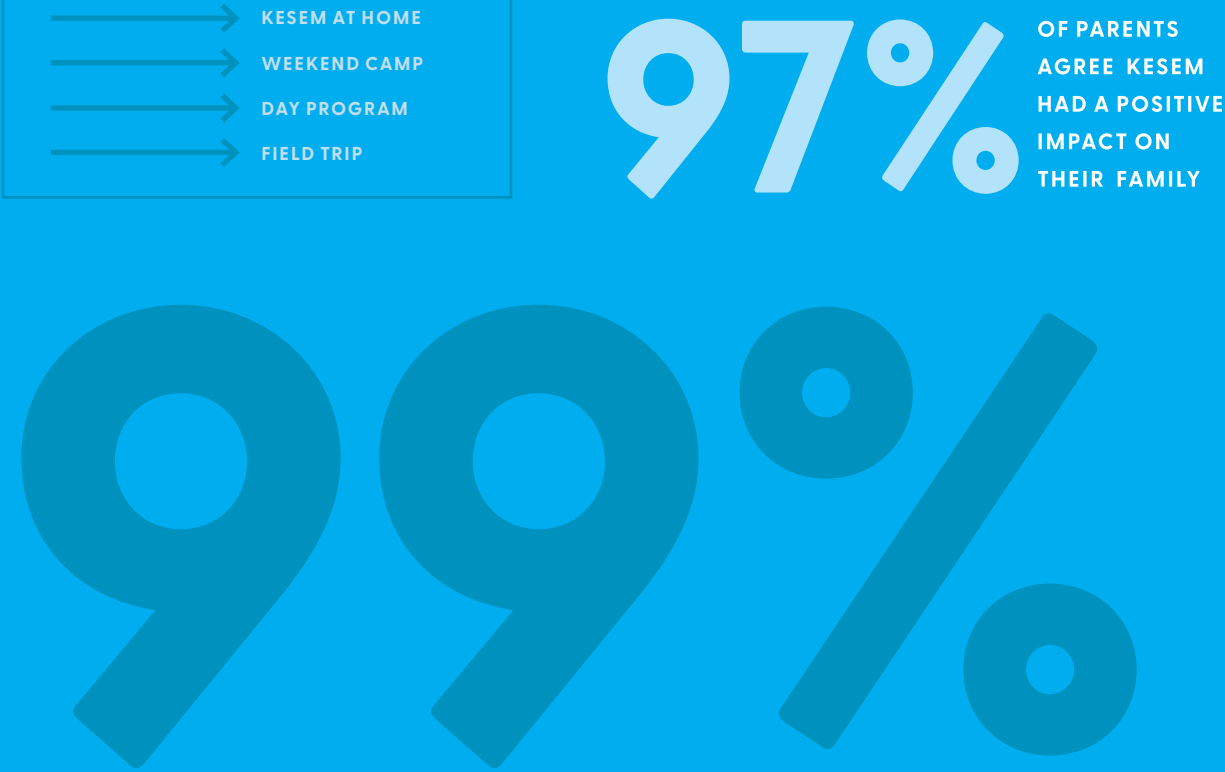
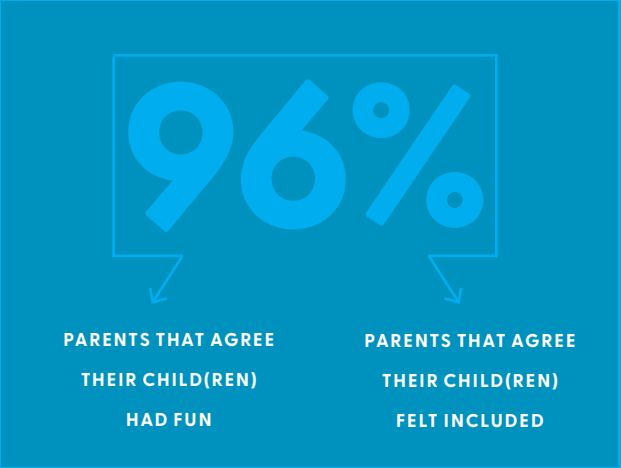
KESEM CHAPTERS

OVER 5,000  
STUDENT LEADERS  
VOLUNTEERING AT

OVER 130  
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY  
CHAPTERS IN

44 STATES  
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

# KESEM AT A GLANCE



“

THIS CAMP WAS CRITICAL FOR MY KIDS...  
I'D LOVE FOR THEM TO CONTINUE TO HAVE  
THIS OPPORTUNITY—THEIR DAD'S CANCER  
IS NOT CURABLE SO WE WILL BE DEALING  
WITH THIS FOR SOME TIME...HAVING THIS  
CAMP WAS SO HELPFUL FOR THEIR MENTAL  
HEALTH!” —**KESEM PARENT**

## YOUR IMPACT

Since Kesem began in 2000, and especially over the past two years, we centered our decisions on two things: what does our community need? And how do we keep our community safe and feeling connected? Beginning with the early decision to shift our in-person Camp Kesem programming to Kesem at Home virtual programming and spanning to our decision to initiate new fall programs in 2021, this has been our priority. Countless children spent the entirety of 2020 remote learning due to the pandemic. Schools have largely returned to in-person this year, but many vulnerable families have chosen to stay virtual to avoid potential exposure. Due to this switch to remote learning, children have lost much of their access to the support systems often offered via in-school programs, including counseling. UNESCO reported increased social isolation as one of the numerous adverse consequences of school closures on children—intensifying a challenge that the children we serve already face.

The introduction and enduring practice of COVID-19 safety measures over the last couple of years amplified our understanding of the meaning, power, and immense value of connection. We are so proud of our families and our supporters rallying around our virtual

programming. Yet, we also heard our families' desires for in-person togetherness.

Once again, thanks to supporters like you, we were able to meet our community's needs creatively and efficiently with the design of our in-person fall program offerings. Whether via weekend camp, day programs, or field trips, this community worked to reunite our returning campers with the friends they couldn't see due to COVID-19. We understand health to be a major concern for our families, and along with our important work came an obligation to take health, safety, and the risk COVID-19 poses incredibly seriously as we returned to in-person programming. Taking these imperative extra steps to mitigate risk has come with increased costs in running our programs. Areas where we have seen an increase in costs include: socially-distanced transportation, PPE, facility rentals (for hosting programming), and fees for nursing in light of increased demand for healthcare workers.

The impact that Kesem has on the lives of the children and families we serve is priceless—but meeting the cost of making our programming free and accessible to our community is something that can only be made possible by your generosity.

## CHILDHOOD PRESERVED: ONE MOTHER'S STORY

“When my children were 4 and 6, their father, a radiation oncologist, was diagnosed with cancer. As a mother, I was desperate to help my children face the new world we had entered, where illness and fear always seemed just under the surface of daily life. The social worker at our pediatrician's office told us about Kesem—and I will be forever grateful to that person. Camp Kesem saved our family. My children had a childhood because of Camp Kesem—time free from the burden and pain of their father's cancer. They had time to be “Pixie” and “Ace” and to have silly moments of fun with other campers and with caring, smart student counselors.

Kesem was a refuge for us all. I knew that my children were safe and happy at camp, and when they were with our counselors for Kesem By Your Side visits. I knew there was a group of thoughtful young adults who were ready

to support me as a mother, by supporting and accompanying my kids on this journey in just the right ways. When their father succumbed to his cancer four years ago, Kesem was by our side in ways I hadn't expected, despite knowing I could count on them for years already. After his burial, my kids asked to go to our Camp Kesem chapter Friends + Family Day that happened to be planned for that very day. The counselors, who knew what had happened, took my kids and did whatever they wanted and needed, with one counselor, Clover, playing tag with my Ace for 40 minutes. Later that month, more than 30 Kesem student leaders came to Peter's memorial service and took my kids to do what each wanted after the service—Ace to play catch, and Pixie for ice cream. I had hope for my children that day, that they would find their way because of Kesem, and hope for the future because of the love and understanding our Kesem chapter gave my kids.”





97%

OF PARENTS AGREE THAT  
KESEM AT HOME HAD A  
POSITIVE IMPACT ON  
THEIR FAMILY



“  
I THINK KESEM AT HOME WAS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE,  
AND EVEN THOUGH IT WAS AT HOME, ALL THE CAMPERS STILL  
LOVED EVERY MINUTE OF IT. THEY REALLY ENJOYED STILL BEING  
CONNECTED TO OTHER KIDS WHO ARE GOING THROUGH THE  
SAME THINGS THEY ARE. IT WAS SUPER COOL TO SEE HOW  
THEY CAME OUT OF THEIR SHELLS EVEN WITH IT BEING ON  
ZOOM.” —KESEM STUDENT LEADER

# QUICK LOOK

## KESEM PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT

Kesem chapters at colleges and universities across the country host **CAMP KESEM**—week-long summer camp programs. At camp, we focus on creating fun experiences that help children escape—even if for a short time—the challenges of coping with a parent’s cancer diagnosis.

**KESEM AT HOME** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kesem created a virtual experience to serve its families from their own homes. Kesem at Home is a remote program designed to allow children impacted by a parent’s cancer the opportunity to build connections and relationships, provide avenues for self-expression and reflection, and have fun with other kids who are going through similar experiences.

### YEAR-ROUND SUPPORT

**KESEM WARM WELCOME** Families receive an immediate welcome—along with a care package—upon joining the Kesem community.

**KESEM FRIENDS + FAMILY DAY** Existing and interested families, Kesem student leaders, alumni, and community supporters attend a local event in the spring and fall for a day full of fun activities, education, and community building.

**KESEM SPECIAL DELIVERIES** Campers receive personalized messages for birthdays and other events by traditional or electronic mail as a consistent touchpoint throughout the year.

**KESEM ONLINE RESOURCES** Families gain access to thoughtfully curated resources online, as well as through Kesem’s social media accounts to keep them connected and informed.

**KESEM BY YOUR SIDE** Families are offered customized support through our college student leaders to help children through the many challenges associated with a parent’s cancer journey including difficult news, recurrence, loss, and anniversaries. This is an impactful way Kesem shows our families they do not have to walk through these adversities alone.





## YOUR GIFT IN ACTION

**PROGRAM** 60 percent of our expenses were used for programming. Kesem used funds to efficiently host more than 150 sessions of Kesem at Home and special kick-off days this summer and to prepare for the launch of in-person fall programming (comprised of weekend camps, day programs, and field trips). We added six new chapters and trained and supported more than 5,000 student leaders—reaching nearly 7,000 campers and their families through these specially designed experiences.

**MANAGEMENT AND GENERAL** 19 percent of our expenses were applied to management and administrative costs. This percentage is consistent with last year because of the lower-than-normal program expenses resulting from the continuation of Kesem at Home. These expenses allowed us to create and deliver five different virtual and in-person programs to Kesem families in 2021. Moreover, we offered ongoing staff professional development training, including a continued focus on cultivating diversity, equity, and inclusion competencies.

**FUNDRAISING** 21 percent of our expenses covered outreach and fundraising efforts. As with every year, we used a portion of donations to engage families. We also strengthened fundraising capacity by creating new virtual fundraising approaches at the national and chapter level.

“

MY DAUGHTERS HAVE ATTENDED KESEM CAMPS TWICE AND THEY HAVE LOVED IT BOTH TIMES! AFTER THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE A COUPLE YEARS AGO, THEY COULDN'T WAIT TO GO AGAIN. WHEN THE IN-PERSON SUMMER PROGRAM WAS CANCELED LAST SUMMER DUE TO COVID-19, THEY WERE BROKENHEARTED—AND WHEN THIS IN-PERSON FALL OPTION CAME UP, THEY WERE THRILLED! THEY'VE BEEN TO A NUMBER OF OTHER TYPES OF CAMPS AS WELL BUT THERE IS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT KESEM THAT THEY LOVE AND WANT TO RETURN AGAIN AND AGAIN. I'M SO THANKFUL FOR KESEM!” —KESEM PARENT



## MOVING FORWARD...TOGETHER

While the past two years have posed unique challenges for all of us, we're moving into the new year stronger and more committed than ever.

**These times have shown us so much about ourselves and our community, creating moments of gratitude and deep reflection guiding our path forward.**

1. The dedication and resilience of our volunteers have reminded all of us of the importance and meaning of the work we do to serve our Kesem families, instilling in us a renewed commitment to our mission.
2. In another year where “social distance” was a centerpiece in our lives, we see the profound need for community and connection. We know that the return to in-person programming will again be transformative for our families, volunteers, and staff.
3. The COVID landscape required us to be more agile, innovative, and mindful in delivering our flagship program, Camp Kesem, and other year-round supportive services.

We've learned a lot and are applying what we've learned to our volunteer training and programming to ensure a return to safe, high-quality programming that reflects the best of Kesem.

4. Disparities in access to care and support services became even more pronounced for millions of families. As we plan for a safe return to our traditional programs and services, we continue to explore ways to scale and expand while removing barriers so that any child in need of our services will have access to the life-changing support we offer.

We hope you see and share in our commitment and excitement for what's to come. Your support allows us to provide a community that helps foster social and emotional life skills for children impacted by a parent's cancer while creating positive and impactful experiences for a new generation of compassionate leaders.

We are grateful to have you as part of our Kesem community and look forward to starting this new chapter together.



# OUR PARTNERS

These leading organizations and strategic partners have invested to expand Kesem’s services and support more children impacted by a parent’s cancer.



**THE CHERYL TESSLER  
SOLIT FUND**

 **DELTA DENTAL®**  
COMMUNITY CARE FOUNDATION

**FOSTER FAMILY  
FOUNDATION**

**The Horace W. Goldsmith  
Foundation**



**THE YEARDLEY SMITH  
FOUNDATION**

**KESEM IS GRATEFUL FOR OUR  
COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS.  
YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS  
MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR THOUSANDS  
OF CHILDREN TO BE SUPPORTED  
THROUGH AND BEYOND A PARENT’S  
CANCER. THANK YOU!**

**OCTOBER 1, 2020 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2021.**

**TRAILBLAZERS  
(\$40,000+)**

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(\$1,000–\$2,499)**

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JOYFULLY, AND WE WISH WE HAD  
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*A child's friend through and beyond  
a parent's cancer.*

**Kesem's mission of supporting children through and beyond a parent's cancer, and our vision of ensuring that every child impacted by a parent's cancer is never alone, can only be realized through an ongoing, steadfast commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in every part of our organization.**

**To that end, Kesem makes the following commitments:**

To continually expand the communities we support and work with—our camper families, volunteers, staff, alumni, partners, donors, and boards—with attention to engaging communities we are not currently reaching.

To strive for equity in delivering a transformative, fun, and empowering community that recognizes and embraces our differences.

To aspire to create shared spaces that are safe for every member of the Kesem community to feel valued and respected.

Kesem will engage in continued meaningful learning in order to better support our mission, and our growing Kesem community.



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