



Pediatric Oncology Support Team, Inc.

Because **NO** family should walk their
child's cancer journey alone

Because no family should walk their child's cancer journey alone...

Help us help children like Olivia.

Olivia was a typical 4 year old little girl playing with her baby dolls, entertaining her stuffed animals at tea parties, and pleading with her single mother, Sarah, to let her take ballet lessons, a simple luxury Sarah could ill afford. When Olivia started complaining about back pains, Sarah chalked it up to a recent playground accident at school.



One cold February morning, a 104 fever landed Olivia in the emergency room. Sarah was stunned by the news that her doctor presented, "We suspect that your little girl has a tumor on one or both of her kidneys." With no family and few resources on her own, Sarah was referred to the Pediatric Oncology Support Team, Inc. (POST). POST supported Sarah and Olivia through treatment for Wilms Tumors, a rare kidney cancer: surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. The POST team rallied around Sarah and Olivia to help them bear the devastation that a pediatric cancer diagnosis brings. Today, 6 year-old Olivia is a bright and happy child, and 5 months in remission.

POST is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit enhancing the social, emotional, and financial wellness for **local** children with cancer and their families. Having a child diagnosed with cancer leads to the darkest times most families will ever face. Our **free** innovative programs work in partnership with children to provide support, teach new skills, offer new perspectives, and help to reinforce a family's natural resiliency. POST makes a real difference for these devastated families by embracing them with compassionate support and expert care.

POST walks with every local family who has a child with cancer - like Sarah and Olivia – on their journey with cancer. We cannot do it alone. We need good people like you to partner with us and make it possible to keep helping families like Olivia's.

Cancer in children is on the rise, especially in Florida. The need has never been greater. "Because of POST, I was able to get through some of the hardest things I have ever gone through. Olivia and I are thankful that POST came into our lives when we were at our worst and helped us get through it all!" says mom Sarah.

I hope that you can join our efforts in the fight against childhood cancer. Help us light a candle in the darkness for another family just like Olivia's.

Best regards,

Barbara
Abernathy, PhD,
LMHC
President & CEO

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About The Pediatric Oncology Support Team, Inc.

Our Mission

POST is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit enhancing the social, emotional, and financial wellness for local children with cancer and their families.

Who We Are

POST partners with children diagnosed with cancer and their families by providing support, teaching new skills, offering new perspectives and helping to reinforce their natural resiliency.

Our History & What We Do

POST was initiated in 1997 by funding from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. The need for POST services arose from the unmet needs of families living in a six county area dealing with the devastation of a child diagnosed with cancer. All of our services are free. These services include but are not limited to:

- Comprehensive Case Management and Advocacy
- Counseling for Individuals and Families
- Sibling Intervention
- Discharge Planning
- Medical Play
- Financial Crisis Stabilization
- Referral to Local and National Resources
- Support Groups
- Clinic, Hospital, Home and School Visits
- School Re-entry and Educational Planning
- Bereavement Support

Below, please find a code for you to easily view our new music video **“Stronger than Cancer”** on YouTube featuring many local children battling cancer. Please take time to view it and pass it on.



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Staff



Barbara Abernathy, PhD, LMHC is the Program Director and CEO of the Pediatric Oncology Support Team, Inc. (POST). She provides support and guidance to the team. She is also a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and provides counseling to children and families.



Terrie Johnson is the POST Care Coordinator. She maintains a warm, friendly atmosphere in the office, helps clients with wishes, and serves as a liaison to ensure that services are provided. She also assists the team with administrative tasks.



Carmengloria Davis, MS is the POST Case Manager. She helps families find, apply for, and secure assistance from local and national resources. She serves as a liaison and an advocate on behalf of POST clients and is a Spanish speaker.



Stephanie Padro, LMFT is one of the POST Child & Family Counselors. She helps children and their families deal with the diagnosis of cancer by managing stress/anxiety and teaching new coping skills. She is also a Spanish speaker.



Hilary Schmitt, LMFT, NCC is one of the POST Child & Family Counselors. She also helps children and their families deal with the diagnosis of cancer by managing stress/anxiety and teaching new coping skills. Hilary joined the team in July 2013.



Megan Hamerdinger, BSW is the POST Family Advocate. She provides support for children and families as well as help with Case Management. She also provides medical play and distraction.

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Testimonials



CHILDREN'S WISH
FOUNDATION
INTERNATIONAL®

"I have had the privilege of working with Terrie Johnson and the staff at the Pediatric Oncology Support Team for a couple of years. I have found everyone I work with to place their patients' happiness and well being above and beyond what is expected. The families at The Children's Medical Center at St. Mary's are fortunate to have such quality people working for them."

-Leslie Biegelsen, Program Services Representative, Children's Wish Foundation International, Inc.



"The American Cancer Society would like to commend the staff of the Pediatric Oncology Support Team for their excellent services provided to cancer patients and their families in our community. We have enjoyed an excellent partnership with them in making sure that patients receive the help they need, both financially and emotionally."

-Jean Price, Patient Services Direction, American Cancer Society



"I am 21 years old and I am a cancer survivor. Having the POST team as a resource has meant the world to me. They helped me cope . . . they held my hand . . . they comforted me in their arms when I cried. The POST team encouraged me to stay strong and fight for my life. Even today, I know that I can call the POST team if I have a problem. I hope that someday every child diagnosed with cancer will receive the comfort and encouragement that I received from the POST team."

- cancer survivor



"In June 2002, our son was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. The diagnosis came just two weeks before his fifth birthday. Throughout the course of our son's treatment, POST was a constant, comforting source of support. Unfortunately, less than six months after diagnosis, our little boy succumbed to an infection secondary to his cancer. Even at that late hour, on a long holiday weekend, members of POST were there for us. POST was always there, not only for the well being of our son with cancer, but also to give support to our entire family. We have not, and never will, forget all that POST did for Seth and us."

- family of POST

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FAQs

What kind of services does POST offer?

POST has counseling services, case management, financial crisis stabilization, support groups, hospital visits, educational planning, sibling services and bereavement services.

Is POST a 501(c)(3)?

Yes, we received the status of 501(c)(3) in May of 2012.

Is this a Palliative Care program?

Yes, but we use the term "Comfort Care." POST is there for families from the time when their child is diagnosed, providing emotional and even financial support throughout the cancer journey.

Can I donate toys and other items?

Yes! POST accepts donations of toys, blankets, clothes, books and batteries. For medical and safety purposes, we ask that all donations be new. At this time, we are fully stocked in beanie babies and stuffed animals, but items like clothes, batteries and even toothbrushes are always needed!

How can I get involved?

POST always needs volunteers to plan events, host fundraisers and donate money or items. Contact POST at post@postfl.org or call us at 561-882-6336 to find out how to help!

How long do families have access to POST's services?

POST's services are available to families dealing with a cancer diagnosis during treatment, through survivorship and bereavement care.

If I donate money, how much of it will go to the families that POST serves?

100% of donated money goes towards helping the families that POST serves. All of our services are free, we use all the funds we acquire to provide families with all the services listed above.



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Posted: 12:00 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 1, 2012



Video inspires pediatric cancer patients to be 'Stronger'

By [Leslie Gray Streeter](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Diana Gallo looks up at the screen and sees her son, the little boy dancing goofily on the beach, making faces and grooving along to a Kelly Clarkson song.

"That's my child," she says. "You wouldn't know he has cancer now."

Thirteen year-old Daniel Jaramillo does, indeed, have cancer - he's been fighting leukemia since May 2010. But in the video, he and other kids who also do or have had cancer are lip-synching along to Clarkson's hit, "Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)." In short, they're just being kids.

And that is the point.

A few months ago, the Pediatric Oncology Support Team (POST), which provides services to kids being treated at Palm Beach Children's Hospital at St. Mary's and Palms West Hospital, made some of those kids the stars of their own video, set to Clarkson's uplifting hit. They frolicked on the beach at Jupiter's Carlin Park, claiming their command over cancer.

"It takes a lot of guts," says family advocate Megan Hamerdinger, herself a pediatric cancer survivor. "There is no fear in our kids."

"It seemed like a new experience that would be a lot of fun," says Daniel. "I got to be with all of my friends. People might be a little sad at first, but when they watch it, then they'll feel happy."

The video is impossible to watch without initially tearing up, until you realize that tears are not welcome here. It's not that kind of video. It's the kind of video with a lot of smiling and dancing and laughing, and the word "HOPE" spelled out in the sand, and a kid holding a sign that says "Cancer Fears Me." It's the kind of video where not only kids, but their nurses and doctors, embrace their inner silliness and let it all hang out.

POST director Barbara Abernathy said the idea came from a conversation with staff, as a motivational project for the kids, using "Stronger." Completely coincidentally, they found out

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that Seattle Children's Hospital had made a similar video, to the same song - "We were like 'No, you did not! You beat us to the punch, but it's on now,'" Abernathy says.

Undeterred, POST made their own version "Florida-style" on the beach, in the sunshine, with an incredibly enthusiastic cast - "We asked some of the kids, and they were all 'When? When is it? Is it now?,'" Abernathy says.

The shoot was done over several weeks, with about 12 kids, overseen by Boca Raton photographer Andy Hirst, who donated his time after meeting Abernathy at a charity event - "He said 'Whatever I can do to help,' which are words you should never say to the director of a non-profit," she says.

"It was awesome that he could do something to enjoy himself," says Ingrid Guzman of Greenacres, whose son Eduardo Gonzalez, 10, is a patient. "They're limited with what they can do outside. More than anything when I saw him out there, I saw him. He's a goofball. He always has a smile on his face. Even in chemo, he never lost his smile."

Jeff Mortimer, 17, of Riviera Beach, who can be seen in the video intently and cheerfully singing along, is now in remission after treatment for scapula sarcoma, a bone cancer. An amateur rapper with his own YouTube page, Jeff says he was "excited about the music, excited about getting outside."

Gallo, of Lake Worth, says that the video isn't just about a fun day, but about the emotional support that the POST team gives her kid, and others. "I'm a single mom, and it's been very hard. If it had not been for the POST team and the support they gave us, we would never have gotten through this," she says.

The video is currently available on the POST Facebook page, and has been shared over the weeks by patients, staff and their families. Abernathy says watching it is inspirational, not sad.

"People say 'How can you do this depressing work?'" she says. "But it's not. I can't have a bad day around these kids, and if I do, it doesn't last long, because they do not feel sorry for themselves. If these kids can feel great about life, what are we complaining for?"



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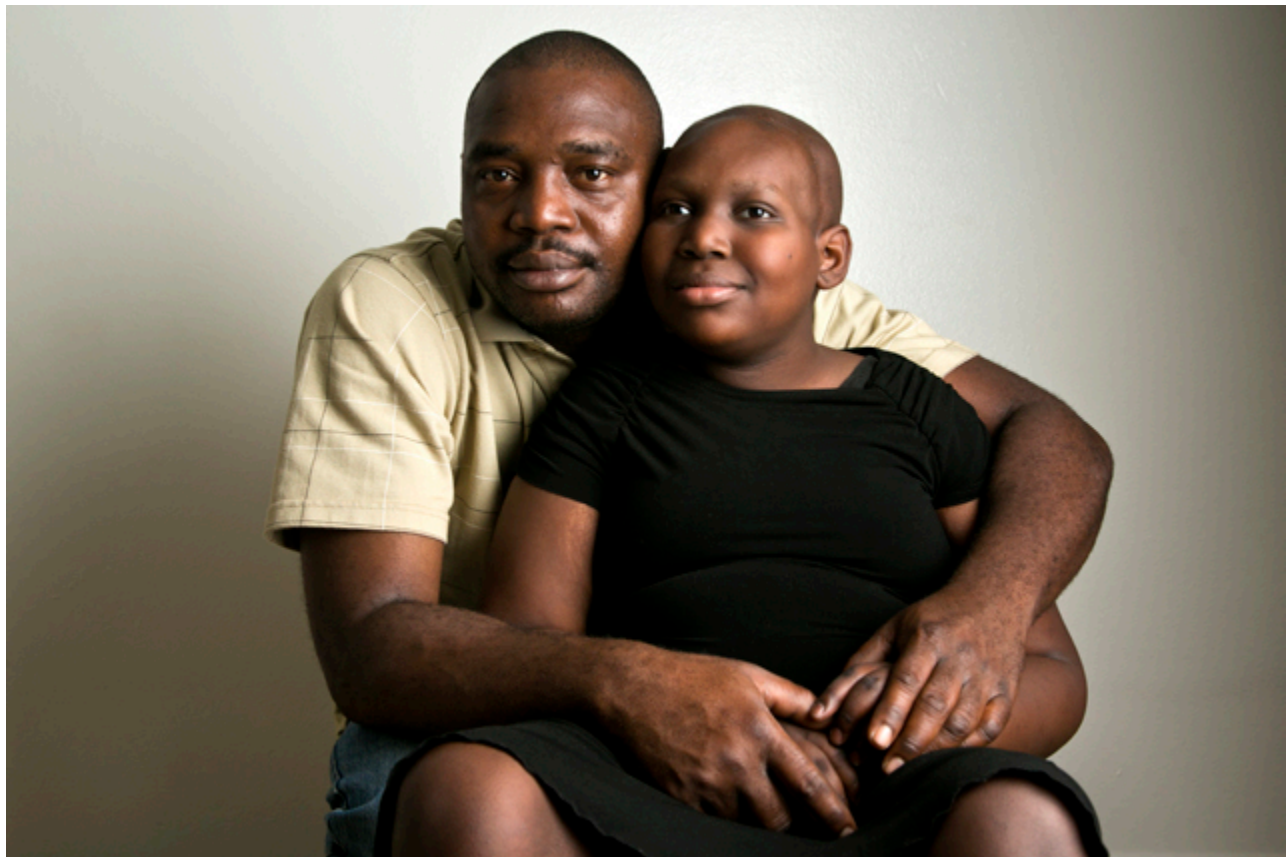
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Posted: Nov. 26, 2012



MIKAHISSA COTY

Single dad keeps it together as his princess battles a blinding tumor



Mikahissa Coty, 13, is blind and has severe cognitive and neurological deficits from a brain tumor. Her father Joel Coty brought his tiny daughter here from Haiti when she was 4 to raise her as a single father in a place both could live a better life. (Greg Lovett/The Palm Beach Post)

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By **LESLIE GRAY STREETER**

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

“Do you like my bracelet?” Mikahissa Coty asks, a delicate pink beaded treasure dangling from her outstretched wrist. It matches her girly hat, all knit pastels with a giant bow, a joy to see.

Except she can't see it.

Following a March surgery no one was sure she would survive, a brain tumor took her sight. The tumor, which necessitated the chemotherapy that also has taken her hair (hence, the hat), has eaten away at her cognitive ability. And, Mikahissa, who prefers to be called Princess Mikahissa, is not the kind of royalty to complain much or worry. No, that silent task is left to her father.

“It hurts me. But the cancer did not just start. It has been in place for a long time,” says Joel Coty, 37, who brought his tiny daughter here from Haiti to raise her as a single father in a place both could live a better life. A year later his “very active” baby girl, then 4 years old, was struck still and listless from what turned out to be that tumor, called an optic chiasmatic hypothalamic glioma.

It's been this way for almost nine years, this quiet, proud man faithfully toiling between his job as a cook at a West Palm Beach chain restaurant and caring for his child, now almost 14. They took a break from treatment for a while, “but it made the tumor bigger,” Coty says.

Despite the blood clots Mikahissa developed in both legs this spring, the surgeries, treatments and close calls, her father has rallied, regrouped, continued on. What choice does he have?



Mikahissa gives a thumbs up after her first surgery at age 4, for the brain tumor. (Family photo)

“You have no idea how many times they've been referred to hospice,” says Barbara Abernathy, executive director of the Pediatric Oncology Support Team (POST) on the campus of St. Mary's Medical Center.

Three years ago, Joel's mother, Marilia Cauthy, moved from Haiti to help care for Mikahissa. Their rented home is sparsely furnished — they don't have a couch — and Mikahissa and her grandmother share the only bed, leaving Joel to sleep on the floor. But this is not a family that complains or demands. “I'm not really good at asking,” he says, even when the

restaurant cut Joel's hours to 20 a week as he shuttles his girl to her chemo treatments.

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“They let me have time off to be with her before her surgery,” Joel explains, because they thought this might be their last brief time together. But Mikahissa survived. And she keeps on smiling.

Even as her sight has diminished to shapes and shadows, she can still hear her beloved Scooby-Doo cartoons, and sing you the theme song. She can still hold tight a doll she has just received as a gift. She happily prepares pretend meals for her father with the miniature play kitchen at the POST offices.

The only thing she seems to want is to be a normal student. She collapsed from a seizure in class in January and has not been healthy enough to return since.

“Where would you go if you could go on vacation?” a friend asks.

The Princess Mikahissa answers without hesitation.

“To school.”

MIKAHISSA'S WISH

Single father Joel Coty has struggled for years to support his daughter, Mikahissa, who recently went blind from a tumor that developed in her brain when she was 4 years old. They have very little furniture — Joel sleeps on the floor. So, in addition to a bed, the family needs a sofa and a television for the living room, and a dining set so that they may eat together. Mikahissa would benefit from a radio with a CD player, as well as children's books on CD for her to listen to. She also needs adaptive educational equipment for the blind, a play kitchenette for her home and money to help with their rent and household bills, which her father struggles to pay since his work hours as a cook have been drastically reduced as he cares for his daughter.

NOMINATED BY: [Pediatric Oncology Support Team at St. Mary's Medical Center](#)

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11 Responses to "Mikahissa Coty"

1. *damaris* on 26 Nov 2012 at 11:13 am <#>

I would like to help. May I have the address so that I can drop things off to the family or where can I drop things off to them.

2. *The Palm Beach Post* on 27 Nov 2012 at 5:18 pm <#>

Hi Damaris,

Thank you for your offer to help this family. Contact their nominating agency, which can be found on the "Gift of Giving" page on the Season to Share site, to ask about dropping off donations.

~Jennifer Podis

3. *Barbara Abernathy* on 29 Nov 2012 at 12:40 pm <#>

POST helps any child with cancer living in Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, Indian River, or Hendry counties. We also provide on-site support to patients at Palms West Hospital, in addition to Palm Beach Hospital at St. Mary's Medical Center.

We are honored and privileged to help families who are fighting for their kids' lives. POST is a LOCAL 501(c)(3) non-profit helping over 1400 children/teens with cancer in 14 years.

You can find out more about us at <http://www.postfl.org> or 561-882-6336.

4. *D & J* on 04 Dec 2012 at 1:30 pm <#>

We have a double padded futon we would like to donate if you would like.

5. *JENNY* on 05 Dec 2012 at 9:52 am <#>

I have a bedroom set, recliner chair, china cabinet that I would like to donate to the family, Mikahissa Coty (Princess) wish you well and lots of health. GOD bless you.

6. *AG* on 09 Dec 2012 at 7:53 pm <#>

I have a solid wood kitchen table & chairs I would like to donate! Please contact me for more information.

7. *The Jones Family* on 12 Dec 2012 at 8:30 am <#>

My family and I would like to help with a few items for Christmas.

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8. *LATONYA SIMS* on 17 Dec 2012 at 4:50 pm <#>

I HAVE COUCH TO DONATE IF PROVIDED WITH THE FAMILIES HOME ADDRESS. IF POSSIBLE.

9. *tanisha geffrand* on 18 Dec 2012 at 1:56 pm <#>

we have beds and couches that we would like to donate 754-214-7714 located in west palm beach

10. *ceceile lewus* on 21 Dec 2012 at 9:23 am <#>

I have a bed and couch i would love to give to this family. How do i go about doing this?

11. *Lynn Phillips* on 21 Dec 2012 at 10:11 am <#>

We would like to donate a solid wood play kitchen with pans that belonged to our niece and also had brain cancer as a young child. Please contact us with how to accomplish this.



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