



February 2021 Mermaid Memoirs - 1st Wave

If ever there was one, 2020 sure was a year for the books! From a Wish to our Mission, this past year did not turn out the way we had anticipated. I'm sure many of you can relate to that statement. When the calling of establishing our own foundation in memory of Sophia started to come together, we thought we had it all figured out. Our plan. Our direction. Everything. Once again, we were humbled by the reminder that none of us are really ever "in control." So, let me take this opportunity to share with you what the foundation's first nine months looked like, as well as our upcoming plans.

I left my corporate career at the end of February 2020 and the following week began working on the Best Day Ever Foundation debut. I had so much joy working with Team Mermaid and watching the next stage unfold. Then, just a couple of weeks later, we received the message that school will be virtual due to the COVID-19 virus. Seriously?! My day schedule looked drastically different than my plans (appreciating that so did everyone else's). As you know, we moved forward with a virtual format for the unveiling of the Best Day Ever Foundation on April 3, 2020. The night sky was filled with a blanket of twinkling lanterns, as if the stars were dancing in the sky. It was a beautiful sight. The love and support were once again overwhelming.

Much of the spring was spent working on the foundation behind the scenes, including construction of the website. We wanted it to depict Sophia's story and how toasting **#ToMermaids** became our motto. It felt good to gather all the events Sophia's journey has impacted since 2016, not to mention the combined financial impact to pediatric and cancer research partners, which now exceeds \$500,000 in total. Please check out the site. www.BestDayEverFoundation.us

Mermaid Events

Following our launch, a dear friend of our family, Jen Havlin, offered to do a Mother's Day fundraiser for the Best Day Ever Foundation. Jen volunteered to shave her beautiful hair if we raised \$1,000. With COVID still rising at that time, we once again went with a virtual platform. The event raised \$1,581 and Jen rocked the new look like a warrior! Thank you, Jen, for getting us started.



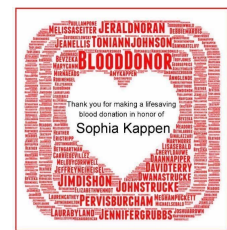
Special thanks to Lily Hermann, for requesting that her 9th birthday gifts be in the form of donations for the Best Day Ever Foundation, raising over \$200!! Love this special girl to the moon and back!

Working With Our Partners



Our annual Sophia's birthday blood drive for **Hoxworth Blood Center** in Cincinnati was a huge success, pandemic and all! We had 54 donors, including 17 first time donors! Thank you for all who donated and continue to give the gift of life. Thank you, **First Church of Christ** in Burlington, KY for graciously hosting our event once again.

Team Mermaid made another big splash at this year's **Leukemia Lymphoma Society's (LLS) Light the Night**, raising \$30,239, becoming once again the #1 Friends & Family team. Pairing up with Rally for Rob, we've raised over \$250,000 for this annual LLS event in the past eight years.



Plans for other Mermaid events were being reconsidered as it became more evident that COVID wasn't going anywhere. While all networking, or Toasting **#ToMermaids** events were on hold, different conversations followed of what we could do for families who have endured the loss of a child. Annual "celebrations" came to the top of mind.

In the year Sophia passed, we were invited to private ceremonies (usually at holiday time) through a number of hospitals or groups, to honor children who have died. In year one, we accepted all the invitations, not knowing what to expect. Most were independently "lighting a candle" in Sophia's memory while we looked at a computer screen. We listened to names of too many children being announced, or just sat there with Sophia's picture by our side. We felt alone. It left us feeling more empty inside. And the private masses held at the hospital were only for the families who lost a child that year. Not every child loss is the same cancer journey we knew, so we were not sure who received the invites to the hospital mass? Were families inadvertently left out? And what, after one year we're supposed to be "better?" Not a chance. We needed our army. We kept thinking "there has to be a more meaningful way to celebrate their lives that ended too soon?" And that's when we decided to change it.

Shine the Night – Saturday, April 3, 2021



Shine the Night will be the Best Day Ever Foundation's signature event to be held on the Saturday night before Easter each year. You may ask, why Easter? April was the month when Sophia was diagnosed with cancer and one year later, the month she died. But more than that, both life changing events occurred during Holy Week, the most sacred time leading up to the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Religious rituals often include lighting up the night before Easter to disperse the darkness, a symbol of Jesus as the light of the world. It feels right to schedule this event then.

We want to **Shine the Night** for our children who are in Heaven now with Jesus. We believe our children should light up the night together to help disperse our darkness. Families who have lost a child will receive a Best Day Ever care package. The package will contain paper lanterns to light and release that night, and a gift from the foundation.

We will first gather everyone together virtually to honor the memory of our children. We would like to make the virtual session personal for each child, more than just their names and/or photos flashed on screen. We all want our children to be remembered.

After the virtual portion, each family will simultaneously release the lanterns with their families, friends and communities who lifted each and every one of us during our biggest time of need. Followed by a toast **#ToMermaids**, of course! Separate but together in 2021.

As we celebrate their lives, our hope is to ensure no family feels alone. We hope this evolves into something more beautiful each year. Together, we will "**Shine the Night**" for our children. More details on the event to be shared soon. If you would like to help us, please reach out to Amy at amykappen@bestdayeverfoundation.us



Best Day Ever Foundation Merchandise

Best Day Ever long-sleeved t-shirts are still available. Thank you for all the positive feedback on how soft and comfy they are. We're grateful to work with Reis Promotions again. So glad our supporters love them! Cost is \$15 (extra for shipping).



Coming in February...we're touched to be working with another small business owner for these beautiful candles. We will have three beach-scented candles to choose from (sea salt & orchid, high tide or sea minerals), reminding us all where Sophia felt her best. Cost is \$20/each. Local sales only (we will not be shipping these due to costs). All merchandise proceeds benefit the Best Day Ever Foundation. Email Amy at amykappen@bestdayeverfoundation.us for orders.



Toasting #ToMermaids

The WISH behind our MISSION. Although COVID is halting our ability to have events for families to network together in person, in due time, we will reestablish ways to unite other than virtual platforms. Thank you for your patience and standing beside us as we navigate this new path.

I'm taking advantage of this down time by not only spending lots of time with my boys, but focusing on my writing. For me, it's part of the healing process. I hope to make big progress in 2021 on a book documenting this journey.

If you or a family you know has endured the loss of their beautiful child, please reach out to me and let us help soften this journey. No one should travel it alone.

Have the best day ever,

Amy F. Kappen
Founder & Executive Director
Best Day Ever Foundation