SHANNON DALEY
MEMORIAL FUND

The Shannon Daley Memorial Fund is proud to announce its 25th Annual Charity Basketball Event. The Readington Teachers and Hunterdon Central Teachers will once again take on the world-renowned Harlem Wizards.

The Harlem Wizards are one of the greatest basketball show-team organizations to ever "lace it up and let 'em fly." The Harlem Wizards' performance offers a rare combination of individual athleticism, teamwork, and entertainment to delight fans of all ages.

The Shannon Daley Memorial Fund mission is to assist local families facing financial hardship due to a child battling a serious illness. Our first recipient is 18-year-old Ella Ziolkowski from Hillsborough who has Spina Bifida and Chiari Malformation Type II . Our second recipient is 3-year-old Aleesha Nistico from Clinton who has Rett Syndrome. Our third recipient is 3-year-old Thomas Price from Long Valley who has High-Risk Neuroblastoma with metastasis. Our fourth recipient is 2-year-old Dustin Godding from White Township who has Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome.

The event will be held Tuesday March 3rd, 2026, at Hunterdon Central Regional High School Fieldhouse in Flemington, New Jersey. Game time is 7:00 PM. Hunterdon Central Regional High School is located on Route 31 in Flemington. For further directions call (908) 782-5727.

We also have business opportunities for advertisers. More than a thousand spectators will attend, and we are anticipating another sellout. Ad rates are as follows: Back Page $2,500, Full-Page $1,000, Half-Page $500, Quarter-Page $250. All donations of $50 or more will be noted in the Program.

Advance tickets for the game are $10 for adults and $5 for children under 12. All tickets are $10 at the door. Donations can also be made directly to the above address at any time.

For ticket information please call (908) 229 - 5460 or go to www.shannonfund.org. If you would like to advertise in the program, please call (908) 528 - 2231 or email Paul.McGill@shannonfund.org . Tickets also are available at:

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| Darrow's Sporting Edge | (908) 534 - 2838 |
| Sneakers Plus | (908) 788 - 2921 |
| Lindsay Salaj | (908) 268 - 9395 |

# Ella Ziolkowski's Story

Ella was born on October 22, 2007. From the beginning, her life has been full of challenges. Ella was born with Spina Bifida (myelomeningocele), and Chiari Malformation Type II. Since her Spina Bifida was detected during a 20-week ultrasound, Ella was born at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. At one day old, she underwent surgery to repair the myelomeningocele in order to prevent infections and additional damage to her spinal cord. At a week old she was discharged from the NICU, however a week later, we returned to the hospital. Ella developed hydrocephalus, as most babies with Spina Bifida do. Hydrocephalus is a buildup of cerebral spinal fluid in the ventricles of the brain. At two weeks old, Ella had surgery to place a VP shunt which would drain the excess fluid from her brain. While the shunt was necessary, it has come with so many complications. Ella's shunt failed and had to be surgically repaired 3 times in her first 6 months of life, and a total of 10 times by the time she was 10 years old. Each shunt malfunction meant a trip to the emergency room, surgery, and a hospital admission in Philadelphia.

In 2018, even after all of the shunt surgeries, Ella continued to struggle with headaches, dizziness, blurred vision and chronic pain. So, we sought a second opinion at Boston Children's Hospital. At this time, Ella underwent surgery in Boston to have a new programmable shunt placed. This would allow her neurosurgeon to adjust the shunt setting without surgery and manage the symptoms of her hydrocephalus. Ella had 4 wonderful "surgery-free" years from 2018-2022 and we transferred all of her care to Boston Children's Hospital. Although Boston is over 200 miles from home, BCH has an excellent Spina Bifida clinic and team of neurosurgeons, which made the drive worth it.

In addition to Hydrocephalus, Spina Bifida causes varying degrees of paralysis and orthopedic issues. Ella began receiving physical therapy at 3 months old to address lower extremity weakness and later mobility challenges. She continued with PT through most of her childhood and worked hard to stay as active as possible. She wears braces to support her legs and help her walk and uses a wheelchair for distances. While her childhood has been peppered with hospital visits and surgeries, she has accomplished so much in spite of her challenges. She is a wonderful big sister to her 14-year-old sister and brother, Ava and Anthony. She is a loyal friend and a hard-working student. She has competed in wheelchair racing, swimming, and power lifting. She works twice as hard to go half as far as others, but she does it with quiet strength and usually with a smile on her face.

Unfortunately, the past three years have been the toughest on Ella. Since 2022, she has had 7 more shunt malfunctions and one shunt infection. Now a High School Senior, she has missed countless days of high school and has missed out on many events and experiences that most high schoolers take for granted. She continues to struggle with debilitating headaches, dizziness, blurred vision and severe chronic pain. She does her best to continue on with school and her daily life. As a working mom, I do my best to keep up with the follow-up appointments with specialists to see what else can be done to help her. Ella has always been such a resilient young lady, but the past few years have been extremely challenging for her and for our family. She hopes to be feeling well enough to compete in her adaptive sports again soon. After graduating high school, she hopes to attend college and then pursue a career in Early Childhood Education or in Social Work.

We are so honored to have been selected by the Shannon Daley Memorial Fund. We are forever grateful for this amazing organization.

# Aleesha Nistico's Story

Aleesha is 3 1/2 years old, born July 5, 2022. She was born full term and healthy, just like any other baby, and has always been a happy child. Until she was 18 months old, she could feed herself, play with her toys, and even pull herself up to move around. She was able to say a few words, including "mama." Around the 18-month mark, her progress suddenly halted. She began to quickly lose her ability to hold objects and control her movements, along with struggling to chew food and speak.

We took her to see a pediatric orthopedic specialist; after conducting X-rays, everything appeared normal. We also consulted with a pediatric neurologist who ordered a brain MRI, which also showed no abnormalities. Following that, the neurologist recommended early intervention and genetic testing. After a long eight-month wait, we received a call with the devastating news that Aleesha has Rett syndrome. Rett syndrome is a mutation to the MECP2 gene on the X chromosome.

This diagnosis hit us hard as parents, as we had no prior knowledge of the condition. We immediately scheduled appointments with all the recommended specialists and turned to online support groups to learn and do everything we can to help support Aleesha throughout her journey. Things are never easy for Aleesha, as she has very limited mobility. Rett syndrome also brings her many other issues, such as absence and nocturnal seizures.

While Aleesha has many struggles every day, she is happy and smiling. She enjoys going to Pre-K and playing with all her friends. She loves going to the park, the mall, or to anywhere there are kids for her to interact with. At home she loves watching Minnie and Mickey Mouse while also playing with her interactive toys.

We are very honored for Aleesha to be selected as a recipient for the Shannon Daley Memorial Fund. We have plans for her to get a Tobii eye gaze device to help her communicate better and different medical equipment to help her daily life. Aleesha has lots to say, but few ways to express it. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The Nistico Family.

# Thomas Price's Story

At just 2 1/2 years old, Thomas, was diagnosed on August 25th with High-Risk Neuroblastoma with metastasis. The cancer had already spread to his head, bones, bone marrow, ribs, with the primary tumor located in his chest. Thomas is currently undergoing very aggressive treatment at Morristown Medical Center in the Goryeb Children's Hospital. He has already completed 5 rounds of in-patient chemotherapy and is participating in a study for a drug called Dinutuximab by United Therapeutics. Because of this Thomas needs to remain in the PICU while receiving his chemotherapy treatments.

On Dec 4, 2025, Thomas underwent a 4-hour long surgery to remove the primary tumor from his chest. His incredible surgeon was successful in removing the primary tumor only leaving a few 'fingers' of the tumor that were overreaching into arteries in his neck. At the discretion of the Hematology team those were left to be treated with radiation and chemotherapy.

In addition, Thomas will very soon undergo two stem cell transplants at CHOP, which will require him to be in isolation and remain at CHOP for approximately 1 month for each transplant. This will be followed by radiation which will also take place at CHOP and another 5 rounds of chemotherapy back at Goryeb Children's Hospital at Morristown Medical Center. As you know, these treatments are vital but also extremely costly.

Laura has taken an extended leave of absence from work to care for Thomas and support him through this difficult journey. We are seeking financial assistance to help offset the mounting medical bills and related expenses, ensuring that Thomas can receive the best possible care without the burden of financial stress.

Your support means the world to this brave young boy and his family, and it will significantly ease their financial burden during this difficult time.

# Dustin Godding's Story

Dustin was born at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia in April 2023 after being diagnosed with Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (a condition where the left side of the heart does not grow as expected and requires a series of three surgeries to repair) in utero at his 20-week ultrasound. CHOP truly saved his life as he came into the world limp and lifeless. The first few days were touch and go as he was put in a hypothermic state to preserve brain function, but he was able to get his first surgery at a week old that would buy him more time before needing his first open heart surgery.

The next several months were spent back and forth to CHOP for months at a time as we tried to figure out why Dustin was struggling in almost every aspect of his life: sleeping, eating, and breathing. Dad had to stop working to be able to care for Dustin as well as his big sister Adelyn, who was 3 at the time, while mom continued to work full-time. Dustin was diagnosed with sleep apnea and was put on CPAP overnight, required supplemental oxygen during the day, and had surgery to get a G-J tube placed so we could safely feed him past his stomach to reduce his risk for aspiration. During this time, we also got answers from his genetic testing that put all these different diagnoses together into a bigger picture: a chromosomal deletion referred to as Kleefstra Syndrome.

At the end of October, at just 6 months old, Dustin had his first open heart surgery. It was a very long journey to recovery with several setbacks along the way including a clot in his pulmonary artery. Just as we thought we were on a road to be home for the holidays, Dustin's health started deteriorating again which resulted in several "code blue" alarms over the course of a week. This effectively pushed up the timeline for his second open heart surgery in January 2024. His recovery was once again long and slow, but he finally came home a week after his first birthday in April 2024!

Since being home, Dustin still has a lot of hurdles to overcome but he is showing us that anything is possible. Despite still being hooked up to a feed pump 20 hours a day, having to sleep with a pesky CPAP mask every night and constantly having to be poked by doctors for follow-ups, he is as happy as can be and is always smiling. He has taken some huge strides developmentally this past year and has started to roll over and even army crawl a few inches to get what he wants. And while he can't communicate verbally, he finds ways to show us what he wants and is always making us laugh.

We are anticipating that Dustin will need his third open heart surgery later this year which will require our family to relocate to Philadelphia once again so we can be by his side as he recovers. We are so appreciative and honored to be given this opportunity to be sponsored by the Shannon Daley Foundation. This is an absolutely amazing organization!