



HEALTH & WELLNESS / LIFESTYLE

Through the Eyes of a Child

LUCY'S LOVE BUS FOUNDED BY 12-YEAR-OLD TO PROMOTE INTEGRATIVE CARE

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Once upon a time there was a girl name Lucy. Lucy had cancer, but she had a heart filled with love and compassion. Please come along to hear this story of an amazing child, her tenacity and her dream to help other children. Let us introduce you to Lucy's Love Bus through her mother, the Executive Director of Lucy's dream come true, Beecher Grogan.

Tell us a little about Lucy, your inspiration for this non-profit organization?

BG: Lucy was my outrageously funny, spunky, and compassionate daughter. She was an old soul and taught me everything I know about the importance of comfort and quality of life for children facing life-threatening illness. Lucy was diagnosed with the adult form of Leukemia (AML) when she was 8 years old. She underwent 11 grueling months of chemotherapy, then experienced 18 tough months in recovery and remission. The cancer came back when Lucy was 10 so she had to have a bone marrow transplant from an unrelated donor. The last 18 months of Lucy's life were filled with intense suffering from the side effects of chemo, total body radiation, and a chronic case of Graft Versus Host Disease.



Lucy Grogan

Lucy had always enjoyed integrative therapies. During the last months of her life, she depended on acupuncture, massage and Reiki to help ease her excruciating pain and anxiety. Lucy founded Lucy's Love Bus from her hospital bed, six months before she died at age 12. She was horrified to learn that most integrative therapies are not covered by medical insurance and made it her personal mission to ensure that all childhood cancer patients could access to the healing properties of integrative therapies. Lucy's vision guides us in everything we do at Lucy's Love Bus, and we have a wonderful Board of Directors that is committed to staying true to Lucy's original mission for her organization.

What kind of services does Lucy's Love Bus provide to children with cancer?

BG: We provide funding for and referrals to the very best integrative therapy resources available for children with cancer, all over the United States. Lucy had a very broad definition of integrative therapies and wanted to provide "anything that helps and does not hurt." Some of the most commonly requested integrative therapies that we fund are acupuncture, massage, *Qi gong*, Reiki, yoga, swimming, meditation, therapeutic horseback riding, art/music therapy, and dance/gymnastics, among many other possibilities. We consider integrative therapies to be activities and therapies that help sick children feel good physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, providing them with comfort and quality of life during and after treatment.

Who can qualify for Lucy's Love Bus services?

BG: Anyone who was diagnosed with cancer between the ages of birth and 21 years is eligible to apply

for funds through Lucy's Love Bus. Our funds are available for those currently undergoing treatment for cancer, as well as those suffering from the late effects of treatment. We have a national footprint and have funded children in 24 states.

What are the kinds of benefits you have seen from children receiving acupuncture services?

BG: Our children and their caregivers have consistently reported very positive results through acupuncture, including decreases in fear, anxiety levels, pain, nausea, constipation, and sleeplessness. Many of our children have reported an increased appetite, energy level and an improvement in their overall sense of wellbeing. Parents are often hesitant to introduce the idea of acupuncture to their children, but we always encourage families to try it, based on the wonderful results other families have experienced. We suggest that children begin with acupressure, then transition to acupuncture after having the chance to see it performed on someone else. This is how I got Lucy to try acupuncture when she was 8. I had her look into my eyes while the needles were being placed on my hands. She saw that I didn't flinch and then she was willing to try it. Lucy loved acupuncture and found great relief from many of her most debilitating side effects.

Where does the grant money come from to provide such services?

BG: Only a portion of our funding comes from grant money, and we are always looking for grant foundations that care about the quality of life for children with cancer. Most of our funding is raised through our events, corporate sponsorships and our monthly donor program called "Lucy's Love Corps."

How far reaching are your programs?

BG: Lucy's Love Bus has worked with over 185 children in 24 states.

As of now, how many practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental medicine volunteer their services?

BG: We pay all of our partnering practitioners for their services. We strive to validate the importance of integrative therapies in improving the quality of life for children with cancer, so we pay our practitioners for their services. If practitioners would like to contribute to us in other ways, we would gratefully accept donations or practitioners can donate their services to the parents/siblings of the children they are seeing through Lucy's Love Bus. We currently have 21 practitioners of acupuncture and Oriental medicine who work with Lucy's Love Bus as partnering practitioners.

How can practitioners reading this piece get involved and help and how can someone outside of Massachusetts start a local state chapter?

BG: We don't have local chapters, but plan to develop regional chapters over time. NCCAOM Diplomates are welcome to go to our website and complete the paperwork under the 'Forms' tab to become a partnering practitioner, and we will add them to our database. Because we have such a large number of practitioners who want to get involved, practitioners often have to wait quite awhile for us to connect them with a patient. We try to connect the child with one of our existing partners when possible, then look at adding new practitioners in their area if need be.

Another great way for anyone to get involved with Lucy's Love Bus is to become a member of Lucy's Love Corps, our monthly donor program that sustains our mission and ensures we can provide services

to the overwhelming number of children who need and deserve our support. For \$15 per month, interested practitioners can make a profound impact on the world's most vulnerable children.

For more information on Lucy's Love Bus visit www.lucyslovebus.org.

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