
Sending Hope. Sharing Christ. One Care Package at a Time.

A cancer diagnosis was the last thing Concordia University student Phil Zielke expected to receive at the age of 22. But he did. Stage 4 Hodgkin's Lymphoma. And not just once, but twice.

By God's grace, Phil survived and, now at age 43, is cancer free, married to his lovely wife Carrie, and is the father of two young sons, Hudson and Graham.

Phil founded Phil's Friends in 2006, inspired by a thoughtfully curated care package he'd received during his cancer treatments. That care package meant the world to Phil, and he wanted to pay it forward.

The nonprofit began in the basement of Phil and Carrie's townhome, with three mom-volunteers assembling the care packages. Each care package contained items a cancer patient could use during their hospital stays and treatments: lotion, a toothbrush and toothpaste, playing cards, a puzzle book, a water bottle, a journal, a fleece blanket, a knitted hat, socks, a stuffed animal (for children).

Most importantly, though, Phil was uncompromising in that each care packages must contain a spiritual element above all else, and so each recipient got a Gospel letter and a Bible, the only true source of hope and salvation.

That first year, the tiny ministry sent 100 care packages.

Eighteen years later, Phil's Friends sends on average 250 care packages and 8,000-plus Cards of Hope *a month*, totally close to 60,000 care packages and more than one million Cards of Hope sent to cancer patients across the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.

These small gestures of Christ-like love and hope cannot be underestimated. Their impact has been tremendous in the lives of the recipients. Almost daily, we receive messages of gratitude about how much a care package or Card of Hope meant to them.

"Thank you so much for the care package that was sent to me. Your kindness, thoughtfulness, and prayers are much appreciated. May God bless you all," wrote one recipient.

Our care packages and Cards of Hope are sent free of charge. It is our way of serving those who are sick and suffering, and of bringing the love, compassion, and hope of Jesus Christ into their lives.

Because we are a nonprofit, we rely heavily on donations—both in-kind and monetary—to offset the costs of purchasing supplies and postage. It costs \$150 to support a cancer patient for one year with a care package and 12 Cards of Hope.

We are also blessed to have volunteers—thousands every year from schools, churches (many of them Lutheran), corporations, and civic organizations—lend their time and talents to decorating boxes, coloring Cards of Hope, assembling the care packages, and praying.

To that end, we invite churches and schools to join us in our mission of providing Christ-like support, hope, and love to cancer patients. We offer a variety of ways to do so, large and small.

- **Host a Pack Event:** These are fun and engaging events that can bring your community and congregation together, to assemble care packages with a variety of items that cancer patients can use.
- **Color Cards of Hope:** These can be downloaded directly from our website and colored by children in classrooms, Sunday School, or during VBS. Even adults love this fun and therapeutic pastime!
- **Tie fleece blankets:** These take a bit more time and are great for a rainy afternoon project at your church or school.
- **Collect Care Package Items:** This is a great opportunity for adults and children to bring items to church or school during Missions Week or as a special outreach project.
- **Join our Prayer Team:** We are always in need of prayer warriors who will lift the sick and suffering up to the Lord with petitions and supplications.
- **Contribute monetarily:** Ninety-one cents of every dollar donated goes to supporting cancer patients. Every penny makes an impact!

For more information about how you can get involved, please visit our website at philsfriends.org, or contact us directly at info@philsfriends.org.

Thank you very much, and God bless!

The Phil's Friends Team