

NOISE

MAKING

Written by Julie Jacobs
Photography courtesy of Malcolm Sutherland-Foggio

After surviving childhood cancer, Malcolm Sutherland-Foggio created his own foundation to help fund research.

On a sunny afternoon, it's "move back in" day at the Parsippany, New Jersey, headquarters of the Make Some Noise: Cure Kids Cancer Foundation, following renovations to the building that houses the organization. The office suite is decorated in hues of purple and gold—purple as a combination of pink for girls and blue for boys, and gold for the color of pediatric cancer. Photo collages of kids who have battled cancer line the walls and a large yellow plastic crayon stands upright in the reception area, where even the chairs are purple.

While materials are being organized and stored, Make Some Noise founder Malcolm Sutherland-Foggio—dressed casually in a red jacket, khaki pants, and sneakers—extends an invitation into his office, adorned with framed news clippings documenting the foundation's history and accomplishments to date. The 20-year-old University of Rochester sophomore was diagnosed with pediatric cancer at age 10 and founded Make Some Noise a year later.

"People are now more aware that childhood cancer exists, which is something that I couldn't really say in 2009," says Sutherland-Foggio.

Still, he points out that standard treatment protocols for pediatric cancer have not changed in upward of 40 years and are based on chemotherapy drugs developed back in the 1960s and 1970s. "It's embarrassing," he laments. "They got survivor rates up, but at what costs?"

"At the same time," he adds, "we've seen huge advancements in things like immunotherapy and nanotechnology, in terms of delivering chemo more precisely to the tumor."

According to Sutherland-Foggio, when he was undergoing treatment, only 3 percent of cancer research funding was allocated to pediatric cancer. While that figure has risen to 4 percent, overall cancer funding has decreased, and with many different types of pediatric cancer in need of research support, there are too few dollars to go around.

"There's really not much funding, which was a big annoyance for me, and why I wanted to do something to increase that funding," he says.

Realizing that objective was rooted in Sutherland-Foggio's innate determinedness. The youngest of three boys, he was an assertive child, according to his mother, Julie Sutherland, who serves as Make Some Noise's president and CEO. She jokes that he appointed himself "king" at age two.

It was a decade ago when Sutherland-Foggio began experiencing hip pain, but the discomfort always subsided with over-the-counter medication, and he remained active until he collapsed during soccer practice six months later. An orthopedist diagnosed him with a broken growth plate in his hip, initially unaware that a large tumor was the culprit behind the break. An MRI eventually revealed the mass, and Sutherland-Foggio and his family learned he



Sutherland-Foggio at his high school graduation in May 2016

had Ewing sarcoma, a highly aggressive malignant bone tumor. Fourteen rounds of chemotherapy and surgery to remove his hip at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) followed, as did his decision to advocate for childhood cancer.

Sutherland-Foggio remembers that epiphanous moment well. An inpatient at CHOP, he was getting ready for bed as the unit was settling into the evening hours. "It gets really quiet and you can hear pretty much everything," he says. "Suddenly there was a break in the silence and it was a crash and the scream of a mother. On the oncology floor, that really only happens for one thing." He later found out that a three-year-old named Michael had passed away from cancer.

"What bothered me is that nobody knew. The world didn't stop to honor and remember Michael. Even people on the same oncology floor did not know that Michael had passed. It didn't make the news. It didn't cause companies to rethink corporate giving or anything like that. And yet when a child dies of salmonella poisoning in Minnesota, everyone loses their minds," says Sutherland-Foggio. "There's a disconnect there, I think."

That night, he and his mother bought the domain name makesomenoise4kids.org (the moniker stems from Sutherland-Foggio's wish to have music be an integral part of all the foundation's events; he plays the guitar). Once his treatment was finished, they hit the ground running.

"When he told me he needed to incorporate, he told me he needed me to find a board, and I wondered, 'How does a 10-year-old know that?' He told me he needed to do cause-related marketing and he had to hit the national talk circuit," recalls Sutherland, still clearly amazed. "As far as I knew, he'd only watched Nickelodeon and PBS in his whole life, so I don't know where it came from.

“He’s very good at delegating,” she adds with a laugh.

By that point, Sutherland-Foggio had already raised money through a blog he started, malcolmspage.net, where he shared his experience with cancer and site visitors could purchase wristbands to support research (the bands are still available through the foundation). “We raised around \$13,000 in a few months and I was like, ‘This is what I can do without [really] trying. What can I do if I do try?’”

While he admits to having no idea what he was doing at the outset, he knew this: “People who have been affected by pediatric cancer are more likely to be involved in helping with fundraising and things like that. They have a vested interest in improving the landscape of childhood cancer.”

That said, Make Some Noise’s board of trustees is made up predominantly of parents of a child with cancer, including Sutherland-Foggio’s father, Robert. They are what Sutherland-Foggio calls the “doers,” those individuals who are on the ground and “get their hands dirty, so to speak.”

He also looked to his mother for guidance. “Growing up, my mom was always involved in some sort of fundraiser, whether it was for the school or some charity that she was working with at the time, so I was exposed to [giving back] a lot,” he says. “In our family, we have this drive to always be doing the best we can for other people.”

With pluck and persistence, Sutherland-Foggio incorporated Make Some Noise in 2009. Since then, he has helped other kids with cancer by raising awareness as well as by meeting his objective to “increase that funding”—\$2 million to date for critical translational research to find a cure for childhood cancers.

He stresses that the foundation tries to fund non-chemotherapy studies “because chemo sucks,” and directs dollars to hospitals based on their particular strengths in pediatric cancer research



Sutherland-Foggio playing with Billy Nemecek and Tim Clement from the Blue Vipers of Brooklyn at the 7th Annual Noise Night Gala.

and treatment. (Make Some Noise’s research committee assists in determining allocations.) Recipients of the private funding secured by the foundation—which has supported investigations into immunotherapy, oncolytic viruses, and the identification of trigger genes—include Harvard University’s Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Seattle Children’s Research Institute, Baylor University’s Texas Children’s Cancer Center, Children’s Medical Center of Dallas, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Weill Cornell Medicine, Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, Huntsman Cancer Institute, and CHOP.

Sutherland-Foggio makes a point to meet with the researchers at these facilities. He also visits the foundation’s grassroots chapters, currently in Colorado, Washington, and New York, with more to come. And he is integrally involved in the various activities that help Make Some Noise raise awareness about pediatric cancer and money for research. While the foundation relies in part on grassroots events at schools, churches, and the like, as well as donor gifts, it holds its own annual fundraiser walk/run called Heroes for Kids Cancer at Giralda Farms in Madison, New Jersey.

What remains perhaps its most notable project—and Sutherland-Foggio’s favorite—is its National Angel Quilt for Childhood Cancer. Featuring images of children who have lost the fight along with their names and ages, the tribute quilt has been touring the country since September 2011, visiting 20 states and the District of Columbia, garnering extensive press. It is so large that it is rolled up, stored, and transported in a snowboard bag, which



Judy Hsu and Sutherland-Foggio on the National Angel Quilt tour.

Sutherland-Foggio pulls out into the middle of the reception area. He unzips the bag and opens the plastic wrapping protecting the quilt to provide a peek at the 300 yellow and gold squares framing photos and family messages. That figure is destined to grow until a cure is found.

“It’s an amazingly powerful quilt. It’s something that is beautiful and informative,” says Sutherland-Foggio, who has taken the quilt to malls, universities, and even capitol buildings. “It’s just really great to be able to share the stories of all these kids, and to show the country that it’s not just numbers on a piece of paper that we’re losing. It’s real kids who could have been doctors, teachers, musicians, scientists, leaders. They could have changed the world.”

The foundation has reach beyond its own doors and has become known in wider circles. In 2016, Make Some Noise participated in a research conference put on by the Coalition Against Childhood Cancer, a national pediatric cancer collaborative network of which the organization is a founding member. The event was held at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, an institution at the forefront of research and education in molecular biology and genetics. The conference brought together pediatric cancer advocates, funders, researchers, and clinicians, as well as representatives from governmental agencies and the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries to examine emerging technologies, drug development, and treatment protocols.

Sutherland-Foggio shows no signs of slowing down in his perseverance to help bring an end to childhood cancer. In support of this mission, thus far, he has traveled more than 55,000 miles, attended more than 110 fundraisers and meetings, and given well

over 100 interviews and speeches. At the University of Rochester, he spends his hours between classes, papers, and exams seeing to the foundation and is looking to launch a Make Some Noise campus-based club. Academically, he is pursuing a double major in business and psychology, with plans to work full time with the foundation after he graduates. He is also considering becoming a cancer researcher.

Although he does not seek accolades, Sutherland-Foggio’s efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2016, he received two honors: He was named the first Outstanding Young Fundraiser by the New Jersey chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and voted Volunteer of the Year by *NJBIZ*’s Healthcare Heroes Awards program. Make Some Noise has also earned praise, touted as a top-rated nonprofit on GreatNonprofits.org and a Gold participant on GuideStar.org.

“It’s an honor to be recognized the way that I have been for the work of the foundation,” he remarks. “These kinds of awards are helpful in getting our name out there and making people aware of the issue. Because without people knowing about childhood cancer, we’re not going to raise the money.

“I’m one of thousands and millions of children who have fought childhood cancer,” continues Sutherland-Foggio, who has been in remission for eight years and returns to CHOP for annual checkups. “Any one of them could have done the same thing...I’m lucky enough to have been given the resources that I have to make this foundation, to raise money for pediatric cancer in an effective way, and to have a real impact on the future of childhood cancer research.” **LM**