



*Ella's Umbrella*  
**IMPACT REPORT**

Brighter Futures for Heart Kids

2025

**Keeping kids' hearts beating through** *discovery*  
*innovation and connection.*

# LETTER FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends and Supporters,

How do we begin to thank you for all your support in 2025? It is hard to believe how much ground we have covered in such a short amount of time. What started as a grassroots movement has become something much bigger, and you are part of that.

We began the year with the launch of *Threads of Gold: Stories of Hope for Hurting Hearts*, an international bestselling anthology featuring 26 stories of loss, hope, and resilience. It was a beautiful reminder that connection can bring light, even in the darkest seasons.

We also became more intentional about how we communicate with our community, establishing a rhythm of two emails per month to help people better understand the heart of our work. We focused on fewer, more impactful events, which gave us space to invest more deeply in our mission and pursue new partnerships with organizations like The Children's Heart Foundation and Parent Heart Watch.

Most importantly, we continued seeing real waves from your generosity. The XMR Suite at St. Louis Children's Hospital is now fully funded, and Ella's Umbrella was honored to help move that project forward after our 2024 gift was matched twice, turning \$20,000 into \$60,000. We supported pediatric cardiology projects through the 3D Print Lab, helped families access genetic heart screenings, and continued building partnerships around promising heart technologies like IntelliStent and Ventripoint.

This year, we also welcomed two new board members, broadening our perspective, insight, and capacity as we continue growing with care and intention.

Thank you for locking arms with us and helping us fight for heart kids!

With Heartfelt Gratitude,  
**Ella's Umbrella Board of Directors**

# BOARD MEMBERS



Betty Mertens, *Co-Founder & President*



Kyle Mertens, *Co-Founder & Treasurer*



Pamela Kraus, *Vice President*



\*Grant Epstein, *Secretary*



Lynn Mertens



Michael Mertens



\*Rodney Shrum

*\*New Board Members*

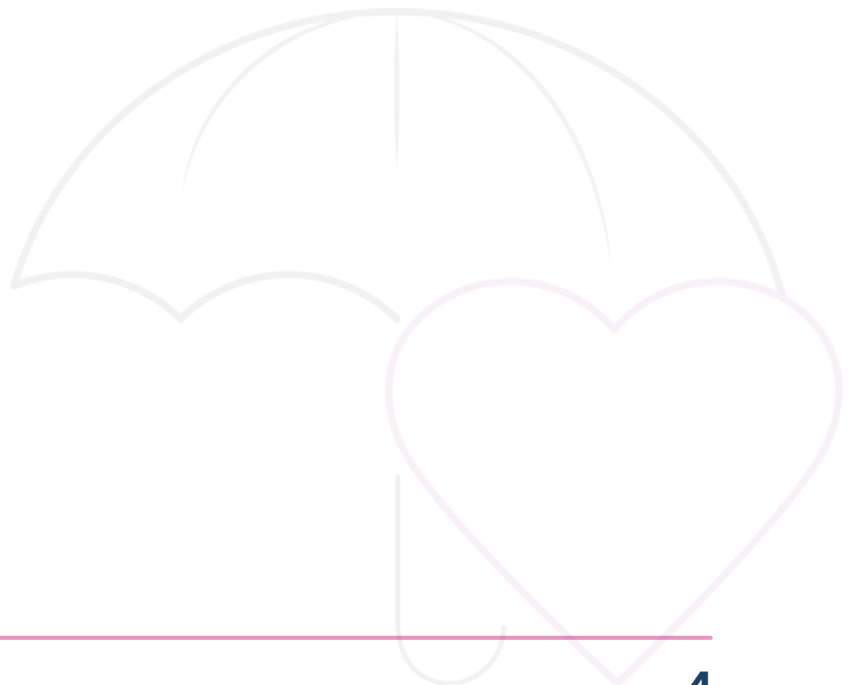


*Table*

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# OF CONTENTS

<b>ABOUT US</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>OUR WHY</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>OUR WORK</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>OUR RESOURCES</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>OUR EVENTS</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>OUR SPONSORS</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>OUR VOLUNTEERS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>OUR PARTNERS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LOOKING AHEAD</b>	<b>14</b>



# About US

## ELLA'S STORY

In 2017, Ella Mertens' life was cut short at 13 months by an undiagnosed heart defect. With better research and treatment options, her life might have been saved. We can't change what happened to her, but we can keep it from happening to other kids. No parent should know the pain of losing a child.



## OUR TIMELINE



# Our WHY

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Nearly **1 in 100** babies in the US are born with Congenital Heart Defects (CHD).



CHDs are the **leading** cause of birth defect-related infant deaths.



Research funding for CHDs is **limited** compared to other childhood conditions.

*According to CDC and Children's Heart Foundation*

## OUR MISSION

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To fund pioneering heart research and technology, while protecting and supporting families with inspiration and resources.

## OUR PURPOSE

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To keep kids' hearts beating.

## WHAT WE DO

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DISCOVERY



INNOVATION



CONNECTION

# Our WORK



## DISCOVERY

We advance awareness, research, and early detection so more children can get answers sooner and families can move forward with greater clarity and hope.

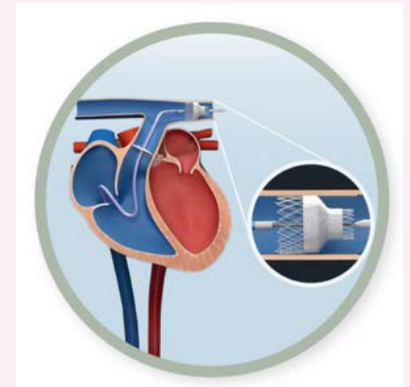


*Improving imaging with STL  
Children's Hospital Cardiologists*



## INNOVATION

We champion tools, technology, and equipment that advance pediatric heart care, helping bring safer and more effective solutions to the children and hospitals that need them most.

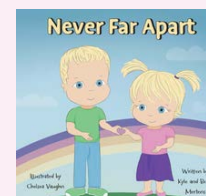
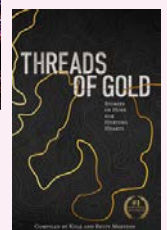


*Supporting Intellistent, a life-saving device for children like Ella*



## CONNECTION

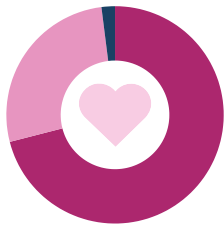
We create meaningful connection and compassionate support for grieving individuals and families through stories, resources, and community, helping turn heartbreak into action.



# Our RESOURCES

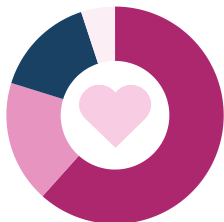


## TOTAL REVENUES AND SUPPORT



71% Event Income  
27% Non-Event Donations  
2% Merchandise Sales

## TOTAL EXPENSES



61% Funding Distributed  
18% Fundraising Expenses  
15% Admin Expenses  
5% Resources Distributed

## REVENUE

Event Income	\$29,824
Non-Event Donations	\$11,670
Merchandise Sales	\$944
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$42,438</b>

## EXPENSES

Funding Distributed	\$28,702
Fundraising Expenses	\$8,430
Admin Expenses	\$7,178
Resources Distributed	\$2,484
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$46,795</b>

<b>Total YE Net Change</b>	<b>-\$4,357</b>
Net Assets Dec '23	\$14,193
<b>Net Assets Dec '24</b>	<b>\$9,836</b>

# Our EVENTS

## ELLA'S TRIVIA NIGHT

In April, we hosted our 6th Annual Trivia Night at the beautiful Post Building in downtown St. Louis. The event raised over \$21,600 toward our mission to keep kids' hearts beating, and we were honored to have News Channel 5 join us to help share Ella's Umbrella with the wider community.



## ELLA'S UMBRELLA 5K

In August, we hosted our second annual 5K to raise money for advancing heart technology. Even with the summer heat making things extra "memorable," our community showed up in a big way. We doubled both our number of runners and the amount raised from our first year, helping move life-saving heart technology closer to kids who need it.



# Our EVENTS

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## WINE & WHISKEY NIGHT

This year, we added whiskey to our annual soirée, and our community was clearly on board. Attendance doubled from the prior year, and together we raised \$5,000 to support pediatric heart technology advancements. Thanks to a full match from the Ollie Hinkle Heart Foundation, the total impact grew to \$10,000.



## IN THE PRESS

This year brought many new opportunities to share Ella's story and grow awareness for the work of Ella's Umbrella. KSDK did a feature on Ella around her birthday, and we were grateful for several invitations to speak at events and share our mission through podcasts and radio interviews. You can view or listen to these features at:

[ellasumbrella.org/press](https://ellasumbrella.org/press)



# Thank YOU

We are deeply grateful for all our 2025 sponsors and donors. We could not do what we do without your support!

For a complete list of donors or to get involved for 2025, visit: [EllasUmbrella.org](https://EllasUmbrella.org)

## 2025 SPONSORS

1st Phorm  
Alex Hoffmann  
Alison & Andrew Wright  
Ally Vasquez  
April's Tax Service Inc.  
Bank of Washington  
Barb Lenger  
Barrels Taphouse Bar & Grill  
Beth Petric  
Blooming With Joy  
Breakthru Beverage  
Brian Albers  
Brown and Croupon  
Bubble Bus  
Byrne & Jones  
Casey Jones Distillery  
Chicken N Pickle  
Christina White Salon  
Circle of Marketing  
Colleen Lawler  
Compass Realty  
Coopers Hawk  
Dance Pizazz  
Das Bevo

Dave Luxten  
Embroider the Occasion  
Fabletics  
Fresh Thyme Market  
Friendship Brewing Company  
Gary and Laverne Brittan  
Harper's Daycare  
Hawkins Construction  
Jack Gamby  
Jeri Sewell  
Jimmy's Auto  
Jon Zemann  
Kendra Scott  
Kind Soap  
Mid Rivers Music  
MFO Inc.  
Mira Smart Conferencing  
MirrorMe  
Nidec Motor Corporation  
Nothing Bundt Cakes, St. Peters  
OG Cares  
OG Hospitality Group  
Olive & Oak  
Painter Plus

Patriot Machine, Inc  
PRIMETIME  
Purina  
R Medical Spa at Renaissance  
Plastic Surgery  
Rediscover Community  
Ministries  
St. Louis Cardinals  
St. Louis Children's Hospital  
Saint Louligans  
Stacy Lenger  
Stages St. Louis  
The Crafty Chameleon  
The Crecelius Family  
The Edge Fitness Clubs  
The Ellenor  
The Epsteins  
The Hermann Family  
The Magic House  
Third Wheel Brewing  
TIN/ Sue Neumann  
Total Wine and More  
Trader Joe's (Chesterfield)  
Yoga Six

# Our VOLUNTEERS



**We don't have paid staff, so 100% of the work we do is accomplished through the work of incredibly generous volunteers!**

## 2025 VOLUNTEERS

Abigail Beasley  
Bryan Carr  
Nikki Clark  
Scott Connell  
Jason Crecilius  
Caden DeSandro  
Tom DeYoung  
Nathalie Donderis  
Grant Epstein  
Kim Epstein  
Lynda Ervin  
Jamie Fodrini  
Brad Kay  
Al Kraus  
Glen Kraus  
Pamela Kraus  
Sophia Luraschi  
April Mertens  
Betty Mertens  
Chris Mertens

Don Mertens  
Kyle Mertens  
Layne Mertens  
Lynn Mertens  
Mike Mertens  
Ryder Mertens  
John Moenster  
Holly Murray  
Katy Nesslebush  
Kyle Nesslebush  
Josh Newman  
Maya Newman  
John Pettis  
Kelly Pettis  
Greyson Pippin  
Kelly Pippin  
Lois Pippin  
Michael Pippin  
Jen Rieger  
Rebecca Sabogal

Brianna Schnardthorst  
Katerina Schnardthorst  
Rodney Shrum  
Victoria Songer  
Jenn Steward  
Bacardy Taylor  
Haylee Teklinski  
McKenzie Telthorst  
Ally Vasquez  
Melissa Wallis  
Paul Wallis  
Dr. Chris Weilandich  
Colt Williams  
Ali Wright  
Andrew Wright  
Charlotte Wright  
Kris Wright  
Lindsay Wright  
Nora Wright

# Our PARTNERS

We are all better when we work together. It is our honor to collaborate with these amazing nonprofit partners to help accomplish our mission.

## 2025 PARTNERS



Working Session with OHHF & Jovie's Joy



### **Expand Advocacy for Heart Kids**

We will continue raising awareness and advocating for better research, earlier detection, and stronger support for children and families impacted by heart conditions.



### **Increase Access to Early Detection**

We are exploring new ways to help identify heart conditions sooner, giving more children the chance to receive answers, care, and support before a crisis occurs.



### **Grow Connection and Healing**

We will keep creating spaces for people experiencing grief to feel seen, supported, and connected, while continuing to share stories that turn heartbreak into hope.



### **Strengthen Long-Term Sustainability**

We are focused on growing our reach, deepening donor relationships, and building more diverse funding opportunities so Ella's Umbrella can continue making a meaningful impact for years to come.

Stay informed at [www.ellasumbrella.org](http://www.ellasumbrella.org).



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The *good* of having something special  
far *outweighs* the pain of losing it.

