



PROJECT  
sunshine

**2024  
IMPACT REPORT**

# Dear Friends,

At Project Sunshine, we focus on creating lasting change for children with medical needs through play and connection. We partner with 566 hospitals and organizations, and work with over 18,000 volunteers to deliver healing play to children and families in 48 U.S. states and three international sites.

This report highlights our program model, growing needs, core purpose, research-based outcomes, and stories of impact. It also covers challenges we're addressing, proposed solutions, and how we're ensuring our programs are effective and impactful.

Reflecting on the past year, we've advanced in many exciting ways, including bringing play to our largest number of children to date, launching a new platform, Sunshine Central, to support our volunteer corps, and expanding our programs with national disease-specific non-profits. We're grateful for the partnership of our donors, volunteers, medical facilities, nonprofit organizations, and board. Together, we're making a meaningful difference in the lives of hospitalized children. Thank you for your continued support as we grow and bring more joy through play.

Gratefully,

*Whitney Namm Pollack*

Whitney Namm Pollack  
CEO



# Why We Do What We Do

Millions of children in the U.S. face serious medical challenges, with 20% requiring ongoing care. Every year, 1.3 million children are hospitalized, and 15 million kids aged 6-17 live with chronic illnesses—missing nearly a month of school per hospitalization. Beyond the physical toll, these children often experience stress, isolation, and a world centered around medical treatments.

## 1 IN 7 CHILDREN SUFFER FROM A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION



The mental health crisis among youth has become a national emergency, and 1 in 7 children worldwide are affected by mental health issues. Children with chronic conditions are more than twice as likely to struggle with anxiety and depression. In 2023, the American Pediatric Society highlighted the urgent need for mental health support for these children, underscoring why we do what we do—to provide comfort, connection, and healing to kids with medical needs.

**1.3 million**   
children are hospitalized annually

**15 million**  
children aged 6-17 live with chronic illness

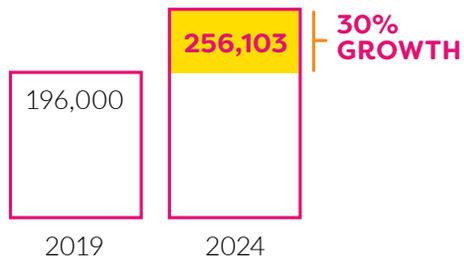
**29**  **school days**  
on average are missed per hospitalization,  
for children with chronic conditions



# Play is healing

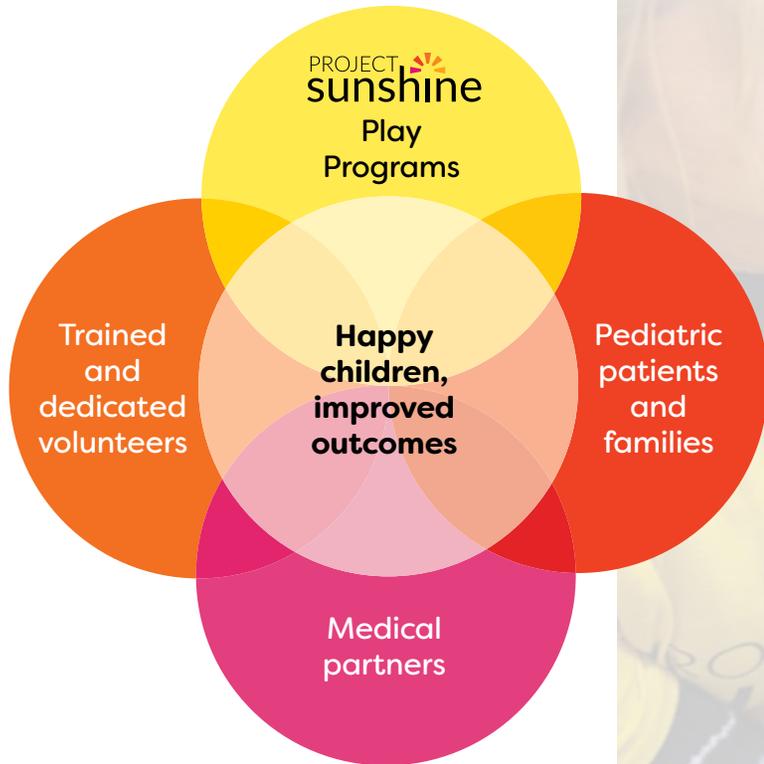
Modern life has cut back on kids' playtime, which affects how they learn, grow, and adjust to new situations. Play isn't just fun—it's a powerful way for children to build essential skills and cope with difficult situations. When kids explore and engage in play, they develop problem-solving abilities, creativity, and confidence. Guided activities that spark curiosity and conversation help children express themselves and learn. Play strengthens everything from coordination and communication to self-control, social skills, and resilience. In short, play is more than just fun—it's a key part of growing up happy and healthy.

## TOTAL PATIENTS AND FAMILIES REACHED BY PROJECT SUNSHINE



# Mission

To deliver the healing power of play to children with medical needs through trained and dedicated volunteers.



# Reach

-  **256,103** patients and families reached
-  **18,100** volunteers mobilized
-  **29,197** volunteer hours served
-  **566** hospital & nonprofit partners engaged



# **How do we help hospitalized, sick children overcome feelings of isolation, anxiety, and stress?**

We know that play helps children relax, be creative, and heal.

Project Sunshine brings play-based programming to medical facilities through trained and dedicated volunteers.

# Here To Play

Volunteers facilitate arts and crafts activities with patients in-person at hospitals and clinics. Here to Play helps children reduce stress and sparks socialization, creativity, intellectual growth, and sensory integration during medical stays.

**85,128** patients and families reached

**115** medical facility partners

**3,765** Here to Play volunteers



# Kits for Play

Project Sunshine's activity kits provide children with safe, creative play that aids in physical and emotional healing. Volunteers prepare individualized kits with developmentally appropriate activities and send them to hospitals to distribute to pediatric patients. Designed by child life specialists, these kits alleviate boredom, stimulate imagination, and foster a sense of connectedness.

**170,265** patients and families reached

**449** medical facility partners

**6,393** corporate volunteers



# Kits for Play Success Story



“ My daughter, who has been diagnosed with Arthrogryposis\* and has little to no movement in her arms, is obsessed with the animal hand puppets this organization has donated to Arkansas Children's Northwest Hospital.

She is 8 months old and we have watched her have little to no interest in toys because of her lack of movement in her arms. I saw the Project Sunshine yellow bags in the cart outside her clinic and picked two up, not knowing what was inside and boy am I so happy I did! She has lit up every time she sees them. We sing, play silly games and talk with them. My family and I are so grateful for these puppets. It has given us a new way to interact with her.”

- Ava, Mother

# **How do we provide children with play experiences after discharge or while managing chronic illness outside of hospital settings?**

With TelePlay, Project Sunshine can deliver play both in and out of hospital environments, and connect pediatric families nationwide.

# TelePlay

Project Sunshine's virtual program, TelePlay, offers live play experiences through HIPAA-compliant video conferencing. Volunteers engage children in developmentally appropriate games and activities, and the flexible platform allows us to serve a wider population, including patients living with chronic and rare conditions or residing in rural communities.

**710** patients and families reached

**22** medical facility and non-profit partners

**262** TelePlay volunteers

## KEY IMPACT OF TELEPLAY

 **Reducing Isolation:** Helps children with medical needs and chronic illnesses build peer connections.

 **Proven Benefits:** Over 80% of participants report reduced anxiety.

 **Growing Reach:** Engaged 50 hospitals since 2020.

The landscape of pediatric care is shifting to outpatient care. Telehealth services and outpatient clinics are becoming popular options for patients managing chronic conditions.

## KEY TRENDS IN OUTPATIENT PEDIATRIC CARE:

 **Subspecialty Care:** More children are receiving outpatient pediatric subspecialty care.

 **Telehealth Growth:** Remote consultations improve access and chronic care management.

 **Chronic Conditions:** Outpatient clinics offer convenient non-emergency care for a growing number of patients with chronic health conditions.

In the coming years, Project Sunshine intends to invest in TelePlay, enhance the patient experience, and create a smoother transition from hospital to home play.



# TelePlay Success Story



“ [This partnership with Project Sunshine] creates a safe space where kids can be silly, laugh, and connect through games and conversations that make even heavy topics feel lighter. Whether it's Art Mad Libs or Movie Mojis, these moments of fun help break down barriers - inviting kids to share their stories, support one another, and use laughter as a form of healing.”

– Rachel Lee, volunteer, Project Sunshine  
and Crohn's and Colitis Foundation

**Medical facilities offer clinical solutions, but often lack resources for play-based programming. How do we help medical facilities integrate play into patient care?**

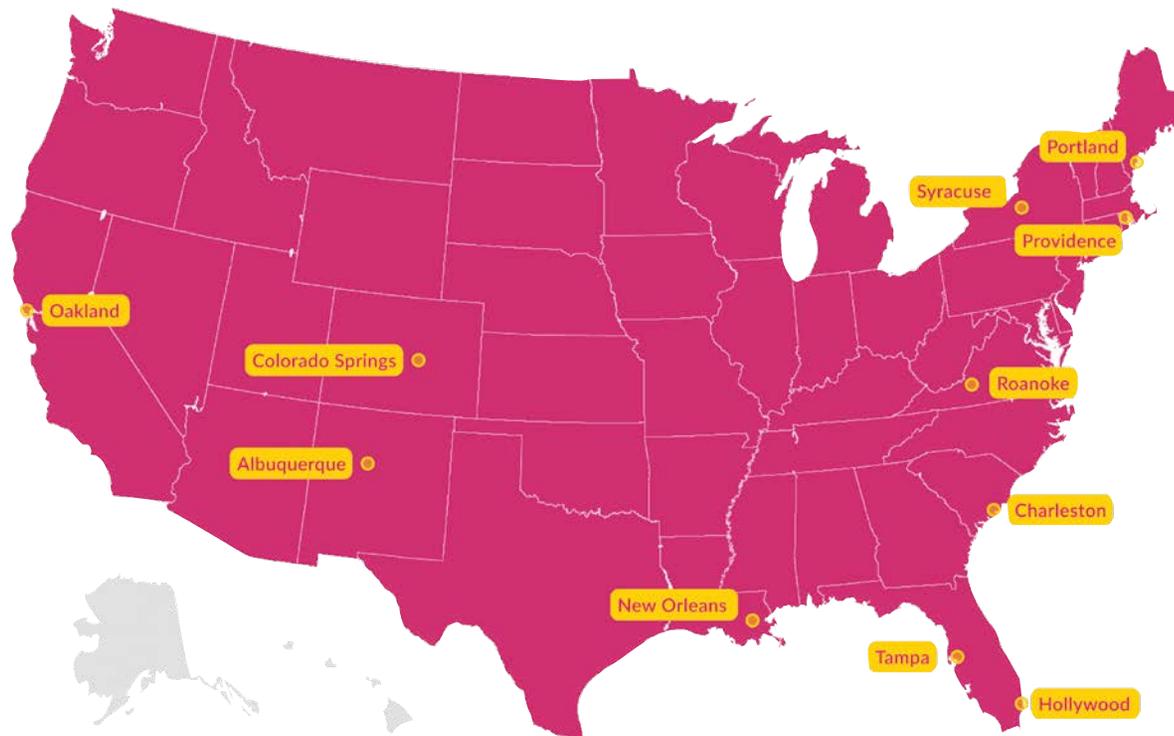
Project Sunshine acts as an intermediary, providing free arts and crafts materials and volunteers to support play-based programming.

# Our medical partners include



## EXPANSION OF VOLUNTEER CHAPTERS

Project Sunshine operates in 48 out of 50 states and we launched 11 new volunteer chapters in 2024 to support our medical partners (seen in yellow).

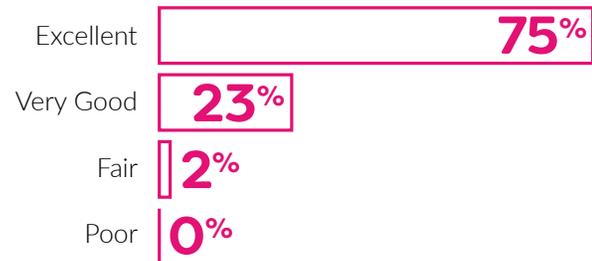


# Medical Partner Satisfaction

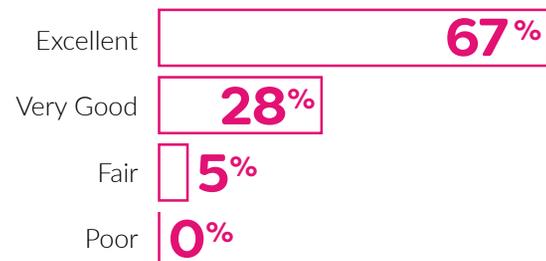
Project Sunshine's medical partner satisfaction rate was 98% in 2024. Our partners reported high satisfaction with the impact of Project Sunshine's programs on their patients, with 75% describing it as "excellent" and 23% as "very good." We are proud to have earned a Net Promoter Score of 81 in 2024!

## PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

How would you rate the impact of Project Sunshine on your facility/organization's children and families?



How would you rate Project Sunshine programs overall?



# Medical Partner Success Story



“ I cannot adequately describe the impact that Project Sunshine has on patients and families. I have been a Child Life Specialist for 15 years now, and I've had the pleasure of working with Project Sunshine to support families at three different hospitals. Project Sunshine always takes a personalized approach, in order to best meet the needs with each facility they help. They are also incredibly supportive of hospital staff, as well. With Project Sunshine, we feel so much better supported in our mission to provide quality family-centered care to pediatric patients and their families. Thank you for everything that you do!”

– Janis Meadows, Certified Child Life Specialist at  
New York Presbyterian Queens

## **How do we provide meaningful, accessible volunteer opportunities in local communities?**

Project Sunshine brings people together—kindhearted community members, motivated students, and socially-minded companies—to brighten the days of children facing medical challenges.

# Volunteering

Volunteering isn't just about giving; it's also deeply rewarding. The Mayo Clinic Health System says volunteering releases feel-good chemicals in the brain, creating joy and connection. Research from the National Library of Medicine also shows it boosts overall well-being, improving volunteers' mental and physical health. At Project Sunshine, we believe small acts of kindness can make a big difference—for the children we support and for the volunteers who share their time and hearts.

 **18,100** volunteers

 **29,197** volunteer service hours

 **50** **Community Chapters** provide critical support to pediatric families, and give back to their local communities. They are passionate individuals, 18 years and older, dedicated to Project Sunshine's mission.

 **67** **College Chapters** offer students the opportunity to develop their leadership skills, engage in service opportunities in local hospitals, and spread awareness about our cause.



# Introducing the Howard Weiser Volunteer Award



*Howard Weiser*

The Project Sunshine community mourns the loss of founding board member Howard Weiser, whose spirit inspired many. Known for his “how can I help?” attitude, Howard set the standard for board members and leaders since 2001. In his honor, Project Sunshine established the Howard Weiser Volunteer Award to recognize volunteers who embody his commitment to service.

The inaugural awardee, **Roe Gaizler**, has volunteered with Project Sunshine Israel since 2014. Roe is a constant presence at Schneider

Children’s Medical Center, creating meaningful connections and training new volunteers. During times of uncertainty and conflict in Israel, Roe has never failed to step up and support kids, families, and hospital partners in Israel with his behind-the-scenes work and patient-facing interactions.

With his dedication, generosity, and joy, Roe mirrors Howard’s legacy and is a trusted leader in Israel. The community proudly honors Roe with the Howard Weiser Volunteer Award!



*Roe Gaizler and patient*

# Volunteer Spotlight



At Project Sunshine, volunteers play diverse roles, and one key contributor to the organization's growth, structure, and cultural development is Patricia Langer, JD.

Pat has served as a pro bono human resources advisor at Project Sunshine since 2018, working closely with the CEO, leadership team, and Board to help shape the organization into what it is today. At Project Sunshine, the staff drives our work; they are a living "asset" that comprises a significant portion of the budget. Throughout her service, Pat has leveraged her expertise in organizational design to set up the most strategic and responsive structure, develop professional development programs, and advise on competitive compensation. Pat dedicated countless hours collaborating with CEO Whitney Namm Pollack to develop key structures, including the expanded organizational chart, that have been integral to the organization's evolution.

Pat's long-standing commitment to Project Sunshine is driven by her dedication to the mission and belief in its strong leadership team. Her remarkable commitment as a volunteer, generously offering her time, talent, and resources pro bono, is truly inspiring. We are grateful to honor her as a super volunteer and long-time supporter.

Pat's passion for HR stems from her extensive experience as an executive, including a seven-year tenure at NBCUniversal, where she served as the Executive Vice President of Human Resources. Prior to her time at NBCUniversal, she was at Lifetime Networks, where she established HR policies and initiated the Lifetime Volunteer Corps.

Thank you, Pat, for everything you have contributed to Project Sunshine!

# Corporate Partners

Project Sunshine partnered with more than 100 corporations in 2024 to deliver play and connection to kids with medical needs.



In 2024, Project Sunshine launched our inaugural Summer Solstice campaign. We celebrated the longest day of the year with support from our corporate partners, volunteers, hospital partners, and donors. Watch our 2024 Summer Solstice video [here!](#)



# Pepsi Magic Kit

Since 2020, PepsiCo has partnered with Project Sunshine to deliver activity kits to children in the hospital.

In 2024, the Pepsi Magic Kit reached 10,000 children with medical needs across 78 hospitals. In collaboration with magician Justin Willman, Project Sunshine and PepsiCo enhanced this year's magic kit to feature seven tricks of diverse difficulty levels. We are grateful to work with PepsiCo to bring fun and creative play opportunities to pediatric patients across the US!



 **10,000**  
Pepsi Magic Kits delivered

 **78** hospitals

# Corporate Volunteer Success Story



“ Each of us left with a sense of pride and humility knowing that children and their parents are dealing with such difficult medical and emotional journeys, but still had the ability and strength to smile and have fun with something as simple as arts and crafts. Our time spent with the children was incredibly rewarding; their resilience and joy in the face of adversity was truly inspiring. In the end, we received far more than we gave. When we returned to the office, other staff members heard about our day, and hoped to have a chance to participate in the future. I know Project Sunshine will continue to be a part of our firm for years to come.”

*- Andrea, Project Sunshine Corporate Volunteer and  
Managing Member at Tromberg, Morris & Poulin, PLLC*

# **Is our play programming adaptable and scalable world-wide?**

Project Sunshine's satellite programs in Canada, Israel, and Kenya bring play to diverse environments and populations - from special needs kindergartens in Israel to orphanages in Kenya.

# Canada

Similar to in the US, Project Sunshine Canada partners with medical facilities to meet the psychosocial and developmental needs of pediatric patients. We bring joy and play to children all over Canada with the help of our college and community volunteer chapters and partnerships with over 50 medical facilities.

 **10,088** patients and families reached

 **250** volunteers



# Israel

Despite ongoing challenges in the region, Project Sunshine continues to bring joy and support to children facing medical hardships in Israel. Studies show that 20% of Israeli parents report their child struggles with severe depression, and 84% of youth experience emotional distress. For children with illnesses, the impact is even greater, as they are twice as likely as their peers to face mental health challenges. Sadly, a shortage of mental health professionals means children can wait over eight months for care.

In 2024, Project Sunshine Israel expanded its reach by nearly 15%, bringing comfort, connection, and support to over 12,000 children and families through our dedicated partners.



**12,648** patients and families reached



**105** volunteers (both Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs, giving us the flexibility to connect with our diverse population)



# Kenya

Since 2006, Project Sunshine Kenya has worked to improve health literacy and outcomes for children with HIV/AIDS in Mombasa, where nearly a million have been orphaned by the disease. We provide critical care through three key programs:

**Clinic-Based Programs:** At Bomu Hospital and six rural clinics, we offer arts, tutoring, hygiene education, and healthy snacks to children. In 2024, we supported 16,000 children and families through this program, making clinic visits more positive and encouraging care.

**Healthy Living Initiative (HLI):** Our home visit program reaches children in remote areas 200+ km from a clinic. Local health workers provide treatment, education, and supplies. In 2024, 286 children received monthly visits, improving adherence to life-saving care.

**Community Events:** Partnering with Kenya's Ministry of Health, we hosted four major health events, engaging 30,000 children and families in 2024.

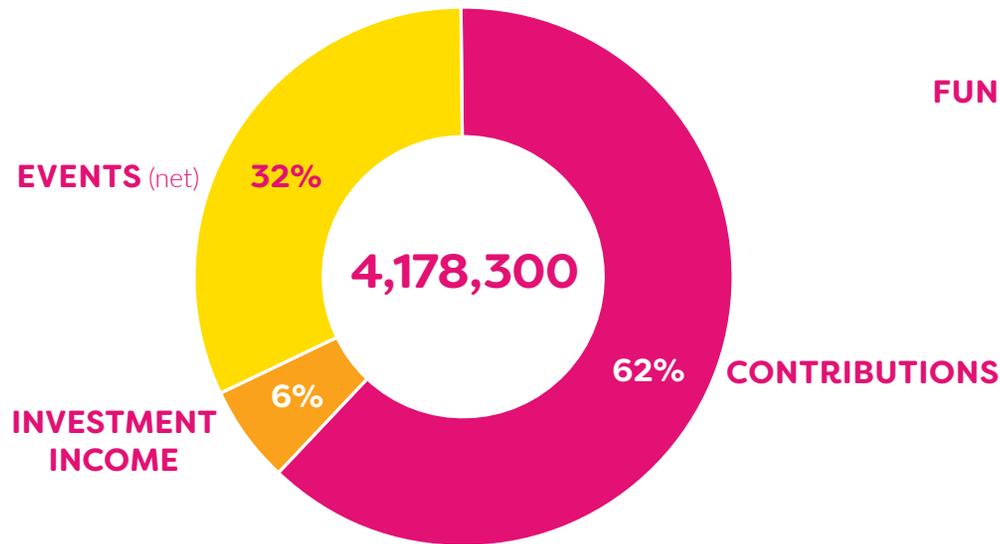
 **51,837** patients and families reached

 **44** volunteers

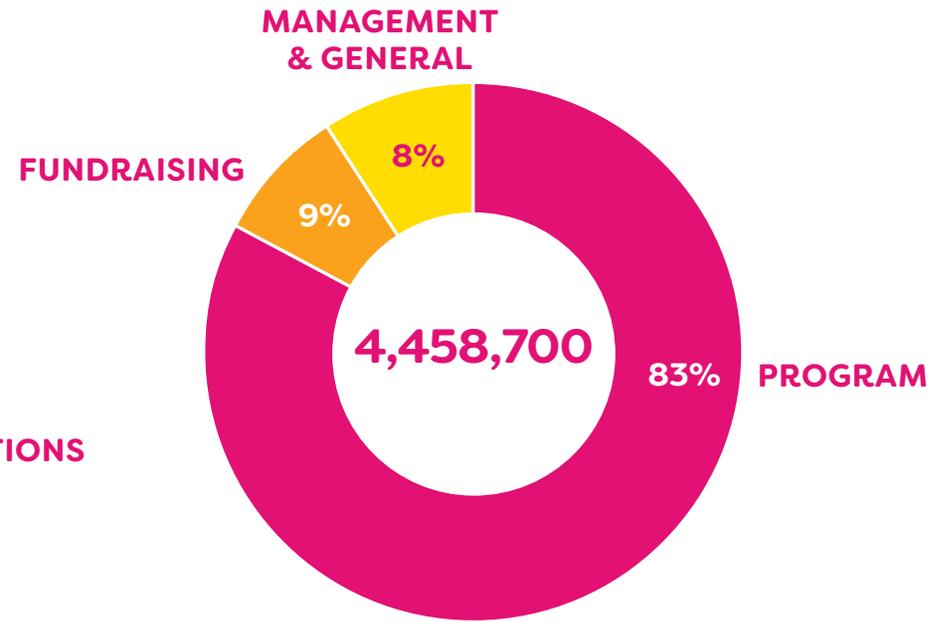


# Financials

## Support & Revenue



## Spending & Allocations



# Board of Directors

## **Natan Bibliowicz**

Chairman of the Board, Project Sunshine

## **Quemuel Arroyo**

Chief Accessibility Officer,  
NYS Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)

## **Stephanie Glenn**

Chief Commercial Officer,  
Maven Clinic

## **Michael Goldman**

President & COO,  
NFP

## **Gerald M. Loughlin, M.D.**

Chair of Pediatrics (retired),  
Weill Cornell

## **Shawn McGowen**

Founder and CEO,  
Leather Honey

## **Meg Moloney**

Executive Director, Children of Bellevue

## **Petra Pope**

Senior Vice President Event Marketing and  
Community Relations (former),  
Brooklyn Nets/Barclays Center

## **Bernard M. Rosof, M.D.**

CEO, Quality in Healthcare Advisory Group, LLC

## **Amy Saperstein**

Founding Executive Director,  
Project Sunshine

## **Taylor B. Sewell, M.D., MBA**

Pediatric Hospitalist and  
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics,  
Columbia University Irving Medical Center

## **Matthew Skurbe**

Chief Operating and Financial Officer,  
CC Capital

## **Gireesh Sonnad**

CEO (former),  
Mphasis Silverline

## **Stacy Taffet**

Chief Growth Officer,  
The Hershey Company

## **Kate Cinella Tylis, Esq.**

Legal Search Consultant,  
David Carrie LLC;  
Co-Founder,  
Tylis Family Foundation

## **Caryn Stoll Unger**

Unger Family Foundation

## **Robin Wilpon Wachtler, MSW**

Judy and Fred Wilpon Family Foundation

## **Joseph Weilgus**

Founder and Chair Emeritus, Project Sunshine;  
CEO, New Legacy

## **Erica Zimmerman**

Senior Director of Marketing,  
PepsiCo

## PROJECT SUNSHINE LEADERSHIP

## **Whitney Namm Pollack**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Project Sunshine

## Donors 2024

The work we do at Project Sunshine is only possible through the generous support of our dedicated annual donors. A list of our 2024 contributors can be found at [projectsunshine.org/2024supporters](https://projectsunshine.org/2024supporters).



## PROJECT sunshine

211 East 43rd Street, Suite 401, New York, NY 10017  
212-354-8035  
[www.projectsunshine.org](http://www.projectsunshine.org)



### Support our work:

[projectsunshine.org/donate](http://projectsunshine.org/donate)

### Volunteer in person:

[projectsunshine.org/volunteer](http://projectsunshine.org/volunteer)

### Volunteer with your company:

[projectsunshine.org/volunteers/corporate](http://projectsunshine.org/volunteers/corporate)

### Sign up for email updates:

[projectsunshine.org](http://projectsunshine.org)

### Sources:

[projectsunshine.org/research](http://projectsunshine.org/research)

