

The Social Distance Squad: Young People With Cystic Fibrosis Rally to Help Teens Live Their Best Lives During and After COVID-19 Lockdowns

As lifelong experts in social distancing, young people with CF help others cope with COVID-19 restrictions

CITY, STATE – DATE – Leading cystic fibrosis (CF) nonprofits Claire’s Place Foundation, Piper’s Angels, The Bonnell Foundation, Attain Health, and the Boomer Esiason Foundation are pleased to announce [The Social Distance Squad](#), a special program led by kids, teens, and young adults with CF who have been social distancing their entire lives due to this genetic disorder. These young experts have banded together to share their lockdown tips, wisdom, and support through social media, learning institutions, and one-on-one settings with kids across the country who have been struggling with social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outbreak of COVID-19 and the need to implement social distancing measures has hit teens especially hard. They have been cut off from their social circles during the formative years of their development, missed out on key events, and have been left searching for guidance on how to be social while social distancing. To assist teens during COVID-19, leading CF foundations including Claire’s Place Foundation (Los Angeles, CA), Piper’s Angels (Jupiter, FL), the Bonnell Foundation (Detroit, MI), Attain Health (Red Lodge, MT), and the Boomer Esiason Foundation (New York, NY) have joined forces to launch [The Social Distance Squad](#). AREA 23, an FCB Health Network company, created the unifying platform for the organizations and are working with young people with CF to share encouraging, inspiring and informative stories and tips across a variety of channels.

The young people with CF in The Social Distance Squad are serving as thought-leaders and influencers on all matters related to quarantine and social distancing, focusing on topics like how to stay positive, healthy, strong, and connected during the COVID-19 lockdown and beyond.

Since early Spring, the Social Distance Squad has reached teens through limited channels, and then expanded. Originally, they partnered with teachers and made appearances via Zoom and other online platforms in virtual school classrooms across the country. As the program continued, they’ve been creating and sharing lessons on staying healthy and happy on Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. And now, with the introduction of [SocialDistanceSquad.com](#), teens can sign up for one-on-one sessions with Squad members, to get advice or support on how to navigate these unprecedented times.

“People with CF have to stay six feet apart as they can spread dangerous germs and bacteria to one another. Now in the era of COVID-19 we are all being taught this critical measurement when it comes to spreading germs,” said Claire’s Place Foundation Executive Director Melissa Yeager. “We want to bring the CF community’s expertise on distancing to the greater public, particularly teens, to help them navigate through this challenging time. Teens need to know that although they are physically distant from each other, they don’t have to be socially distant. Our young CFers can teach teens how to stay connected to family and friends while being safe.”

In addition to helping young people cope with the newfound challenges of social distancing, the initiative serves to raise awareness and increase understanding among the general public of the strength, compassion, and positivity of the CF community.

“This pandemic has given me the opportunity to put to use a skill I have always had and something I never thought anyone would ever truly understand, and to share that with others,” says Leah Schwanke, a senior member and mentor of The Social Distance Squad, who virtually visits junior high classrooms. “To be able to spread my knowledge and lifelong experiences of social distancing with teens and young adults through a message in their classrooms has been tremendously impactful for both me and the students. I hope my lockdown lesson can show teens in schools that you can live a purposeful and happy life while maintaining social distance precautions.”

“It might be tough,” Leah said, “but young people need to know that the CF community around the world has been doing this for years. And if we can do it and stay ourselves, they can, too.”

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About Claire’s Place Foundation, Inc.

Claire’s Place Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization providing support to children and families affected by cystic fibrosis (CF). Claire’s Place Foundation is named in honor of Claire Wineland who lived with CF her entire life and passed away at the age of 21. Claire was an activist, author, TEDx Speaker, social media star and received numerous awards. Claire’s foundation was a way for her to assure that others living with CF enjoyed the same hope, strength and joy that she enjoyed. Recipient of Los Angeles Business Journal’s “Small Nonprofit of the Year,” the foundation provides grants to families affected by CF, offering both emotional and financial support. Today, Claire’s Place Foundation continues to carry on Claire’s legacy. For more information and to make a donation, please visit clairesplacefoundation.org.

About Piper’s Angels Foundation

Piper’s Angels Foundation’s mission is to support and enhance the lives of families with cystic fibrosis through grassroots advocacy, raising awareness through education, offering life-expanding activities, providing urgent financial support, and funding critical research.

Our vision for Piper's Angels is to provide the most innovative social services focused on advocacy, and rallying of our CF community. These tools serve to bring forth compassion and love to dissolve the isolating barriers of this disease, and through empowering each member of the CF community, we manifest a brighter future for all.

Recipient of both the Nonprofit Executive of the Year award in 2019, and Nonprofit People’s Choice award in Palm Beach county in 2019. Piper’s Angels Foundation is the producer of the world-famous Crossing For Cystic Fibrosis, an international paddle challenge from the Bahamas to Florida.

Piper is our inspiration and guiding light. By empowering her, we hope to lift the hearts of others.

For more information, please go to: pipersangels.org.

About The Bonnell Foundation

Our mission is to give emotional and/or financial support to parents who have a loved one with cystic fibrosis. Our hope is one day no CF parent will experience the pain of losing a child to this disease. The Bonnell Foundation came to be after Laura Bonnell had two daughters with CF, Molly and Emily, and realized parents needed support.

The purpose of The Bonnell Foundation is to provide tools to navigate the difficulties of living with CF. We strive to connect families with resources through their CF journey. The Bonnell Foundation offers college scholarships to those affected by CF, financial assistance and lung transplant grants. We hope to equip families with a roadmap to guide their way.

For more information, please visit thebonnellfoundation.org.

About Attain Health

Attain Health Foundation was created to work collaboratively with patients and caregivers to become empowered, activated and to establish a mindset of adherence. We partner with individuals living with cystic fibrosis to optimize their health through coaching, education, partnership and peer support.

To learn more, please go to attainhealth.org.

About The Boomer Esiason Foundation

In 1993, NFL Quarterback, Boomer Esiason, learned that his son, Gunnar, was diagnosed with the incurable genetic condition cystic fibrosis (CF). Boomer and his wife, Cheryl, founded BEF to fight for a cure and for the cystic fibrosis community. Since its start, the Foundation has raised over \$145 million, allowing it to support the CF community in the here and now in a number of ways, including financial aid programs, like scholarships and transplant grants, and educational resources, as well as supporting research, CF centers, and lung transplant programs.

Learn more about the Boomer Esiason Foundation at esiason.org.

About AREA 23

AREA 23, an FCB Health Network Company, has been consistently recognized with top advertising industry awards and honors. In 2017, Med Ad News named AREA 23 “Agency of the Year,” “Most Creative Agency” and “Most Admired Agency” — the first time that any agency was able to win the show’s top three awards at once. In 2018, it took home the Med Ad News trifecta yet again and was also recognized as “Agency of the Year.” But AREA 23 didn’t stop there — in 2019, it was awarded “Agency of the Year” for the third consecutive year by Clio Health and took home “Most Admired Agency” for the fourth consecutive year by the Manny Awards. It was also named “Global Agency of the Year” and “Regional Agency of the Year” at the New York Festivals Global Awards. The agency was also recognized as “Large

Agency of the Year” at the MM&M Awards and took home Titanium Best in Show. AREA 23’s “See Sound” won the Innovation Grand Prix at Cannes Lions 2019.