

# Jacob's Heart celebrates 15 years of cancer support

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OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**WATSONVILLE** — An organization tasked with providing support for children with cancer celebrated 15 years Saturday.

Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services held a "Family Reunion" celebration at Del Monte Beach House in Monterey, bringing together children currently dealing with cancer to those who have survived it.

Three Jacob's Heart childhood cancer survivors, now in their 20s, talked about their experiences with treatments at a young age. Jacob Judd, the organization's namesake, sang "The Rainbow Connection" to the crowd.

"It was an amazing day," said Susan Osorio, executive director of Jacob's Heart.

Osorio, who has been with the organization for nearly 10 years, said she has seen Jacob's Heart grow over the years.

"Looking back on the past



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**Jacob Judd, namesake of Jacob's Heart, sings "The Rainbow Connection" during the organization's 15-year anniversary celebration Saturday as Executive Director Susan Osorio listens in the background.**

15 years, we've been fortunate to see children get through the cancer experience," she said.

Despite times of financial hardship, Jacob's Heart has

been able to continue on, Osorio said.

"There's been some financial challenges, but we've been able to maintain our mission," she

said.

That mission includes programs like Heart on Wheels, which brings support services, such as art therapy, directly to the families' homes.

Osorio said the organization's future plans include developing a parent-to-parent program.

"Our families dealing with a recent diagnosis benefit greatly from other families who understand their needs and anxieties," she said.

Since 1998, Jacob's Heart has provided emotional, social and financial assistance to children with cancer and their families in Santa Cruz, Monterey, San Benito and South Santa Clara counties. Currently, the organization is supporting 158 children with cancer.

Since its inception, Jacob's Heart has supported more than 400 families, Osorio said.

All services are free of charge and offered in English and Spanish.