

# Sandra Muvdi

Founder, president/  
CEO, Jessica June  
Children's Cancer  
Foundation

BY JENNIFER COHEN



**BIRTHPLACE:** Broward Health Medical Center, Fort Lauderdale

**CURRENT RESIDENCE:** Fort Lauderdale

**LAUNCH OF JESSICA JUNE CHILDREN'S CANCER FOUNDATION:**

I created the foundation in May 2004.

**ABOUT JESSICA:** Jessica was my only child and the love of my life. I was a single mother with all my attention focused on her; my plans and dreams involved the two of us. It never crossed my mind that she would go before me. She was gone four days after I was told a parent's worst nightmare—"Your child has cancer, and she must be rushed to the PICU." She was a healthy, charismatic and extroverted 7-year-old, and then, suddenly, she was gravely ill. After losing Jessica, I was lost. I didn't know what my purpose in life was or why I was going to wake up the next day.

**HOW DID JJCCF START?** I thank God for hearing my calling to start the Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation (JJCCF) in my daughter's memory. The foundation has saved my life by giving me a purpose and reason for being. I am blessed to have found my passion, which allows me to channel my grief and emptiness into helping others. I do not think I would have survived this tragedy if it wasn't for the foundation. Immediately after my loss, I left my job as a middle school math teacher to grieve with my family in Colombia, where I grew up. I became involved with a childhood cancer charity and became acquainted with the misery families experience after a childhood cancer diagnosis. In addition to facing a medical and emotional crisis, many families experience a financial crisis. They're suddenly faced with an avalanche of [challenges] while trying to focus on what is most important; their child's survival. Many families lack basic human necessities, and this quickly developed the mission of JJCCF.

**WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU?** I am excited to wake up every day to help families battle childhood cancer. Most of the time I operate as a "one-[woman] band" with an army of volunteers. I wear many hats to manage the organization. I laugh when I receive a phone call asking to speak to the human resources department. A typical day can involve updating our social media, accounting, processing applications for financial assistance, calling families and hospital social workers, writing grants and event planning.

**IF YOU WEREN'T IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?** I would be working in finance.

**WHAT HAS BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE FACED WITH JJCCF?** The loss of children we have assisted.

**HOW MANY FAMILIES HAVE YOU HELPED?** Over the last 15 years, the foundation has served more than 4,500 lives and has raised more than \$3 million to provide emergency financial assistance, hope, compassion and love for families fighting childhood cancer.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?** I love to travel the world, practice yoga and have quality time with my boyfriend.

**WHAT IS SOMETHING FEW PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOU?** I have traveled around the world twice on a floating university ship.

**FAVORITE QUOTE OR MOTTO:** "Don't wait for the right time; make it the right time to do the things you have always wanted to do."

**HOW WOULD PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU DESCRIBE YOU?** Passionate, motivated, driven, empathetic, compassionate, perfectionist, genuine, philanthropist.

**WHAT'S YOUR THEME SONG?** A song that inspires me is by Jon Secada, "I'm Free."

## ABOUT JJCCF

The Jessica June Children's Cancer Foundation (JJCCF) is a nonprofit IRS-approved 501(c)(3) public charity founded in 2004 by Sandra Muvdi shortly after the loss of her only child, Jessica June Eiler Muvdi (1996–2003), to cancer. Its mission is to provide emergency financial assistance for children fighting cancer to ensure access to basic human necessities. The foundation also raises awareness about childhood cancer and advocates on behalf of those battling it. Visit [jjccf.org](http://jjccf.org) for more information. See our cover story for details about JJCCF's 15th anniversary Gold Party on June 1.