



NEWS

# During A Health Crisis, CaringBridge Creates Online Community For Each Patient

The nonprofit website just passed a big milestone: two billions visits since the launch 1997

CARRIE FEIBEL | JULY 7, 2016, 6:50 AM

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CaringBridge

Nearly twenty years ago, Sona Mehring founded CaringBridge when her close friends, JoAnn and Darrin, had a premature baby named Brigid.

Sona Mehring was working in internet technology when close friends had a premature baby in 1997. They asked her to keep family and friends updated on their daughter's condition, so Mehring created a website. That led to the launch of CaringBridge, a nonprofit website (and app) where people can document their "health journeys" instead of making – or fielding – dozens of phone calls.

Since 1997, more than half a million CaringBridge websites have been created. The platform is now used in 236 countries and territories, and earlier this year hit a milestone: two billion site visits.

Sona Mehring recently retired as CEO and is now working as an “ambassador” for CaringBridge, which has its headquarters in Eagan, MN. In that role, she visited Houston in late June to show hospital administrators how CaringBridge can be incorporated into a patient’s treatment plan. She also sat down for a conversation with Health and Science Reporter Carrie Feibel.

Here’s an excerpt from that interview. You can listen to the full conversation above.

**Carrie Feibel:** What’s different about Facebook, that (this) type of information can’t be shared there? Why do you need CaringBridge?

**Sona Mehring:** The entire conversation is about the health journey that that person is going through. It doesn’t get interrupted with different types of news feed, it’s very authentic, none of the data’s manipulated, we’re not selling the data, there’s no intrusive ads. So, it’s very pure, to the community, it’s the conversation that’s going on. It just really creates a healing environment.

**Carrie Feibel:** What health conditions do you see the most?

**Sona Mehring:** About half our sites are for cancer and I think cancer is one of those journeys where you kind of get that devastating diagnosis and it becomes a treatment plan for cancer. Automobile accidents when there’s that kind of sudden, acute, no one was expecting something to happen. Any type of health journeys, CaringBridge can be used.

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Carrie Feibel

HEALTH AND SCIENCE REPORTER

Carrie Feibel is the health and science reporter. Her reporting frequently appears on national NPR shows like Morning Edition and All Things Considered. Before coming to Houston Public Media, Feibel spent ten years as an award-winning newspaper reporter. She has worked at the Houston Chronicle, the Associated Press, and two...

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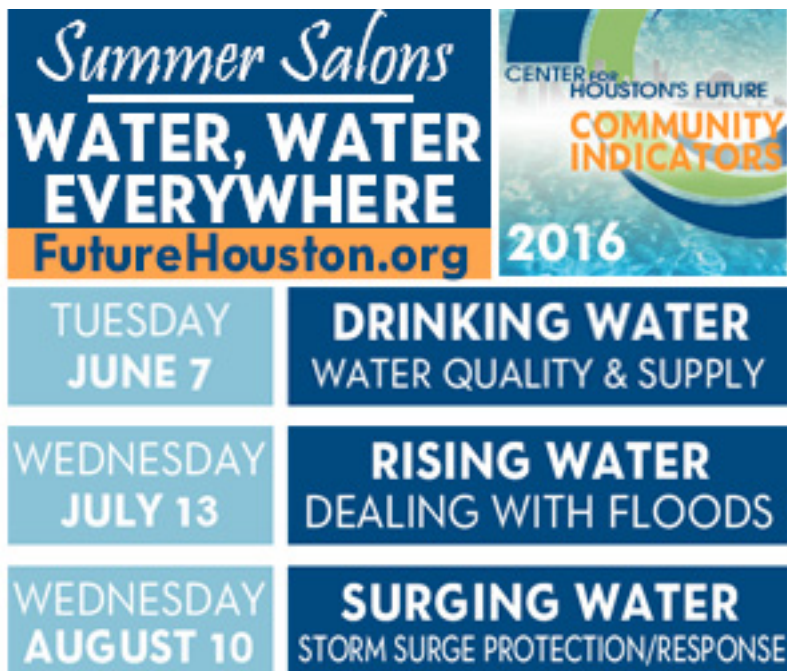
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