LEADERS IN care
STORIES OF THE MOST AMAZING CARE ANYWHERE
FALL 2022

Part of the Team
Meet our 2022 National Patient Ambassadors, Parker and Katherine
ABOUT SHRINERS CHILDREN’S

OUR MISSION

At Shriners Children’s™, our three-part mission has one goal: to change and improve lives. We do this by caring for our patients, conducting research to gain knowledge and develop new treatments, and providing educational opportunities for physicians and other healthcare professionals.

WHO DO WE TREAT?

Children under age 18 may receive care and treatment when there is a reasonable possibility they could benefit from the specialized services we offer. All services are provided regardless of a family’s ability to pay or insurance status.

WHAT ARE OUR PEDIATRIC SPECIALTIES?

+ Treatment for orthopedic conditions
+ Burn care
+ Spinal cord injury rehabilitation and management
+ Cleft lip and palate care

GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH

We strive to discover answers that will one day improve lives. Our innovative researchers have made significant breakthroughs in all four of our service lines, improving patient care and adding to the global body of medical knowledge.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

One way we help improve the lives of children worldwide is by offering educational opportunities to medical professionals. We maintain relationships with several medical teaching facilities, and our clinicians are known for sharing their experience and knowledge with other medical communities.

THE SHRINERS FRATERNITY

Shriners International, a fraternity based on fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth, founded Shriners Children’s as its official philanthropy in 1922. What began as one hospital is now a world-renowned healthcare system with locations in three countries. The fraternity, which has approximately 200 chapters in several countries and thousands of clubs around the world, continues to support this unique healthcare system. To learn more, please visit shrinersinternational.org.
COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Dear Readers,
As we continue to honor and celebrate the 100th anniversary of our healthcare system and the 150-year history of Shriners International, the fraternity that founded our unique, compassionate and generous pediatric healthcare system, we especially remember Sept. 16, 1922. On that day, in Shreveport, Louisiana, we saw our very first patient.

Over time, Shriners Children’s expanded, added service lines, and eventually became revered and respected around the world for providing excellent care, sharing medical expertise, and conducting important, meaningful research to add to the worldwide body of knowledge and improve treatment protocols and standards of care.

Since that first September day a century ago, Shriners Children’s has given hope and healing to more than 1.5 million children around the world.

Sincerely,
Mel Bower
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer
Shriners Children’s

PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

RENEE, A PATIENT of Shriners Children’s Lexington, loves drawing and uses an app on her phone to create incredible pictures.

She is a patient of Orthopedic Surgeon Vishwas Talwalkar, M.D., and has been coming to our medical center since she was an infant. Renee has osteogenesis imperfecta (sometimes called brittle bone disease), which causes her bones to be weak and break easily. She’s broken more than a dozen bones in her life, and at her most recent visit she had casts removed that she wore after a surgery to repair a complicated break in her leg.

“We appreciate everything Shriners Children’s has done for us,” her dad, James, said. “Everyone is wonderful and the care is just over the top.”

Her mom, Carrie, agreed: “I don’t know what we would have done if we didn’t have Shriners Children’s!”

LEADERS IN CARE AWARDS 2020–22

FALL 2022

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VISIT US ONLINE to find more stories like these at myleadersincare.com.

ON THE COVER: Parker and Katherine, both avid athletes, received care at Shriners Children’s. Photo by Rachel Nadeau.

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Support a unique, compassionate, and generous pediatric healthcare system!
Since 1922, Shriners Children’s has given hope and healing to more than 1.5 million children.

A Grand Affair Gala

Celebrate the First
Shriners Hospital

Horseshoe Riverdome | Shreveport, Louisiana
Saturday, September 17

- Lavish seafood buffet sponsored by the Louisiana Seafood Board
- Entertainment by the George Hancock Band and Windstorm
- Auction to benefit Shriners Children’s Shreveport

shreveportfirstshriners.org

Celebration of the Century

100 Years of Caring for Kids

Prepare for an unforgettable night of energy, excitement and star-studded entertainment, featuring acclaimed singer-songwriter Dierks Bentley

Help raise funds to support Shriners Children’s worldwide efforts to transform lives

Saturday, November 12 | Minute Maid Park
Houston, Texas

shrinerscelebrationofthecentury.org
Shriners Children’s is an internationally recognized leader in clinical motion analysis. Our motion analysis centers complement our healthcare system’s commitment to provide excellent care to children with orthopedic conditions, including those caused by neuromuscular problems, such as cerebral palsy. When we understand how children with these diagnoses move, we can help them move more efficiently, more effortlessly and more confidently.

In the motion analysis centers, high-speed cameras, reflective markers, force platforms and muscle sensors work together to record and measure how a child is moving.
This technology provides a way to collect detailed data that offers a complete picture of how a patient’s muscles, joints and bones are interacting. This gives us the understanding often needed to provide the best treatment recommendations for our patients. Additionally, the availability of pre- and post-operative data helps refine and adjust surgical procedures to achieve even better outcomes in the future.

Shriners Children’s has 14 motion analysis centers in the healthcare system. The centers are primarily used for gait (walking pattern) analysis to help guide surgical decisions and outcomes.

**A definitive improvement**

Caleb, a third-grader with cerebral palsy and a patient of Shriners Children’s Chicago, has benefited from the information provided by the hospital’s motion analysis center.

The results provide a three-dimensional picture of how he moves, according to Caleb’s orthopedic surgeon, Haluk Altiok, M.D. “It is certainly possible that we can see and manage patients with cerebral palsy, but motion analysis takes it to a different level,” he said. The data can make a great difference in understanding both the effects of a condition on a child’s walking pattern and the improvement that has been accomplished.

“I think the gait lab was eye-opening,” said Caleb’s mother, Kenia. “We got to see how his body was moving. They showed us a video of him before, right around age 2, to now. When you live with this, you don’t realize how far he’s come. Literally all he did was toe-walk. But then to see it and be reminded of it . . .”

Caleb can now walk a mile. He is also earning belts in karate. The 8-year-old loves reading and hopes to work in TV or the movies one day.

**Precise information for smarter decisions**

Payton is a 15-year-old high school sophomore who cheers competitively, plays soccer and serves on her school’s student council. Payton was born with cerebral palsy, but she refuses to let her condition hold her back.

When Payton was a year old, her mom, Erika, noticed Payton’s walking didn’t seem quite right. She was referred to Shriners Children’s Northern California and was diagnosed with spastic cerebral palsy.

When Payton was 7, she had her first study in the motion analysis center.

“Three-dimensional motion analysis helps us see movement that would otherwise be impossible in a quick appointment in the clinic,” said Vedant Kulkarni, M.D., attending pediatric orthopedic surgeon and director of the pediatric orthopedic fellowship program at the hospital. “The results of these studies allow us to have a level of precision in our understanding and decision-making.
that each child deserves. Payton’s first study showed us that a tendon lengthening surgery for her right ankle and knee would substantially improve her walking.”

The surgery went well, and Payton worked hard during physical therapy. Her surgery was ultimately so successful that she now participates in multiple sports, including competitive cheerleading. She travels across the country for competitions, and her team has won a national championship.

“I can run, tumble, flip and do everything my teammates can do,” said Payton.

Return to sports testing

Return to sports testing is a new and exciting use of the motion analysis centers.

Following a sports-related injury, it can be difficult to determine when a patient may be ready to return to full participation. Through return to sports testing in the motion analysis center, Shriners Children’s Erie has objectified clinical decision-making regarding appropriate timeframes for returning to sports safely. “It is imperative that we use evidence-based practice and clinical decision-making, along with state-of-the-art tools that are available, such as three-dimensional motion capture,” said Mary K.V. Eighmy, PT, D.P.T, OCS. “This will help ensure that patients are safely progressed back to sports, as dictated by their progression of function and strength.”

Completing return to sports testing in the motion analysis center includes applying retroreflective markers to the patient. The software then creates a digital model to analyze sport-specific movements, such as running, cutting, jumping and landing. From here, physicians and physical therapists can create an individualized treatment plan that addresses functional deficits in strength, motion and biomechanics, until the patient is cleared to return to sports.

Olivia, a highly motivated athlete and 14-year-old patient at Shriners Children’s Erie, had numerous sports injuries, which led to instability of her knee. After the most recent injury, emergency room staff at a local hospital suggested that her family follow up with Shriners Children’s Erie. There, Michael McClincy, M.D., performed ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) reconstruction surgery, and Olivia has been undergoing physical therapy to regain strength and mobility. “The care we have received at Shriners Children’s has been wonderful,” said her mom, Emily. “It’s so helpful to have her doctor and physical therapist in the same location, working together.”

Olivia recently participated in return to sports testing in the motion analysis center. “It’s really cool to see what the motion capture can do and how it can measure things,” Emily said. “It shows what was good and what we still need to work on.” Although Olivia is not cleared to return to sports quite yet, she will continue to work hard to get there. She is an avid athlete and looks forward to participating in several sports throughout her high school career.

“I feel very comfortable knowing that she will be fully healed before going back to her activities, thanks to Shriners Children’s and the motion analysis center,” said Emily.

Quality of our motion analysis centers

Shriners Children’s has nine motion analysis centers accredited by the Commission for Motion Laboratory Accreditation – representing 41% of the accredited centers in the U.S.

By the end of 2022, we hope to have all 14 of our centers accredited, which would make Shriners Children’s represent 51% of all nationwide accredited labs. This is a prestigious distinction, and will attract patients and encourage other providers to collaborate with us. “Accreditation ensures the highest quality of care and sets standards for research,” said Ross Chafetz, PT, Ph.D., D.P.T., MPH, corporate director of the motion analysis centers for Shriners Children’s.
Finding Their Stride

Shriners Children’s seeks answers for toe-walking treatments in new study

When Kulukulutea was 1 and learning to walk, her mom, Kaori, noticed that she consistently “tiptoed,” using only the balls of her feet. As she grew older, she would fall forward whenever she attempted to walk with her feet flat on the ground. Suspecting a medical issue, Kaori took her to see a pediatrician, who reassured her that toe-walking was normal.

Toe-walking is common in toddlers who are just starting to walk, and many children outgrow it. But some require medical care to overcome it. However, the cause of the condition isn’t always known, and the success of treatments can be varied. To learn more about the best treatments for toe-walking, Shriners Children’s has launched a research project involving nine of its locations.

Providing solutions

It wasn’t until Kulukulutea had her preschool physical that her doctor recommended that she have a consultation with medical staff at Shriners Children’s Hawai’i. “I was nervous at first because I thought Shriners Children’s was for specialized surgeries only,” said Kaori. “But when we went there, the staff was so welcoming and full of ‘aloha.’” (The Hawaiian spirit of aloha is one of fellowship and love.)

Upon examination, Kulukulutea was diagnosed with severe toe-walking, a condition that sometimes has no exact medical cause. Much to the relief of Kaori and her husband, Kalavi, Kulukulutea’s situation was treatable. Over the next several months, she had weekly hospital visits to stretch her muscles and tendons, and underwent casting and bracing of her feet to encourage a normal gait.

“The staff was awesome,” said Kaori. “They educated and guided us through the process, set expectations and made sure Kulukulutea was always comfortable.”

Staff also helped with the little details of her care, including tips on how to properly use a walker, navigate stairs and practice proper foot hygiene. “Kulukulutea calls everyone at Shriners Children’s ‘doctor,’ because they fix things,” Kaori chuckled.

Now 5, Kulukulutea beams with affection. She cares for their crops of taro, ulu and lauhala daily on their family farm in Punalu’u. She takes time to visit her kupuna (grandparents and family elders) with flowers and homemade bread. “She’s so full of energy and is such a girly girl,” said Kaori. “When she’s not jumping off tree stumps on the farm, she loves playing with her dollhouse.” And Shriners Children’s may be her biggest dollhouse of all. “She thinks Shriners looks like a magical castle – so she calls it the ‘castle hospital,’” said Kaori.

The mysteries of the cause

While toe-walking is common in healthy, developing children, and toddlers usually

THE TOE-WALKING STUDY is accepting participants. If you think your child would be a good candidate, please contact Shriners Children’s at 971-544-3377.
grow out of it, if a child is still toe-walking after their second birthday, a doctor should be consulted. That consult should happen sooner if there is poor muscle coordination, stiffness in the Achilles tendon or the child’s leg muscles are tight.

The condition is diagnosed as “idiopathic” when the cause is unknown. But in some instances, toe-walking may be attributed to other diagnoses. For example, if the Achilles tendon is too short, it can keep the heel from touching the ground. In some people with cerebral palsy, toe-walking may be caused by abnormal development or problems with movement or muscle tone. Muscular dystrophy may be to blame if the child started out walking normally before the toe-walking began. It has also been linked to disorders on the autism spectrum. Children who are toe-walkers may also have an increased risk of falling and could face ridicule in social situations.

An opportunity to look for answers
Jeremy Bauer, M.D., orthopedic specialist at Shriners Children’s Portland, calls treatment of idiopathic toe-walking a great research opportunity and is starting a new study to do just that.

“It’s sometimes hard to tell the difference between causes; they all look very similar,” he said. “We take a look at how the child is doing, and now we can use our research study to differentiate between neurological causes versus idiopathic toe-walking.”

This collaborative research project will help inform pediatric orthopedic specialists in making care plans for children with toe-walking for whom the cause is unknown. The study involves nine Shriners Children’s locations, which allows for an incredible reach and patient diversity available through the Shriners Children’s system and helps ensure the optimal results for patients.

The study will enroll 180 patients who will receive a motion analysis assessment and a genomics evaluation. The researchers will examine surgery versus casting for the treatment of idiopathic toe-walking. The genomics portion of the study will examine whether there is a genetic link to idiopathic toe-walking.

Dr. Bauer recognizes that there are gaps in understanding why some treatments work and others don’t. “This will help us find out what really is the best way to treat each of our patients,” he said.

“This effort highlights the strength of collaborative efforts within our system,” said Bruce MacWilliams, Ph.D., motion analysis center director for the Salt Lake City location. “In a very short time period, we will be able to compile the largest and most comprehensive dataset of children with idiopathic toe-walking.”

Kulukulutea underwent stretching, casting and bracing to address her toe-walking.
Nourishing Healing

Research at Shriners Children’s leads to advances in nutrition for patients with burn injuries

Researchers at Shriners Children’s Ohio spent more than a decade looking at how vitamin D supplements can help prevent bone fractures in patients with burn injuries and discovered something extraordinary: The supplements made a huge difference.

Shriners Children’s comprehensive wrap-around care model includes clinical nutritionists and dieticians who closely monitor patients during the acute and rehabilitative phases, particularly in children recovering from a severe burn. Years ago, they wondered if they could do anything to prevent bone fractures in recovering burn patients.

“Vitamin D is key for growing and maintaining healthy bones,” Sunderman said. “Your body needs vitamin D in order to absorb calcium, the primary component of bone.”

Gottschlich and Mayes launched a series of studies and clinical trials in 2003 and spent more than a decade comparing burn patients who received vitamin D supplements with those who received placebos. They found fractures significantly decreased in patients who received the vitamin D supplements.

“An incredible impact”

“This was really groundbreaking research because very little was known about specific vitamin needs,” Sunderman said. “There’s been a lot of research about the importance of a high-calorie and protein diet, but we didn’t know how important vitamins and minerals were to the recovery process until this study.”

Their findings were published in outlets like the *Journal of Burn Care and Rehabilitation*, *Nutrition in Clinical Practice* and the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition*. More important, the results were folded into clinical practice and are still used today.

Clinical dieticians like Sunderman check vitamin D levels of children recovering from burns when they first arrive at the hospital, then weekly until they’re discharged.

“Vitamin D is key for growing and maintaining healthy bones,” Sunderman said. “Your skin is the largest organ in your body and requires a lot of calories and nutrients to help the healing process after a burn injury,” said Christina Sunderman, MS, RDN, LD, clinical dietician at Shriners Children’s Ohio.

Discovering a special kind of healing

That healing process continues well after the acute phase, when children transition to rehabilitation and receive physical and occupational therapy. Shriners Children’s dietitian researchers, Michele Gottschlich, Ph.D., RD, LD, CSP, CCRP, and Theresa Mayes, RD, LD, CSP, CCRC, discovered that some patients started sustaining fractures in their long bones (femur, tibia, fibula) during their rehabilitative care. They further investigated each case and found low vitamin D levels to be one of the culprits that was weakening children’s bones.

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“It’s amazing when you think about the impact and long-term effects of this study,” Sunderman said. “The research at Shriners Children’s was groundbreaking in terms of how nutrition is so vital to better outcomes for our patients.”
Custom Fit

Sisters achieve greatness thanks to Shriners Children's

Andie Sue and Kaysie Li are sisters who, as little girls, faced the same congenital limb deficiency that required leg amputations shortly after they were adopted from China.

Andie Sue is now a 17-year-old competitive equestrian with dreams of becoming a Paralympian. Kaysie Li is a 15-year-old devoted to training her Australian Shepherd, Rusty, as a service animal. She hopes to become a veterinarian some day.

Both girls use prosthetic legs. Their amputations were performed at Shriners Children’s Northern California, and they have received specialized care ever since, led by Orthopedic Surgeon Joel Lerman, M.D.

Form and function

“When Andie Sue first came to us, our pediatrician insisted we go to Shriners Children’s,” said the girls’ mother, Barbie. “Over the years, we’ve tried other orthotic and prosthetic specialists closer to home, but they never came close to the care at Shriners Children’s. We can’t get the same quality of care anywhere else.”

As the girls have grown, the Pediatric Orthotic and Prosthetic Services (POPS) team at Shriners Children’s Northern California has provided them with custom-fit prosthetics. POPS specialists focus on fit, function and comfort for patients and the

Andie Sue is an accomplished equestrian with dreams of becoming a Paralympian.
specific activities they are interested in, like competitive horseback riding. “I started riding when I was very young,” said Andie Sue, “I started riding bareback, because we didn’t know how to make my prosthetic leg work in the stirrup. I needed my foot to fit straight forward, not angling out, and I also needed my heel to sit lower than my toes. The heel needs to be low so it’s secure, but the toes need to be in and forward so they don’t get caught on anything.”

At 5, Andie Sue knew exactly what design she needed to support her riding. Her certified prosthetist, Eric, who is highly skilled in his profession, was up for the task.

“Designing a prosthesis around the equestrian work Andie Sue is doing requires a unique fit and function when she’s sitting in the stirrups,” said Eric. “It required some creativity, but we have to think outside of the box to support our patients and the activities they love.”

Unlike her sister, Kaysie Li is known for choosing bold designs for her prosthetics. “I’m very creative and artistic, and I want my prosthetic to reflect that,” she said. “Over the years, Eric has messaged my mom saying, ‘I have the perfect pattern for Kaysie Li’s next prosthetic.’ That has always made me feel like I’m Eric’s only patient and that he is so focused on making sure I’m comfortable and confident about my appearance.”

The POPS team is dedicated to ensuring the girls’ prosthetics fit properly as they grow, so that they are well-equipped to continue chasing their dreams. “They never make us feel guilty about being too hard on a leg,” said Barbie. “They always tell me, ‘It’s your job to keep them active, and it’s our job to keep up with them.’ They always want the girls to be active, out there and comfortable.”

A pet project
Kaysie Li discovered a passion for service animal work during her care journey at Shriners Children’s. Volunteers would visit her bedside with service dogs when she recovered from surgeries. Kaysie Li now trains service dogs of her own in hopes of supporting other pediatric patients some day.

“The therapy dogs have had a big impact on me,” said Kaysie Li. “I remember being in recovery, missing my own dog at home, and then a big fluffy dog would come in and lay his head on my lap. My mood would instantly change. I want to give that to other kids because it felt really good for me.”

The Shriners Children’s team will continue to keep up with Andie Sue and Kaysie Li as they grow. We look forward to hearing about their activities and adventures, and will be cheering for Andie Sue when she makes it to the Paralympic Games one day.

“I’m very creative and artistic, and I want my prosthetic to reflect that. Over the years, Eric has messaged my mom saying, ‘I have the perfect pattern for Kaysie Li’s next prosthetic.’”

– KAYSIE LI
Connecting Patients for Life

Patient Alumni Network provides a platform for former patients to share their stories

Every former patient of Shriners Children’s has a story to tell, and through the newly founded Patient Alumni Network, we plan to help them share it.

The Patient Alumni Network was formed in 2022 as part of Shriners Children’s 100th Anniversary celebration. The goal of the network is to connect former patients with one another and provide opportunities for them to share their stories and accomplishments with other patients, Shriners, donors and the public. Members of the Patient Alumni Network gathered for their first meeting during the Shriner’s International fraternity’s annual convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in July 2022.

There’s Elena, who at 4, underwent amputation of both of her feet at Shriners Children’s Twin Cities. She had the surgery less than a year after being adopted from Russia. After surgery, she spent months recovering and going to physical therapy. Less than five months after her amputation, Elena was fitted for

From bottom left: Parker, Leigh, Megan and Jacob
her first set of prosthetic legs and took her very first steps. “I would not be standing on my own two feet – literally – if it wasn’t for Shriners Children’s!” said Elena, now 24. “Everything that was provided by Shriners, from my prosthetic legs to camps, helped me gain confidence in my abilities, excel in athletics, get involved in adaptive programs and live an active life to the fullest. Beyond physical abilities, I developed meaningful relationships and grew as a person through the impact of wonderful people and experiences at Shriners.”

Elena was a National Patient Ambassador for Shriners Children’s from 2004–2005. Being a member of the Patient Alumni Network gives Elena a chance to connect with Parker (treated at the Twin Cities location), who had a successful collegiate baseball career as a pitcher, despite being born with only one hand. The network has connected so many other former patients, as well: Elisabeth, who works as a talent manager and was treated for cerebral palsy at Shriners Children’s Chicago (see below); Megan, a nurse, whose cleft lip and palate was treated at Shriners Children’s Portland; Leigh, who is studying to become a nurse and is a former Shriners Children’s Florida patient (and National Patient Ambassador) treated for osteogenesis imperfecta; and the list goes on.

Jacob is a former patient who spent at least a decade of his life being treated at Shriners Children’s Northern California for spastic cerebral palsy. He uses his time with the Patient Alumni Network to speak to current patients and their families. “To any patients or families who are inside Shriners Children’s right now, I have one thing to say to you: one step at a time, one day at a time,” Jacob said. “I know it might be hard right now, but it will get better. Just keep a smile on your face and keep moving forward.”

Elisabeth credits Shriners Children’s with giving her the support to succeed.

“Beyond physical abilities, I developed meaningful relationships and grew as a person through the impact of wonderful people and experiences at Shriners Children’s.”
- ELENA

“Growing up, I was always interested in theater and film. I mostly got into it when I was in high school.” Dr. Smith used to joke with her that one day they would name a wing of the hospital after her when she became famous.

Elisabeth graduated from Illinois State University with a theater degree. She has worked in the industry since, including as script supervisor on Hulu’s Best Summer Ever, a teen musical feature film with a cast and crew primarily made up of people with disabilities. In 2020, Elisabeth went in front of the cameras herself, walking in the Runway of Dreams New York fashion show on behalf of Zappos Adaptive.

“Through Shriners Children’s, I gained a support system and the inspiration to help other people with disabilities.”
- ELISABETH

Network of Talent
A former patient and founding member of the Patient Alumni Network is following her dreams and helping open doors for others in the entertainment world. Elisabeth, 28, has a type of cerebral palsy called hemiplegia, which causes weakness on one side of the body.

Her family found out about Shriners Children’s from someone at a grocery store who noticed the child’s physical differences and asked about her diagnosis. The woman was the wife of a Shriner and connected the family with the Chicago hospital. She received care from “kindergarten to college” from Peter Smith, M.D., and a team of specialists at the Chicago Shriners hospital. Her care included a variety of surgeries and therapies.

In addition to helping her progress physically, Shriners Children’s taught her to believe in herself and follow her dreams.

“Through Shriners Children’s, I gained a support system and the inspiration to help other people with disabilities,” Elisabeth said. She now works as a talent manager from her home in Indiana, representing more than 500 actors with disabilities around the country for Gamut Talent Management.
After remarkable recoveries, athletes Parker and Katherine are giving back as National Patient Ambassadors.

Every year, Shriners Children’s selects National Patient Ambassadors to represent the healthcare system’s patients. The ambassadors share their stories of perseverance and the ways Shriners Children’s has made a difference in their lives. We are honored to have these impressive young people advocating for our healthcare system.
Katherine has reached her dream of being a collegiate athlete after recovering from burn injuries sustained in a car accident.

**Soccer star plays again**

Katherine, 19, is a student at Northeastern University in Boston, where she majors in nursing and plays on the Division I soccer team. After a devastating car accident in 2019, she wasn’t sure she’d make it to this point.

The fiery crash left Katherine with third- and fourth-degree burns on her lower left leg and right calf and thigh. Katherine needed surgery immediately, and that’s when she first met Robert Sheridan, M.D., chief of burn services at Shriners Children’s Boston.

“We were told that, without the surgery, I was at risk of amputation from the knee down,” Katherine said.

The teenager was hospitalized for a month. During that time, she had six surgeries and procedures, and worked at physical and occupational therapy daily.

A soccer player since she was 3, Katherine had committed to playing at Northeastern University when she was just 15. To help Katherine achieve her athletic goals and get back to playing the sport she loves, Shriners Children’s therapists focused on mobility, endurance, strength and range of motion.

“I worked countless hours with my nurses, physical therapy staff and child life services to get to a point where I could go home,” Katherine said. “Every day I met with my occupational therapist, Courtney. Courtney was by my side every step of the way. She started by helping me take my first steps with a walker and finished by coming to watch my first game back after the accident. The staff at Shriners Children’s makes sure you never feel like you are going through anything alone.”

After transitioning to outpatient care, a focus was on laser surgery. “The best part about these surgeries is they are not required, but I am allowed to do as many as I want as long as they are four months apart,” Katherine said.

“I have seen a huge difference in the appearance, texture and mobility of my leg,” Katherine said. “Each time I return and meet with my surgical team, I am able to indicate a region that I would like them to focus on to offer the most comfort and success on the field.”

Inspired to give back, Katherine has organized donation drives in her community and is eager to serve as a National Patient Ambassador for the healthcare system.

“When everything seems to be going wrong, look for the good things that came out of it.”

– KATHERINE

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“When everything seems to be going wrong, look for the good things that came out of it,” she said. “For me, it was the people I met throughout my journey.

“Between other patients who will forever be my friends, or staff who I look up to, Shriners Children’s will always be family, my home away from home.”
Back on the court with confidence

Parker was 10 when his life changed forever. In the car on the way to school, Parker’s mom, Sharonda, had a seizure and lost consciousness. “When Parker realized something was wrong, he unbuckled his seat belt and got to the front to take over the wheel,” Sharonda said. Her son’s courageous action helped steer them away from oncoming traffic before crashing. “He saved our lives.”

Parker was severely injured in the crash, with damage to his internal organs that required him to be put on life support for a time. Among his other serious injuries, Parker suffered a badly broken ankle. When he learned that his leg would need to be amputated due to the injury, the athletic youth was devastated.

Three months later, Parker became a patient of Shriners Children’s Greenville, where a skilled team began working to help Parker get back to participating in the activities he loves. He was fitted with a prosthetic leg designed for comfortable support and lots of physical activity.

Now 13, “Parker is as strong as ever,” said Sharonda. “He rides bikes and four-wheelers with his friends. He plays basketball on his middle school team.”

His favorite sports are baseball and basketball, and he enjoys playing video games. On social media, his favorite accounts to follow are all sports-related.

Sharonda had to tell her son he needed an amputation. “The disappointment on his face broke my heart,” she said. “But I noticed one thing: Parker didn’t cry too long. Parker perseveres with a positive outlook, and thanks to Shriners Children’s, now he’s limitless!”

Parker, who said he is good at being helpful to others, is pleased to be a National Patient Ambassador. “I can give back a small portion to Shriners Children’s, which has given me a great deal of my life back,” he said. “I want the next child who might be going through the same situation to know there are people to support you, and you’re not alone.”

“A hero, to me, is a person who, no matter what, does as much as they possibly can to make sure everything stays intact,” Parker said. “That’s exactly what I want to make sure I do – for not only my mom and my brother, but everyone who is ever around me.”

“I can give back a small portion to Shriners Children’s, which has given me a great deal of my life back.”

– PARKER

To view Katherine and Parker’s inspiring video, Back in the Game, visit bit.ly/BackInTheGameVideo.
Helping Kids Get Back in the Game

"I want families to know that amazing, family-centered care for sports injuries is available at Shriners Children’s.”
- JJ CRAVEN

Every year, the spouse of the new leader of Shriners International spearheads a program to raise funds and awareness for the extraordinary care found at Shriners Children’s. This year, Jennifer “JJ” Craven, First Lady of Shriners International, is chairing Women Impacting Care. Formerly called the First Lady’s Program, the program’s new name reflects what women connected to the fraternity have always done: worked together in support of the patients and families of Shriners Children’s. The 2022–2023 theme of the program is The World Is Your Oyster, and it is designed to promote and raise funds to support the care Shriners Children’s offers for sports- and play-related injuries.

“What makes our healthcare system distinct compared to other traditional sports injury specialists are our innovative and comprehensive treatment options centering around each patient’s individual needs and goals,” JJ said.

“This year’s campaign, The World Is Your Oyster, is designed to show that we believe in our patients’ grit and determination, and in our healthcare specialists’ expertise, so that our patients can overcome challenges with endless possibilities for success and recovery.”

Help for sports injuries
Many young people participate in team and individual sports, as well as activities such as dancing, running, biking and playing. Unfortunately, some suffer injuries as a result. Those injuries need to be treated differently from similar adult injuries. The medical teams at Shriners Children’s are especially attuned to an athlete’s concerns, as well as the differences between an adult’s body and that of a young, still-growing athlete.

Custom care plans
Shriners Children’s offers care for broken bones, sprains, strains, twists, tears and more. From fracture care and casting to surgery and rehabilitation for injuries involving ligaments, tendons, joints and tissues, our medical teams design custom care plans that are complemented by our physical, occupational and recreational therapy programs. Families appreciate the convenience of a single source for treatment, and children benefit from the continuity of care and collaboration.

Sometimes kids are wary of seeking treatment for pain or injuries because they are afraid they won’t be allowed to play. However, surgery and long recovery times are not always necessary. And when surgery is the best or only option, our clinical teams understand what an athlete is facing and work together to get them back in competing shape as quickly and safely as possible.

The World Is Your Oyster
First Lady JJ invites you to join her in making an impact in the lives of our patients. Donors who would like to support Women Impacting Care may purchase unique The World Is Your Oyster products or make donations online.

“The commonality of sports puts all of us on the same team,” JJ said. We can all relate to that kind of injury, often unexpected. And to know that world-class pediatric care is available from Shriners Children’s is such a comfort to families.”

TO LEARN MORE visit shrinerschildrens.org. To schedule an appointment, call your nearest Shriners Children’s location or 1-800-235-5055.

VISIT facebook.com/WomenImpactingCare.
A STORY WRITTEN IN THE STARS

Kechi, a 2017 finalist on America’s Got Talent, details her incredible story of survival, recovery and journey to becoming an inspiration to all in her memoir, More Than My Scars. Her book is the latest in a list of impressive accomplishments Kechi has achieved since nearly losing her life in a plane crash at 16.

One of only two survivors of the Sosoliso Airlines Flight 1145 crash in December 2005, which claimed the lives of 107, Kechi sustained third-degree burns on nearly 65% of her body. She was initially treated at a hospital in South Africa but eventually came to America, where she sought help at Shriners Children’s Texas. There, Kechi underwent more than 100 reconstructive surgeries and extensive physical therapy.

“Shriners gave me my life back,” Kechi recently told a morning talk show based in her hometown. “I view South Africa where they brought me back to life, and Shriners Children’s gave me my independence,” she said. “They gave me everything that meant something.”

During her recovery at Shriners Children’s, Kechi became involved with the hospital’s music therapy program, where she found the confidence to compete and become a finalist on America’s Got Talent.

Kechi is now a recording artist, author and burn survivor advocate, raising awareness for global causes like youth empowerment and bullying prevention. Her involvement in various international organizations, along with her book, have given her a platform to share her story and inspirational message of hope and healing.

TO LEARN MORE about Kechi, visit kechiofficial.com and youtu.be/32erjHLkCRY.
A Doctor Who Can Relate
Orthopedic surgeon was a patient, too

Eric Gordon, M.D., was first introduced to the field of orthopedics when he was a newborn in central California. But of course, he wouldn’t come to understand that as his life’s calling until years later, when he became a doctor in the field.

When little Eric was diagnosed with club feet, his parents sought immediate help. Months of casting were followed by a heel cord lengthening around the time of his first birthday. That surgery would be his first of six. His diagnosis and treatment influenced much of Dr. Gordon’s childhood. His orthopedic surgeon became a regular character in his journey.

So it made perfect sense that Dr. Gordon chose to study medicine and eventually pediatric orthopedics. A fellowship opportunity brought him to Shriners Children’s St. Louis and Washington University. That was in 1993. As they say, the rest is history.

“I enjoy building things. My grandfather was a carpenter, and I always wanted to be involved with him growing up. I tell people orthopedics is glorified carpentry,” Dr. Gordon explained. “I like the thought process in how to make things function better.”

Six decades after his initial diagnosis, Dr. Gordon can still remember what it was like to be a kid with an orthopedic problem. His memories include glimpses of great success and other moments of awful discomfort. So as a provider, he always keeps patient comfort top of mind.

Often, while in clinic or before surgery, he’ll share his own medical journey with patients and families as a show of solidarity and empathy.

“You’ll always find me trying to talk to the kids on their level. I always ask, ‘What questions do you have for me?’” he said.

It’s a small gesture with a big consequence: empowering a child to own their experience. “There is immediate gratification for me in the almost instantaneous ability to help a patient,” reflected Dr. Gordon. “And who doesn’t love working with kids?”

Eric Gordon, M.D.