

LEADERS IN care

STORIES OF THE MOST AMAZING CARE ANYWHERE

WINTER 2025

A Winning Smile

Families of children with cleft lip
and palate find strength in
community at Shriners Children's



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,



Children inspire us every day. No one sees that more clearly than we do at Shriners Children's. Families come to us seeking help for children with

complex medical conditions and serious injuries, and time and again those children respond with remarkable resilience.

Research suggests this resilience often stems from the inherent trust children place in adults. When a child is surrounded by supportive parents, dedicated caregivers and others who are invested in their recovery, that trust builds psychological and emotional strength.

We see this in our locations; children who face daunting challenges are still playing in our hallways, laughing with friends and smiling at staff. Their optimism lifts the entire atmosphere. Many of our team members say it is the main reason they feel called to work in our rehabilitation units, clinics and hospitals.

In this issue, we share compelling stories of patients who have endured

immense challenges, yet with the support of their care teams and families, have emerged stronger. I hope their journeys leave you with the same deep sense of awe we feel in walking beside them and earning their trust.

At Shriners Children's, we are committed not only to providing the very best care possible, but also to creating moments that make every child's experience meaningful and special. We know it is not only advanced treatments but also the compassion and support we give that make the difference. In return, the children we serve show us the courage and strength in hardship that inspire us all.

This commitment is especially visible during the holiday season, when twinkling lights, toy drives and acts of kindness bring joy to patients, families and staff alike. Within these pages, we share stories of that holiday magic.

From our Shriners Children's family to yours, we wish you a season full of hope, warmth and happiness.

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

PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

The team at Shriners Children's Portland received this lovely note from Katya, the mother of our patient Audrey, who is living with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Audrey had many great interactions with our therapists, and a chance to use an eye-gaze device that translates her eye movements into speech.



"Ms. April from OT and Miss Amanda from PT have been so helpful and empowering to our little Audrey. They both observed and met her where she was and explored new heights with her. Thank you to both! Special shout-out to Ms. Denae from OT – she stepped in with such joy and connection. Audrey loves you and all the games you played. Ms. Megan from speech therapy has taught us all the meaning of patience and endurance in trying out the eye gaze device. Thank you so much for all your incredible help and connection."

– Katya

WINTER 2025

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

ON THE COVER: Beau has discovered his superpower: making others smile as much as he does!

A Bold New Era in Pediatric Research

Shriners Children's is taking a bold step forward with plans to establish a research institute in Science Square Labs in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Shriners Children's Research Institute will be focused exclusively on advancing scientific discovery, unlike our medical facilities that are devoted to patient care. This dedicated engine for research and innovation will attract top physician-scientists, draw support from mission-driven philanthropists and forge high-impact collaborations with leading researchers.

This milestone is the culmination of a successful research partnership launched in 2019 between the Georgia Institute of Technology and Shriners Children's. More than 25 joint projects have made an impact, including those focused on robotic exoskeletons, wearable sleep



monitors and AI-driven insights into complex conditions like scoliosis.

"The Shriners Children's Research Institute will serve as a multidisciplinary innovation hub to advance the healthcare of children," said Marc Lalande, Ph.D., vice president of research programs. "The close partnership with the outstanding biomedical engineers and scientists from Georgia Tech and Emory University will accelerate discovery and spearhead new treatments and therapies."

This marks a remarkable new chapter in the story of Shriners Children's. Research efforts that began decades ago are delivering real benefits to patients today, and the work underway now — from genomics and motion analysis to artificial intelligence and beyond — is poised to drive meaningful advances in pediatric care for years to come.

Shriners Children's Honored in 'Best Hospitals' Rankings

Shriners Children's continues to set the standard in pediatric orthopedics, with four locations nationally ranked in *U.S. News & World Report's* 2025–2026 "Best Children's Hospitals" list. The rankings highlight the top 50 centers across 10 pediatric specialties, guiding families of children with life-threatening or complex conditions to the best care available. Shriners Children's locations are ranked in collaboration with their university affiliates, reflecting the strength of these partnerships in delivering exceptional pediatric care.

This year's honorees:

- No. 21 — Shriners Children's St. Louis
- No. 22 — Shriners Children's Salt Lake City
- No. 23 — Shriners Children's Northern California
- No. 45 — Shriners Children's Lexington

"Excellence in medicine is never an accident," said Chief Medical Officer Fran Farley, M.D. "It is the result of constant learning, collaboration and an unwavering focus on patients. This recognition affirms what I see every day at Shriners

Children's: Teams are dedicated not just to high standards, but to raising them, so that children and families receive the very best care."

As the nation's leading authority on healthcare quality, *U.S. News & World Report* rankings are a trusted guide for families seeking top-tier

pediatric care. This honor underscores Shriners Children's commitment to excellence, innovation and advancing pediatric medicine. We celebrate these achievements and reaffirm our mission to give every child the best chance to thrive.



**Shriners
Children's™**



expertise
& EXCELLENCE

SPECIALTY CARE FUELED BY INNOVATION & RESEARCH

Treating a

Winning
Smile

Parent-
to-parent
connections
foster
understanding
and support

Beau enjoys a snuggle with his mom, Sarah. He is one of thousands of patients born with cleft lip and palate who have received life-changing care at Shriners Children's.

Capture that original smile before it's gone!
That's the advice shared by parents who have a child born with a cleft lip and/or palate. >>

Sarah's son Beau was born with a bilateral cleft palate. Beau had trouble breathing at birth and also needed a feeding tube. Sarah and her husband Gill turned to Shriners Children's Boston and immediately knew they had found the right place to treat their son. Six years later, after several surgeries, Beau is thriving. The family is grateful for their son's treatment.

Still, "I miss Beau's original smile so much," says Sarah, who is grateful she still has many baby pictures of her son.

Annalisa is a mother of four, three of whom were born with a cleft. Her sons Jaxon, Dallin and Landon receive care at Shriners Children's Southern California. "Falling in love with two smiles is such a blessing," she says.

"I tell all my patients to take a ton of baby photos because the cleft smile is very unique," explains Rachel Bishop, M.D., DDS, a specialist in cleft and craniofacial surgery at Shriners Children's Shreveport. "It is big and wide and welcoming. And when we close those clefts, they just look like a normal lip. Families do miss it."

A hallmark of Shriners Children's care is a dedicated team approach. Experienced, innovative specialists create tailored care plans and collaborate every

"Take a ton of baby photos because the cleft smile is unique."

— RACHEL BISHOP, M.D., DDS



At Shriners Children's Shreveport, Chloe, shows off her new smile with her surgeon, Dr. Rachel Bishop.

step of the way. Patients with a cleft often receive care from surgeons, dental professionals, speech and language therapists, and dietitians.

Combine our teams' expertise with the environment of our facilities, where families share their experiences with

each other, and you see what makes Shriners Children's care unique. Our families don't need to go it alone.

Our parents and staff offer this advice to families with an unborn or newborn child with a cleft.

Get a prenatal appointment

There is so much to know and prepare for, and it helps to start learning early, advises

Dr. Bishop. At her prenatal consultations with parents, she goes over what to expect when the baby is born, whether the child will need a special bottle to feed and approximately how many surgeries may be needed.

"In most prenatal consults I see, the mom is usually very tearful, and the dad is apprehensive. Most of the apprehension comes from not knowing what to expect," she says.

Be open and be brave

“Don’t be afraid to take your child out or post pictures of them or talk about what they are going through,” Sarah says.

Being open provides as much of a lesson for the child as it does for those outside the family, say April and Michael, who have two children seen at Shriners Children’s Chicago. “One thing we pride ourselves on is building confidence in our kids,” April says.

People will stare, acknowledges Annalisa. “Try to make it a positive interaction. I use it as a time to inform. I tell them, ‘Yep, one in 300 babies has a cleft,’” she says.

Recognize the cleft is not your fault

“When I first heard that my kid would be born with a cleft, I thought, what have I done wrong,” Annalisa says. “But now, I would say to another mom, it is not your fault.”

Clefts happen due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors, usually impossible to identify in any one case. Annalisa now says: “There is nothing I would do to change anything at all.”



Twin brothers Ty and Colton are looking forward to new adventures after successful cleft treatment at Shriners Children’s Ohio.

Trust yourself and be prepared to advocate

Children born with a cleft lip and palate can face multiple challenges with breathing, eating and speaking. The medical journey can seem like one hurdle after another.

So, sometimes, you, as the parent, have to be assertive to ensure you are getting the answers that you need, Sarah, April and other parents advise. At Shriners Children’s, comprehensive care teams are adept at providing information in a thorough and compassionate way. Even so, it’s important to speak up.

“It’s very easy for medical professionals — especially if they don’t know you — to speak about what is or isn’t in a textbook, or what they’ve seen in their practice,” says Sarah, who is a registered nurse. “And, I think that is fair on their behalf. But you know your kid better than anybody,” she says.

Develop a good support system

“Find your family,” says Barbie, whose twin teenage sons, Ty and Colton, see the cleft lip and palate specialists at Shriners Children’s Ohio. She suggests searching Facebook and elsewhere online to find support groups.

“I have friends I’ve known for 14 years,” Barbie says. “Some I’ve never met in person. But we’d do anything for each other.”

Dr. Bishop says that at Shriners Children’s, support is almost built in. She recently had two families, both going through a lip repair on the same day and then a palate repair on the same day. The families connected and supported each other.

“We can link people up with someone who has already gone through it if they just want to talk,” Dr. Bishop says.

Be prepared: Surgery does not get easier

Children with a cleft often need multiple surgeries. It would be nice if it became easier as kids get older. Unfortunately, it doesn’t.

“It’s tougher when they are older, and understand and ask questions,” April says.

What’s a parent to do when their child is preparing for yet another procedure? “The most important thing is having them know another kiddo who is going through what they are experiencing, even if it is not identical,” Dr. Bishop says.

The Most Amazing Care Anywhere

Lastly, consider getting care at Shriners Children’s.

“From the moment you enter the door at Shriners Children’s, you are greeted with a smile and joy,” Dr. Bishop says.

Sarah says being at Shriners Children’s with Beau is a “no-brainer.” She saw how hard Beau’s physician worked through each struggle and complication.

“I thought, ‘This guy really cares about my son,’” she says.

Every smile tells a story, and at Shriners Children’s, we’re honored to be part of each one. 🧡



Annalisa’s three eldest boys, left to right, Dallin, Jaxon and Landon, had cleft repairs. Now they can’t stop smiling at baby brother Hayden!



LEARN MORE about cleft lip and palate care at Shriners Children’s. Visit shrinerschildrens.org/en/pediatric-care/cleft-palate

We've Got You Covered

Nurse-driven initiative puts patient modesty first

Sometimes, the simplest act can have a meaningful impact on patient outcomes.

At Shriners Children's Boston, as part of ongoing efforts to improve patient care and satisfaction, clinical staff asked themselves, "How can we be more mindful of our patients' religious, cultural and personal modesty preferences during exams and procedures?" This led to We've Got You Covered, an initiative that reflects a commitment by staff to protect patient dignity.

The project was spearheaded by perioperative nurse Maureen "Mo" Hanley, BSN, RN, CNOR, CBRN, who was a patient at another hospital years ago. Hanley's experience left her feeling embarrassed and disrespected when staff failed to keep her covered after injuries from a car accident. "My clothes were cut off so they could assess me, but no one seemed to care I was completely exposed. No one did anything to protect my privacy."

Amid the fast pace of daily care, Hanley's project reminds staff to take time to pause and consider each patient's comfort and privacy.

As an operating room nurse, Hanley recognizes that many surgeries require sensitive body parts to be uncovered; however, her philosophy of maximum coverage for the most amount of time keeps dignity at the forefront. "Patients are vulnerable while under anesthesia, so I take my role as their advocate very seriously," said Hanley. She explained there are interventions to limit what is visible, including sterile towels, blankets, disposable underwear and even disposable hijabs, which reflect cultural competence and reduce patient anxiety.

Dan Driscoll, M.D., FACS, was an early supporter. "With the patient volume we have at Shriners Children's Boston, there's always a sense we've just got to get the job done. You must balance that with patient concerns," he said. "It's important in a pediatric hospital — especially



By presenting her project at research conferences, perioperative nurse Maureen Hanley is helping other healthcare providers understand the importance of respecting patients' modesty.

"Ensuring our patients can trust us as caregivers is an integral part of a positive experience."

— BROOKE ALLEN, CHILD LIFE SPECIALIST

for teenagers going through natural body changes — to let them know we respect their modesty."

The outpatient clinic has played a key role in advancing We've Got You Covered. The clinic is often where care begins, for checkups and preparation for surgery. "Modesty is at the top of the list of things that make patients anxious," said Debbie Carlson, BSN, RN, CPN.

Child life specialist Brooke Allen, MS, CCLS, is also a champion of Hanley's efforts. "This is another way we can advocate for our patients," she said, noting that protecting privacy makes patients feel even more comfortable with their clinicians. "Ensuring our patients can trust us as caregivers is an integral part of a positive experience."

Hanley submitted the project to the American Burn Association annual conference and presented at the Shriners Children's State of the Science research conference. She also attended the Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses national conference, where she detailed her modesty project during a nursing research panel.

The positive feedback extends beyond colleagues to patients. "Caregivers are so appreciative of our staff taking time to address their child's modesty. If these are the things we're doing to make patients feel better about coming to the hospital, it's going to make them feel even safer while at Shriners Children's Boston," said Hanley.

champions

IN HEALING

EMPOWERING PATIENTS, FAMILIES & CARE TEAMS

joyful Spirits

Young patients
discover new
passions through
recovery

What does it take to turn a challenge into a triumph? At Shriners Children's, we see the answer in our patients every day. It takes courage. It takes persistence. And it takes the kind of care that empowers children not only to heal, but to believe in themselves.

For Zhenghong, Martín, Winter and Dani, those ingredients sparked remarkable journeys — nurtured by care teams who offer not only medical expertise, but also encouragement, adaptive strategies and unwavering belief in what is possible. From the ski slopes to the art studio, from the music stage to the family kitchen, their successes reflect a powerful partnership between determination and support. Together, they show that dreams don't just survive setbacks. With the right care, they grow stronger because of them. >>

Nordic skiing has become a passion for Zhenghong, who has been managing his limb difference with help from Shriners Children's Twin Cities.



By adopting a daily training regimen, Zhenghong hopes to one day be a member of the U.S. Paralympic team.

Rising up by sliding down

When Zhenghong lined up at the start of his first World Cup race in Val di Fiemme, Italy, early this year, he was already redefining what was possible. An avid Nordic skier, Zhenghong is chasing his dream: to compete at the Winter Paralympics.

It's a long way from where this young man's journey began.

When Zhenghong first arrived at Shriners Children's Twin Cities at age 6, he was a new adoptee adjusting to life in Minnesota. Because Zhenghong had been born with a limb difference, his mom, Sheila, thought a prosthetic would be essential to help him navigate daily life. The Shriners Children's prosthetics team created a custom one, but they also shared something equally transformative: that whether he wore it or not, he could thrive exactly as he was.

That message, combined with the encouragement of Shriners Children's sports camps, lit the spark that would guide his future. At Winter Camp Achieve, Zhenghong first strapped on skis and discovered the freedom of movement, competition and community. "Meeting other athletes through Shriners Children's made me set a higher bar for myself," he recalls. "I wanted to see how far I could go."

"Sheila told us from the start that her son was an athlete," recalls physical therapist Becky, who worked closely with Zhenghong after an additional diagnosis of scoliosis. "Our role was to strengthen

his body so he could do what he loved." Zhenghong learned exercises to keep his residual limb strong, maintain balance and protect his back, especially when skiing. The sports medicine and rehabilitation team also guided him through safe training techniques, including how to adapt equipment in the weight room.

As a young teen, Zhenghong discovered Para Nordic skiing and attended a Shriners Children's Nordic camp, while in high school. There he met a U.S. Paralympics development coach who saw his potential. That connection set him on the road to elite competition — including training in the underground ski tunnel of Oberhof, Germany, in 2024, and racing against the world's best just months later.

"Nordic skiing is a lot of work," Zhenghong admits. "It's painful, but it's also really fun and rewarding. Being around world-class athletes with the same disability as me is inspiring. It makes me want to push harder — maybe make the Paralympics someday."

Now living in Montana to train full-time, Zhenghong is still fueled by the support that first took root at Shriners Children's. Sheila reflects on his journey with gratitude: "We intentionally adopted a child with a limb difference, but Shriners Children's opened more doors than I ever thought possible — medically, emotionally and athletically. They've been an amazing partner in helping him grow into who he is today."



Kids Conquer the Slopes at Camp Achieve

Skiing can be a difficult skill for kids or adults of any age to pick up, but for children with limb differences, the recreational sport can be even more challenging. That's why Shriners Children's Twin Cities offers a very special ski camp called Winter Camp Achieve Downhill Ski Day. Since 2005, the camp has helped more than 500 children with limb differences hit the slopes, where they can build confidence and friendships.

Britta Kleinwolterink, BS, CCLS, Shriners Children's senior child life specialist and camp director, said the camp provides an opportunity for these kids to get outside of their comfort zone and try a new sport in a supportive and adaptive environment.

"It's incredible to see the impact Winter Camp Achieve has made on kids' lives," said Kleinwolterink. "The skills they learn here go beyond just skiing; the best part is seeing how they help and support each other. There's no one-size-fits-all approach to helping these young athletes learn a skill like skiing. But they figure it out, and many times, it's with the help of not only the instructors, but their peers."

For kids ages 5–19 with limb differences, Camp Achieve lets them try everything from the bunny hill to the high-level black diamond slopes when they're ready.



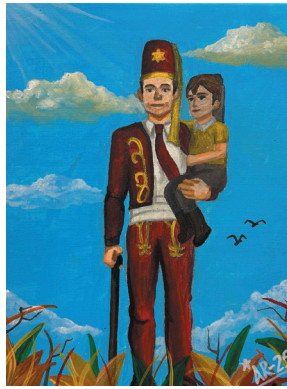
An artistic rebirth

Martín was just 16 when his life changed forever. While playing with a cousin, he accidentally touched high-voltage power lines. There was an explosion and Martín fell unconscious. Hearing the noise, his family rushed over and tried to resuscitate him while waiting for the ambulance.

Martín was rushed to a nearby hospital with extensive electrical burns and remained there for a month. Doctors informed the family of the severity of his injuries. First, they would need to amputate his right foot, then both arms and finally his other leg. The prognosis was grim. “Say goodbye to your son,” the doctors said. “He’s in very critical condition.” The news was devastating.

Against all odds, Martín survived. He lost all his limbs, but never his will to live or his determination to move forward.

Months after the accident, Martín was referred to Shriners Children’s Mexico for rehabilitation, where he began a comprehensive recovery process. He was fitted with custom prostheses for all his limbs and supported by a team of specialists who



Martín recreated the iconic Shriners Children’s logomark to honor his care team.

“Thanks to the doctors, nurses and staff for supporting me and providing me with my prostheses. I hope you continue to have the patience and strength to keep helping more people.”

— MARTÍN, SHRINERS CHILDREN’S MEXICO



Through his painting, Martín has shown both resilience and talent.

guided him through his healing journey. Physical therapists helped him regain strength and mobility. Occupational therapists taught him to successfully use his prostheses in daily life. Psychologists gave him the emotional tools to accept his new reality and envision a future. Each session was a step forward, proving to Martín that nothing is impossible.

During his recovery, Martín discovered a new way of seeing the world: painting. Through colors and shapes, he found a way to tell his story and express his emotions.

He refined his technique until art became his new life’s work. Soon after, he was able to hold his first public exhibition, titled Art Without Hands.

Now 19, Martín is determined to dedicate his life to art and proudly shares his message: “Don’t let the world try to stop us! Even if we’re missing an arm or a leg, we are still complete.” His story is a testament to how resilience, talent and inner strength can overcome even life’s toughest challenges. >>

Cooking up confidence

For Shriners Children's Erie patient Winter, age 9, Christmas has always been about more than just the meal; it's about being in the kitchen with her mom, preparing a feast for the whole family. She's been her mother's big helper with holiday cooking since she was around 5 years old.

Winter's passion for these special moments became even more meaningful after she faced a serious health challenge. A blood infection progressed into a complex condition that substantially weakened her muscles and nerves and eventually required skin grafts. After Winter left the hospital where she was initially treated, her care team recommended occupational and physical therapy to help her regain her independence.

Occupational therapist Kristen Ciacchini, OTR/L, and physical therapist Rachel Mauro, DPT, worked with Winter to rebuild her strength, coordination and confidence. Therapy was challenging at first, but she steadily improved in self-care skills like dressing and grooming. Sessions focused on range of motion, arm and hand strength, and fine motor skills needed for tasks like managing buttons, zippers and shoelaces.

Therapy goals were tackled through games, crafts and activities, like cooking in the therapy kitchen, that made hard work fun. One task Winter struggled with was the sawing motion while using a knife. She discovered that using a larger knife and applying downward pressure, or using an adaptive rocker knife, helps her prepare food more easily and safely. With these adaptations, Winter has gained confidence in a hobby she loves, allowing her to participate more fully in the kitchen and enjoy the independence that comes with it.

Cooking has remained a big part of Winter's therapy journey, and this year she's especially excited to put her skills to use in helping prepare Christmas dinner. From chopping vegetables to stirring stuffing, she'll be side-by-side with her mom, carrying on a tradition she's loved for years.



Rolling out a pie crust is just one of the many cooking skills Winter can tackle now after relearning large- and small-motor functions.

He's got the beat

When Dani was born, a medical error during delivery caused his right shoulder to be dislocated. From a young age, he underwent therapies that only worsened his condition, until it became clear that he had completely lost movement in his right arm.

Everything changed when it was suggested that Dani seek specialized care at Shriners Children's Mexico. When he was 2, he finally received a clear diagnosis from his new medical team: the delivery had injured Dani's brachial plexus, the network of nerves near the neck, where damage can result in weakness, loss of movement, or even paralysis in the shoulder, arm, hand and fingers.

Dani worked with occupational therapists and underwent several surgeries, which gradually restored mobility and function in his right arm. At the same time, Dani discovered a powerful ally in sports. He first tried judo and later swimming, activities that built his strength, coordination and confidence.

"Thanks to the surgeries I've received at Shriners Children's Mexico and the work of my occupational therapists, I've been able to practice sports like judo and swimming and even play more than one musical instrument," Dani shares.

As he gained more mobility in his arm, Dani found a creative outlet in music. When he turned 15, his grandfather gave him his first drum set. He was thrilled at the prospect of playing, but coordinating both arms was a big challenge. Through constant practice, Dani overcame the difficulties, and his perseverance paid off.

Now 18, Dani has not only regained mobility and confidence, but he has also achieved his musical dream. He is part of his own rock band, playing bass and drums, proving that with effort and passion, no obstacle is impossible to overcome.

"I am very grateful to the hospital for all the care they've given me and my family, allowing me today to dedicate myself to what I love most — music," said Dani. 🎸



Clockwise from top: With help from his therapy team, Dani has embraced many new activities. His current enthusiasm for bass guitar and drums grew from the tenacity he showed for judo when he was younger.

Bundle Up, Play Smart

Winter safety tips for families

When the temperature drops and the days get shorter, winter brings a whole new set of adventures — and risks — for kids and their families. Sledding, snowball fights and gathering around the fireplace can all be a blast, but staying safe takes a little extra planning. Before you bundle up and head outside, here's what every family should know to keep winter fun and accident-free.

Layer Like a Champ

- Dress in loose, thin layers: thermal base, sweater/fleece and waterproof coat
- Wear a hat, scarf/neck warmer and water-resistant mittens or gloves
- Choose insulated, waterproof boots and thick socks
- Cover all skin to prevent frostbite



Safe and Cozy Indoors

- Keep heaters and fireplaces clear of toys, blankets and decorations
- Use safety screens and never leave kids alone near flames
- Watch out for glass fireplace fronts — they can be dangerously hot even after the fire is out
- Check carbon monoxide and smoke detectors regularly and replace batteries



Bright Gear, Safer Play

- Dress kids in bright, reflective clothing for visibility
- Pick sledding hills far from roads, trees and fences
- Sled feet-first, with helmets on, and keep eyes on younger kids
- Skate only where local officials say it's safe



Holiday Cheer, Safe and Clear

- Toss frayed cords and unplug lights before bed or leaving home
- Give your tree a fresh cut and water daily so it doesn't dry out
- Keep trees away from fireplaces, heaters and candles
- Switch to flameless candles for sparkle without the risk





systemwide
STRENGTH

DEDICATED TO CARING FOR MORE KIDS IN MORE PLACES

Creating Holiday *magic*

*From toy drives
to twinkling
trees, patients and
community members
bring joy and wonder
during the holidays*

At Shriners Children's, the holidays shine a little brighter thanks to acts of kindness both big and small. Patients, staff and community members come together to make the season magical for children receiving care, reminding them that even in the hospital, joy is never far away. From generous volunteers and students who create dazzling holiday displays to a young patient named Hazel who brings armfuls of toys, these traditions lift spirits and show what the season is truly about: hope, generosity and love. >>

Holiday magic unfolds

For more than 30 years, the holiday season at Shriners Children's New England has been brightened by two Christmas trees adorned with colorful origami. Each delicate fold tells a story of creativity and community, and, most importantly, brings joy to the children who see these unique ornaments.

The tradition began in the 1990s with Bob and Eunice Stack, accomplished origami artists. Volunteering at Shriners Children's New England, they taught patients and families how to fold cranes, stars, trains and other intricate models. For children facing long hospital stays, the opportunity to contribute their own creations gave them a sense of accomplishment and connection. Over the years, these handmade ornaments became part of the holiday trees, spreading smiles and wonder throughout the hospital.

When the Stacks retired, the Valley Folders, a local origami group, took up the tradition. Janet Yelle, an accomplished folder, became the project's coordinator. Her signature "Train and Tracks" model, with shimmering foil and a puff of cotton "smoke," has delighted children every year since it was introduced.

Today, a dedicated team of volunteers carefully unboxes and arranges the treasured models — most folded decades ago by patients, families and the Stacks themselves — and adds a few new creations each season.

"Decorating the trees is magical," Janet said. "Seeing children's eyes light up when they spot a model they helped fold — or discover something new on the tree — is the best part. It's a joy we're honored to share every holiday."

Tree-mendous fun

Sebastian didn't hesitate. The moment he spotted the Hot Wheels Christmas tree — just a little taller than he was — he raced across the room, wrapped his arms around it, and claimed it as his own. With a proud smile, the 3-year-old carried the tree back to his hospital room, where it lit up the space with holiday magic.

For Sebastian, who receives ongoing care for cleft lip and palate at Shriners Children's Texas, that tree meant more than just decoration. It was joy, comfort and a sense of Christmas, even while spending the season in the hospital.

Last December, Sebastian and dozens of other patients chose from 42 handmade Christmas trees, each built and donated by ninth-grade students from nearby Brazoswood High School. The project, designed to give back to the community, featured trees decorated with themes that children love — from Barbie and Pokémon to the Houston Astros and Buc-ee's. Patients were invited to stroll through the "Christmas Tree Farm" and pick the one to brighten their rooms.

The display was coordinated by Lisa Matranga, director of Psalm 91 Ministries, in collaboration with Brazoswood High School teachers and the Shriners Children's child life department. Together, they transformed a hospital hallway into a winter wonderland, ensuring that every child had a bit of holiday cheer to take back to their room.

The Christmas Tree Farm was a highlight of the season — and all are hopeful the tradition will continue for years to come. 🎄



More than three decades' worth of origami ornaments grace the tree at Shriners Children's New England.



Sebastian couldn't resist the Hot Wheels tree — his favorite pick from the "Christmas Tree Farm" at Shriners Children's Texas.



Hope for the Holidays

Hazel's Helping Hands delivers joy with toys

Seven-year-old Hazel is putting her hands to work for the hospital that treated her for burns to her hands and torso. She sustained a serious burn injury on her family's farm when she was a toddler and was rushed to Shriners Children's Ohio.

"I was terrified of the pain she was in and how she was going to recover," Hazel's mother, Ashlee, recalled. "But the nurses comforted Hazel and also walked me through exactly what they were going to do to get her better."

One of the ways the team distracted Hazel during her initial burn treatment was offering her toys and games. When Hazel learned that the toys are often provided by donors, she decided she wanted to contribute.

"I want to help other kids and make them feel a little better," Hazel said. That's when Hazel's Helping Hands, an annual holiday toy drive, was born. Over the last three years, Hazel has donated truckloads of toys to the child life departments of several hospitals.

"The toys donated by Hazel stock our child life department with gifts of all sizes," explained Michelle Smith, CCLS, certified child life specialist at Shriners Children's Ohio. "We understand the unique needs of our pediatric patients beyond their medical care, and gestures like these, especially from a fellow patient, have a powerful impact on helping a child feel comfortable and safe while at our hospital."

When asked if Hazel plans to continue collecting toys she enthusiastically exclaimed, "Yes!" 🧡

Gathering toys by the truckload is a joyful task for former patient Hazel as she shares holiday fun with other Shriners Children's kids.



A Home Away From Home

New housing facility brings relief to families at Shriners Children's Texas

For families whose children are hospitalized, every night counts. The new family housing facility at Shriners Children's Texas provides clean, bright rooms just steps from life-changing care — a place to rest, recharge and focus on their child.

Roughly three years ago, Shriners Children's Texas, located in Galveston, broke ground on a 40-room housing facility for parents and guardians staying with their children. That new stand-alone building, along with an adjacent parking garage, opened in late 2024 — and it's been busy ever since.

Most hospitals recognize the need for nearby lodging for families who want to stay close to their loved ones during hospitalization. But the need is more acute for a children's hospital — and even more so for one that provides burn care, complex orthopedics and rehabilitation therapy, like Shriners Children's Texas. Those patients may need to be in the hospital, or near it, for weeks or even months at a time.

Other Shriners Children's locations have available lodging through partners such as Ronald McDonald House Charities. And Shriners Children's Hawai'i operates its own smaller lodge. But it made particular sense for the Galveston hospital to build dedicated housing, given that the island's popularity as a tourist destination often makes hotels and apartment rentals hard to find and expensive.

Of the 40 units, six are set aside for visiting medical professionals — doctors and nurses who travel to the hospital to train and observe Shriners Children's best practices. The remaining suites are reserved for families, who can come and go easily between the hospital and the facility.

The rooms themselves are a cross between a hospital room and a hotel room. They include two beds, a couch, a desk, an ADA-accessible bathroom and small refrigerators for medication storage. Families can share meals in the community kitchen and lounge, bringing together parents and children on similar journeys.

Among the first to experience that comfort were mother and son Jesika and Jameson, the first family to officially settle into the new housing facility. For them, it meant more than a place to sleep — it was a chance to rest, recover and find community.

Occupancy has been remarkably high since opening. This past July, for example, only eight of the 40 rooms were unoccupied. "The families love it," said resource navigator Sarai Jimenez, who manages the housing. "The impact goes well beyond convenience. It gives families peace of mind because being here gives them more time to focus on their child, rather than worrying about where they are going to stay or how they are going to pay."



Jesika and her son Jameson were among the first families to settle into Shriners Children's Texas' new housing facility, where they can enjoy comfort, community and peace of mind just steps away from the hospital.

The adjoining parking garage has also brought welcome relief to patients and visitors as parking on Galveston Island is limited. Together, the housing and garage project represent a significant upgrade to the Shriners Children's Texas campus — and a tangible example of how Shriners Children's cares not just for patients, but their families as well.

Leslie Stewart, M.D., president of Shriners Children's, shared this during the ribbon-cutting: "This new facility provides comfort, community and peace of mind for our families. It's another way we fulfill our mission — to care for every child, and every family, with compassion and excellence." 🧡



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Whether you're an experienced pickleball player or new to the court, you can make a difference by hosting a pickleball event in support of Shriners Children's™. Pickleball is one of the fastest-growing sports, and it's a fun way to engage your community in raising funds that help provide life-changing care for children like Haidee.

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Legacies of Love

Gifts that continue to make a difference

Arturo and Angelina left their small hometown in Italy, carrying little more than dreams for the future and their six-month-old son in their arms. Their journey brought them to Brooklyn, New York, where they spent 13 years building a new life.



Arturo, a skilled cabinet maker, found steady work with local contractors. Over time, his craftsmanship and determination allowed him to purchase land outside Albuquerque, New Mexico. The family relocated, and Arturo transitioned from making cabinets to building custom homes — crafting not only houses, but a solid foundation for his family's future.

Years later, Arturo and Angelina saw a Shriners Children's commercial, and the stories of hope and healing struck a chord. Learning that the healthcare system had been helping children for over 100 years inspired deep trust. "If an organization had been open that long, they must be doing something right," Arturo thought. The couple began supporting the mission, knowing their contributions would be put to good use.

When Arturo received a piece of mail about planned giving, he explored the idea and ultimately decided to create a charitable gift annuity (CGA). For Arturo and Angelina, it was a way to give back to the country that had given them so much — a way to make dreams come true for others, just as theirs had come true.

Angelina passed away in 2013, but Arturo finds comfort in knowing that their CGA gift is a tribute to their life together and the love they shared in New Mexico for decades — Arturo continues to call it home — a place where hard work, love and generosity took root and continue to grow.



Angelina and Arturo shared a lasting gift that supports Shriners Children's mission.

Charitable gift annuity (CGA) payout rates are higher than they have been in more than a decade. Now is a great time to consider this gift that benefits YOU and Shriners Children's.

Find Your Rate

One Life

AGE	RATE
60	5.2%
65	5.7%
70	6.3%
75	7.0%
80	8.1%
85	9.1%
90+	10.1%

Two Lives

AGES	RATE
60/65	4.8%
65/70	5.2%
70/75	5.8%
75/80	6.5%
80/85	7.3%
85/90	8.7%
90/95+	9.9%

Rates are subject to change. Please contact us for a personalized illustration. If you reside in New York, please contact us directly as your rates may vary slightly.



 **LEARN MORE** about charitable gift annuities at shrinerschildrens.org/cga



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By organizing a golf tournament,
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Whether you're a seasoned golfer
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others, visit our website,
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get started.





Cultivating care

In the 1960s, amid the rolling plains of Illinois, a generous gift had a transformational impact on Shriners Children's. An Illinois farm was donated to Shriners Children's — and this farm remains a cherished part of our heritage today. That act of generosity set in motion one of the most dynamic philanthropic initiatives in our history.

Shriners Children's now owns and manages more than 60 farms and ranches spanning the United States. These properties add a unique asset class to the endowment, making up 90% of our entire real estate portfolio while generating several million dollars every year to support patient care.

Farms provide continuous income potential, annual returns and appreciation of the land over time. It's a rare and special approach, uncommon in the nonprofit world.

"To know that we're working with an organization that ultimately helps children always brings a sense of pride," says Gary Hester, a farmer on a Shriners Children's farm.

Recognizing the profound value of land — and that each property has its own unique story — Shriners Children's leadership and investment committee are committed not only to maintaining the use of donated farmland but also to investing in the conservation of that land. Looking ahead, our mission is to continue to encourage farm owners across the country to consider making a gift of farmland.

Because we have the ability to retain these properties as active farms, managed through a partnership with Farmers National, Shriners Children's can ensure these precious gifts are nurtured and optimized and that farm owners' legacies are secure — all while providing a vital income stream that significantly bolsters patient care. 🌱



To learn about the many ways you can support Shriners Children's, visit shrinerschildrens.org/giving

CONNECT WITH US

By phone: 813-367-2241

By email: plannedgiving@shrinenet.org



LEARN MORE You, too, can support our patients through a:

Gift of Real Estate

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Qualified Charitable
Distribution Giving



A JOURNEY OF HEALING, HOPE AND HAWAIIAN HERITAGE

NAME: KIA'I

CONDITION: TALIPES
EQUINOVARUS
(CLUBFOOT)

LOCATION: HAWAII



“Nothing holds him back — I know he can achieve anything he desires.”

— KIA'I'S GRANDMOTHER NAPUA

Kia'i is quite the fisherman — he recently landed a yellowfin tuna bigger than himself! His grandparents are helping Kia'i embrace his traditional Hawaiian heritage through such activities as surfing, competitive swimming and attending a Hawaiian immersion school.

Kia'i was born with talipes equinovarus, commonly known as clubfoot. His tūtū (grandmother), Napua, knew just where to turn. “My cousin was treated at Shriners Children’s, and I witnessed her exceptional care,” she recalled. “I wanted the best for Kia'i, so I called Shriners Children’s for an appointment.”

At only 20 days old, Kia'i received his first gentle manipulation and cast to straighten his tiny feet. For the next several weeks, he and Napua traveled more than 200 miles from Hilo to Honolulu for new casts at Shriners Children’s Hawai'i.

“The serial (progressive) casting process is the biggest hurdle for any child with clubfoot,” explained pediatric orthopedic surgeon Jonathan Pellett, M.D. “But Kia'i tolerated it remarkably well.”

After graduating to a boot-and-bar brace, which he wore for two years, Kia'i embraced an active lifestyle. Napua encouraged activities that would build discipline, foster individuality and keep him connected to his Native Hawaiian roots — including learning 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, the Hawaiian language. Kia'i developed a passion for the ukulele, surfing, fishing, swimming, wa'a (canoeing) and Kajukenbo, a martial art created in Hawai'i. “Without Shriners Children’s, Kia'i wouldn’t be as independent as he is today,” Napua said.

When Kia'i was 7 and learning soccer, Napua noticed his legs turning inward again. She quickly contacted Dr. Pellett, who reapplied casts for five weeks, followed by physical therapy with Michele Chee, DPT, to strengthen his legs and ankles. Thanks to early intervention, Kia'i avoided surgery — rare, as most children with clubfoot need it. “As a surgeon, it’s almost a contradiction to say the best treatment for clubfoot is to avoid surgery through casting and bracing,” Dr. Pellett notes. “But in Kia'i’s case, that was true.”

Now 10, Kia'i continues to add new interests while dreaming big. “He loves swimming and wants to become a firefighter,” says Napua. “Nothing holds him back — I know he can achieve anything he desires.” 🐟



Unstoppable on the Ice

Shriners Children's alumnae make history

Four Shriners Children's patient alumnae took the ice — and the world — by storm at the inaugural World Para Ice Hockey Women's World Championships in Dolny Kubin, Slovakia, last August. Competing against teams from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Norway and Team World, these athletes showed what grit and teamwork look like.

On the U.S. Women's National Sled Hockey Team, our four patient alumnae stood out: team captain Erica McKee, Paralympian Lera Doederlein, goaltender Hope Magelky and former national patient ambassador Katie Ladlie. Each brought their own strength and drive, and together they made an absolutely unstoppable team.

Their journey from Shriners Children's to the world stage is a reminder of what's possible when kids are given the support and encouragement to thrive. The specialized care, therapy and guidance they received at Shriners Children's helped them build strength, confidence and resilience — tools they carried onto the

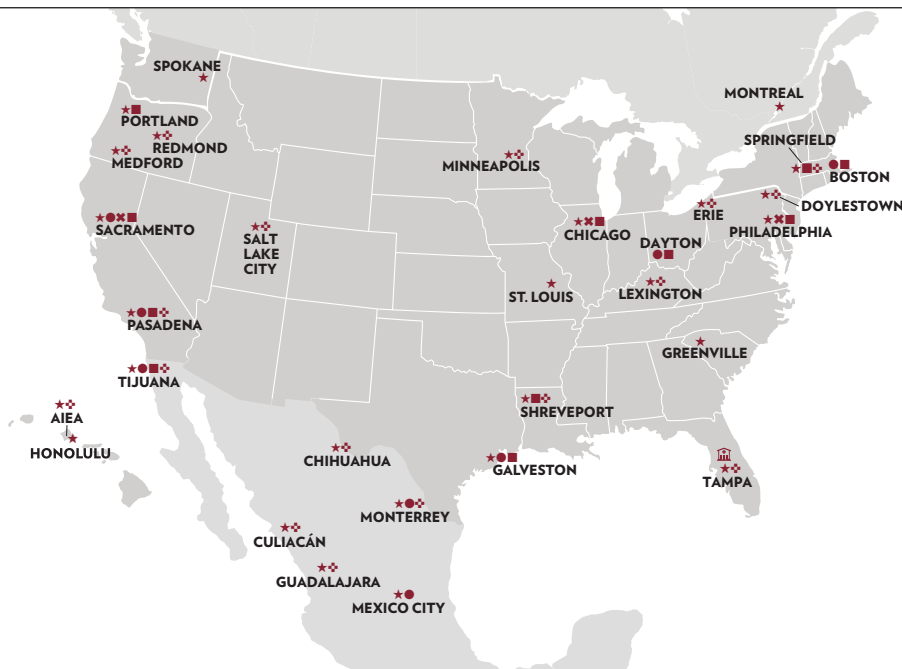


Hope, Lera, Katie and Erica show off their gold.

ice. Every practice, every therapy session, every small victory along the way built the foundation for this moment.

These world-class athletes continue to inspire the next generation of young patients. They show that the right care can turn challenges into achievements. With perseverance and heart, anything is possible.

LOCATIONS



- ★ Orthopedics
- Burn care
- ✕ Spinal cord injury
- Cleft lip and palate
- ⊕ Outpatient care only; necessary inpatient care provided at an affiliated facility
- 🏠 Shriners Children's and Shriners International Headquarters