A Message from the Director

In this, our first issue of the Mt. Sinai Child Life Quarterly, we spotlight our many supporters and the volunteers who help us achieve our vision of providing innovative programming for pediatric patients and families.

The mission of the Child Life program and the Maternal Child Health Care Center is to create a family centered environment that addresses the psychological and emotional needs of hospitalized children and their families.

We salute our many supporters and encourage others to join us as we continue our efforts to offer state of the art opportunities for coping and adjustment to the children and families we serve!

Please feel free to contact me directly regarding these and other opportunities to volunteer or contribute to our efforts.

Diane Rode, Director
Child Life Program
The Maternal Child Health Care Center

The Mount Sinai Children’s Center Foundation

For fourteen years, the Children’s Center Foundation has supported innovative and therapeutic Child Life initiatives in Pediatrics. In 2001, the Foundation supported projects and programming including:

- The “Family Friendly” Dove Movie Channel in Pediatrics
- The annual Maternal/Child Health Care Center Bereavement Ceremony
- Children and Health Care Week activities
- “Through Our Eyes” Video Therapy services
- Extended playroom hours and the “Kids TV” close circuit broadcast programming
- Treatment room therapeutic “Coping and Comfort” supplies
- The ongoing, successful environmental enhancement initiative in Pediatrics and our successful “What We Imagine: The Art of Feeling Better” ceramic tile installation project.

In an institutional environment of cost containment, these program initiatives that dramatically impact on patient and family satisfaction would not be possible. We, along with the patients and families we serve, continue to appreciate the support of the Children’s Center Foundation that enables us to offer the highest quality of care that embraces the emotional and physical aspects of healing and recuperation.

Diane Rode, Director
Child Life Program
The Maternal Child Health Care Center
Child Life Quarterly

The Family Resource Library of The Maternal Child Health Care Center

In 2001 The Child Life Program completed the pilot development of the Family Resource Center Library within the MCH Family Resource Center. The Mount Sinai Auxiliary Board generously funded this pilot project in 2000 to provide specialized materials designed to supplement parent and patient education.

The library is currently staffed by Alika Hope Bryant (also our “Reach Out and Read” coordinator) for four half-days per week, with a goal of increasing accessibility. The library provides materials to children and their families in a non-threatening, comfortable atmosphere at times when family members are ready to absorb and use information. This family environment disseminates information to families through the use of a circulating book and video library, internet access and computer software, reference materials and pamphlets.

The goal of the library is to respect and encourage the choices families make for their children, while promoting partnership between families and health care professionals.

Child Life Specialists inform families with hospitalized children of the libraries hours and assist in arranging appointments. Library Science internship and general volunteer opportunities are available in this developing family centered care environment.

For further information, contact Alika Hope Bryant at the Family Resource Library: (212) 241-7636.

Music Therapy in Pediatric Intensive Care

The Music Therapy Program at Mount Sinai began in 1995 with a gift from Gail Kreitman and Jeffrey Toll to pilot a Music Therapy program in the Pediatric Intensive Care units. A Child Life Music therapist in these potentially traumatic environments enriches the lives of seriously and terminally ill children of all ages. The pilot was so successful, with appreciation expressed by children, families, and the full medical team, that Gail and Jeffery have continued to fund the part time program annually.

The number of patients requiring music therapy interventions has continued to increase. Since 1998 with the help of Mrs. Margarita Meyer, The Karelsie Foundation has provided generous funding to increase our Music Therapy programming. Today, our Music Therapist in Residence, Laurie Toole, provides music therapy interventions to our most seriously ill pediatric patients in all of the intensive care units. Laurie is also available to assist health care staff in providing a relaxing environment during painful procedures or prior to surgery.

Health care staff and families continue to report that children who receive music therapy services seem to experience less anxiety and stress during their hospitalization.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of these important sponsors; without these gifts we would be unable to provide music therapy services to these seriously ill patients. Our goal for 2002 is to increase our music therapy programming in Pediatrics.

Child-Friendly Surgical Waiting Area Opens

On January 12, Michael Rothschild, MD, and Steven Dolgin, MD, were on hand to unveil the newly enhanced pediatric surgical waiting area. The renovated space received a new mural courtesy of Meet Me at Mount Sinai. In his remarks about the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Dr. Rothschild joked about how the idea for the renovation was born. “When I approached the Meet Me at Mt. Sinai folks about the broken VCR, I had no idea what I was getting myself into.” In actuality, pediatric surgeons, doctors, and anesthesiologists donated the funds to
The Gift of a Volunteer

Volunteers serve as invaluable assistants to the Child Life program in Pediatrics. Many routinely scheduled Child Life activities as well as “special events” simply could not run without the help of these generous people.

Representing a variety of ages and backgrounds with unique personal skills, these people donate their time and resources throughout the year to children and adolescents during their hospital stay and/or clinic visit. Whether holding a baby, donating materials for a party, or sitting by the bedside of an adolescent, volunteers enhance the emotional well being of our patient population.

Dressed uniformly in blue jackets, volunteers stand out as “safe” people within the hospital environment to whom both children and families can look to as playmates and nurturers. While a child eagerly awaits the opportunity to engage in a fun game of Candy Land, a weary parent may finally be able to leave that child’s bedside for a quick cup of coffee or a breath of fresh air.

A group sponsored party is a welcome event during a long hospital day, allowing for patients and families to meet one another in a relaxed atmosphere.

Each week, Child Life Specialists receive words of appreciation from parents, medical staff, and patients praising our enthusiastic volunteer team.

The Child Life program would like to extend many thanks to all of these dedicated people who support our program and the pediatric families at Mount Sinai Hospital.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Caroline Boynton in the Volunteer Department at 212-659-9180.

Computer Technology for Pediatric Patients

Computer-based activities enable hospitalized children and adolescents to engage in normalizing and therapeutic processes that foster coping and adjustment.

Our mobile computer equipment includes laptop and desktop computers, a scanner, color printer, digital cameras, and a wide range of software. With creative software such as Printshop, Publisher, and arts programs pedi atric patients and families are able to access art, design, and creative writing tools easily. Computer arts enable patients to express themselves creatively and offer opportunities for communication.

In 2001, two generous gifts have enabled us to bring technology to larger numbers of pediatric patients. The Frances Pope Memorial Fund, which piloted The Andrew Baeumler Pediatric Technology Program supporting a Child Life Patient Technology Coordinator since 1999, continued their support with a generous grant to purchase state of the art computer equipment and to support a our coordinator Luis Borges in bringing therapeutic technology programming to our hospitalized children.

A longtime Child Life volunteer, Maura Surnamer and her husband Joel supported our computer arts program by funding the purchase of laptops (and much-needed videos!). These gifts have made it possible for us to offer our most isolated patients rich opportunities to express, connect, and engage in creative computer arts activities.

“Child Life receives words of appreciation from parents, medical staff, and patients praising our enthusiastic volunteer team.”
A Special Thank You

As 2001 Draws to a close, the Child Life Program thanks the many individuals and groups who have contributed to creating family friendly environments throughout Pediatrics at Mount Sinai. Small and substantial donations alike enhance Child Life programming for our pediatric patients.

Without your collective generosity and commitment to humanizing healthcare for children and for families, we would be unable to provide the depth of programming that is so essential to our mission.

On behalf of the patients we serve, we wish you peace and health over the holidays and in the coming New Year.

Deborah Aberra
Amy & Reuben Adoff
Sandy Altman, NY Flyers
Paul J. Appel, NY Life Insurance
Kelly & Joe Bandalos
Monica Banks, NY Life Insurance
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