



1184 5th Avenue, New York City

The Child Life Program at Mount Sinai offers a full range of free activities and services to make the hospital experience easier, more familiar and more comfortable for children.

Our staff of certified Child Life Specialists includes experts in early childhood education, special education, creative arts therapy and recreation therapy.

Through play, art, school and socializing with peers, these experts help children retain their creativity, self esteem and independence, and continue their normal development while in the hospital.

Spotlight on... Volunteer Sandy Burton

By Cheryl Strauss, B.A., CCLS
Child Life Specialist

Brief facts on Sandy : 51 years old; has lived in the New York area for 33 years; married for 26 years with two daughters, ages 25 and 22; hobbies include pottery and ceramics.

Since July 2001, Sandy Burton has been a special and dedicated volunteer who commits her time and energy to the Child Life Department. Sandy volunteers twice a week on the inpatient pediatric units where according to Senior Child Life Specialist Anne Reilly, "The patients and staff are always happy to see her, with her smiling face and wonderful finger plays for her babies." I recently sat down with Sandy to learn more about her volunteer experience.

How did you learn about volunteering with the Child Life program?

A good friend of mine, Bert Freed, had been a volunteer with the program for over two

years. I was always interested in working with children and this seemed like a perfect way to use my energy and skills.

How do you find working with children who are ill?

Their illness is not an issue



for me. I am motivated by connecting with the bored and lonely component of the child. The challenge at times is to find an activity that is age-appropriate and enjoyable for the short time we have together.

What have you learned about yourself through your volunteer work?

I have a greater capacity for empathy than I thought. My volunteer work also helps puts problems into perspective...the part of my brain that worries about small, everyday problems is much quieter now.

What have you seen as a volunteer that has made a lasting impression?

The quality of care that is provided to the children by all of the nurses and staff inspires me to do my job even better.

The Child Life program is grateful for volunteers like Sandy and the many others who contribute to our mission of improving the lives of hospitalized patients and their families.

If you are interested in volunteer opportunities within the Child Life Department, please contact Caroline Boynton in the Volunteer Department at 212-659-9180.

Improving the Environment in the Pediatric ER

By Kevin Brooks, M.S., CCLS
Child Life Specialist

It is difficult enough for a child to cope with the physical discomfort of a sudden illness or injury. When you factor in the anxiety that most children have about medical procedures, it isn't hard to see why a trip to the Emergency Room can be very stressful for any child and, for that

matter, any parent. For the ER Child Life Specialist, one important goal involves setting up an environment that helps to minimize the anxiety that many children and families experience upon entering the Pediatric ER. With this in mind, the Child Life Program has been working steadily to improve

the physical environment in the Pediatric ER. The changes have been gradual, so it is easy to forget just how much the Pediatric ER environment has changed since Child Life began its work there several years ago. Significant improvements include:

- Permanent therapeutic

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"...it isn't hard to see why a trip to the Emergency Room can be very stressful for any child and, for that matter, any parent."

Improving the Environment in the Pediatric ER (Continued)

- murals in all treatment rooms and triage areas.
- New classroom style calendar displays each month.
- Regular displays of patient artwork.
- Attractive health and safety displays for children and parents.

- A bright and friendly color scheme for the walls and doors.
- Seasonal interactive mural projects that children and families can contribute to.

Every step of the way patients, families, and staff have provided lots of positive feed-

back about the changes, but there is still much to be done.

In the future, Child Life will continue to work for an environment that is welcoming, friendly, and appropriate for all children and families who come to the Mount Sinai Pediatric Emergency Room for care.

Music Therapy in the Intensive Care Units

By Laurie Toole, MT-BC
Music Therapist in Residence

The Music Therapy Program began in 1995 and continues to serve patients within the Pediatric Intensive Care Units. The Karelsie Foundation and Gail Kreitman and Jeffery Toll generously funded Music Therapy programming in Pediatrics for 2002.



Laurie Toole with Rashad

Patients actively take part in Music Therapy sessions through interventions including music improvisation, music for relaxation, song writing, music and imagery, and music for developmental stimulation.

While interventions generally focus on the patient, the program has been expanding to provide emotional support for

parents as well. Although Music Therapy for parents is limited only by their own creativity, and sessions vary greatly, in recent months, many parents have chosen to take part in song writing for their child.

At first, many parents are skeptical that they have the ability to write a song. After the initial start, most parents lose their inhibitions fairly quickly. The song writing process begins with the parent and our Music Therapist in Residence, Laurie Toole, working together over time to create a song that is not only musically sound, but also truly captures the emotions of the parent/child relationship. It is then decided whether the parent or the Music Therapist

will sing the song for the recording, which is where our Child Life Technology Consultant, Lu Borges, comes in. Lu assists in the recording process, ensuring that the parents receive a CD of the highest quality.

When the song is completed and recorded, the CD is given to the parent. It is not rare for the finished musical product to elicit an emotional response from the parent, as well as from other family and friends the song might be shared with.

The song writing experience for parents with children in Intensive Care appears to be an intervention garnering positive results, and will continue in the coming months.

Surgical Dolls for Preparatory Play

By Elizabeth Muia, B.A., CCLS
Child Life Specialist

Child Life Specialists often help prepare children emotionally for medical procedures. Preparing a child for a procedure allows them to become familiar with the experience.

The Child Life Specialist presents the information in a developmentally appropriate

way, which allows the child to develop a sense of mastery and control. Questions and concerns the child may have can be addressed and anxieties relieved.

These opportunities to play allow the Child Life Specialist to get a deeper understanding of what the child is experiencing, thereby helping the child to better cope.

In trying to keep up our supply of surgical dolls, the Child Life Program is asking for help from the community and other volunteer organizations to help continue the making of these dolls.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact: Lesley Phillips at 212-241-6797 for more details.



A Surgical Doll

Closed Circuit Television in Pediatrics (CCTV)

By Elizabeth Muia, B.A., CCLS
Child Life Specialist

In Pediatrics at Mount Sinai Mt. Sinai Children's Medical Center, a special television channel has been designated for live and/or pre-recorded television programming for patients and families. The focus of CCTV (Close Circuit Television) is to provide an interactive television show, which targets all age groups. Children have many opportunities to call in and be a part of the show by answering a question, creating a story or assisting the host. "Live, interactive television programs counteract the passivity of the medium and create an opportunity for active participation and personalized programming, as well as a vehicle of communication for hospitalized children" (46, Elsner). CCTV provides both recreational and therapeutic benefits to the viewers. Some goals of CCTV include but are not limited to:

- Teaching children about the hospital environment and whom they are likely to meet while hospitalized. (Medical Bingo, Ask the Doctor).
- Encouraging self expres-

sion (creating a story for a puppet show or sharing one's own hospital experience).

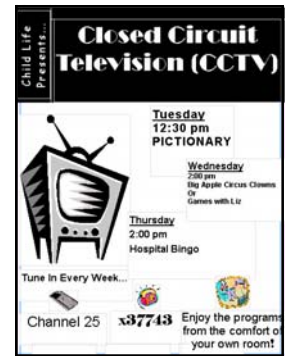
- Increasing socialization opportunities for children who are confined to their beds or rooms due to immobility or immunosuppression.
- Creating a temporary diversion for patients and families wanting to escape from the hospital world.

The Child Life Program at Mt. Sinai Hospital provides three one hour CCTV shows a week. A child life specialist usually hosts the programs. Children who are not confined to their rooms are presented with the opportunity to be the camera operator, story-writer, or star of the show. For example, Hospital BINGO is a very popular game, which teaches children about medical equipment they see or experience on a daily basis. The star patient becomes very active in the game, acting as the caller and communicating with the patients in their rooms. While a learning experience is occurring, misconceptions about medical equipment, often perceived as scary and hurt-

ful, are eased. CCTV allows for a non-threatening and fun learning experience to occur. Children who are non-verbal when in the hospital, usually due the sometimes frightening and unfamiliar environment, call in to the show and participate. Other interactive games which promote learning, socialization and creativity are Hospital Pictionary, What's the Story (children call in and help the host draw a picture and then tell a story about it), a cooking show, and puppet/marionette shows.

Having a special guest come and perform on the show is a fun and exciting way to spice up programming for patients, families and staff. For instance, one day a month, the Big Apple Circus Clowns come to put on a special CCTV show. The clowns silly behavior and spectacular magic tricks make for a very interactive show between the clowns and the kids. In addition, we have had musicians come and perform live on CCTV. CCTV is an interactive medium which provides kids in the hospital opportunities to learn, have fun, and be creative.

Article: Involving Pediatric Patients in Activities Through Closed-Circuit TV. By Kathleen A. Elsner.



CCTV Schedule



A parent leading the Bingo Game



A Child playing from her room

Donor Corner

By Anne Reilly, M.S., CCLS
Child Life Specialist

Many thanks to Mr. McCourt who brought many smiles to children in the hospital from his wonderful donation of a generous amount of "Beanie Babies".

From the Hematology Clinic

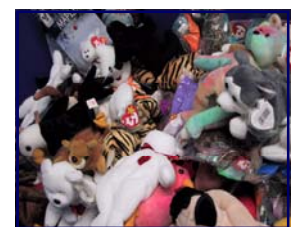


to the Pediatric Cardiology Intensive Care Unit, all the children loved to cuddle with the cute babies. It is wonderful to see how these little critters can bring so much joy and smiles to the faces of these

young people!

Child Life staff visited children bedside to hand them out and kept the left over for our famous Bingo Prize Cart.

Thank you Mr. McCourt!



Beanie Babies!!

The Child Life Gallery - Art, Stories, and More

"Confused Story" as told by Malaysia, age 9

I'm watching TV and the maintenance man comes in the room and sweeps. The doctor, they ere talking to me. Krista was helping me write a story. the doctor said I have to get a shot. He told me to go to the treatment room. My mom came and said "first let her eat". I went to my room and my mom brought me food and she left. I finished my food and the doctor said, "let's go". We went to the room. Then Anne said, "let's go to the playroom!". I was confused. Then I said "Hey, I'm confused here!, because he told me to go to the treatment room and you told me to go to the playroom". I made up my decisions. I went to the playroom and I went to the treatment room after that and went back to the playroom. My mom came back with my brother and we went to my room. I told my mom I was confused cause Anne told me to go there and the doctor told me to go here. Now, I'm in my room. The sweeper man said, "I'm confused too! Mop, sweep, I don't know, I quit!"
 Krista came out of the elevator and said, "I'm confused too, I don't know what to do, help you or write a book, I don't know really what to do."
 And so we all went to the playroom except the doctor.



Malaysia, age 9

Abigail, age 11

How my life has changed with my new heart and kidney...

- I can breathe easier and sleep much better.
- I have the energy to ride my bike and run and play with my friends.
- I can swim and have fun in the water.
- I can participate in gym and not have to sit on the sidelines.
- I can go to school and not have to have a home time.
- I feel better and have a lot more energy.
- I can not be in the hospital as much. I can enjoy being at home and sleep in my own bed.
- I can eat better tasting foods.
- I can go to camp this summer.
- I was able to visit my Grandma in another state this past Christmas.
- I can go with my class on field trips instead of being home.

So, now I can "almost" be a normal kid. Thank you for all of your support!

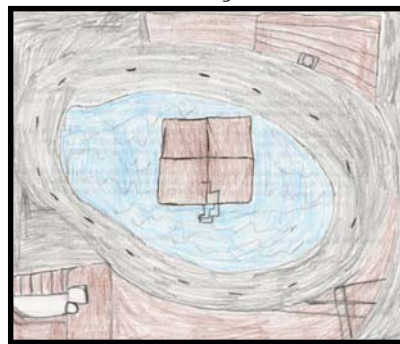
Abigail Trent
 Abigail Trent - 11 years old
 (Kidney transplant - 5/06/06, Heart transplant - 3/23/07)

Lakesha, age 13

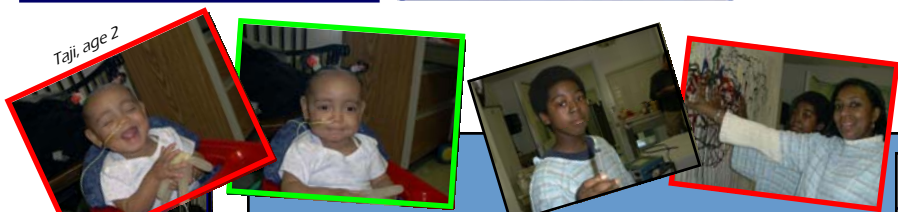
I'm in a new world

I'm happy I have a new liver.
 I'm glad it's not pink and silver.
 However it is precious and nice
 and didn't flip like a rolling dice.
 I wanna take care of it
 and not like any old toy.
 But like my own little baby boy.
 My new world is gonna be fun and
 I'm glad it's over and done.
 By, Lakesha Pass

Manuel, age 12



Parties and Celebrations!!



Taji, age 2

Vanessa Cynthia Rivera, Dedicated to Bradley, October 2001

*I know you feel lonely, and I know you feel scared.
 You have people beside you and in front of you.
 But for some reason you still feel the same.*

*You feel allot of support, but not much comfort.
 Deep inside you want to cry because you don't know if these are your last good days.
 Right now all you can do is think of the good times you had
 But you're wishing that those days didn't go so fast.
 You're hearing everyone talk about you and saying your name but you know it's not that fabulous fame.
 So many thoughts are going through your head,
 but all you really want to do is go home to your bed.*

*For you, this is a lot to cope
 but you just need to keep hope.
 The pain is hurting so much that you could not ignore to care
 but in reality it's not so hard to bare.*

*So all you can do now is close your eyes
 and leave everything in the hands of the lord and dream.*



Vanessa Rivera, A Dedication



Alejandra, age 2

