



Teddy Bear Clinic (pg.2)

*The Child Life Program at Mount Sinai offers a full range of 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... The “Meet Me at Mount Sinai” Team

By Cheryl Strauss, CCLS

Imagine that after visiting with the doctor, you’re told that your child needs surgery. What’s your reaction? How do you talk to your child about this impending experience? Most caregivers are filled with questions, uncertainties, and anxieties at that time and for the child or adolescent, surgery can be a daunting and often confusing prospect. A team of dedicated professionals at Mount Sinai aims to alleviate pre-operative stress and to warmly introduce families to the hospital experience. They are...the “Meet Me at Mount Sinai” team.

Team members include: Pediatric Social Worker, Rachel Justus, CSW; Child Life Specialists Lesley Phillips, M.Ed., CCLS, and Iris Rivera, CCLS; Pediatric nurse Lydia Callangan, RN; and Pediatric Surgery Nurse Practitioner, Nan Lim-Sulit, RN, PNP.

Working under the guiding principle that preparing children for surgery is important and beneficial, this experienced multidisciplinary team routinely meets with children, adolescents, and their families prior to surgery to provide a



The Meet Me at Mount Sinai Team

unique preview of the hospital experience and to answer questions in a supportive setting. The hour-long sessions (in group or individual format) include a wide range of preparatory activities such as a tour of the admitting area, a surgery picture book/video review (Spanish and English), open discussions, and hands on exploration of medical equipment.

The team approaches families as they embark on their surgical journeys with warmth, sensitivity, and honesty. Rachel Justus, CSW, fields many of the initial phone calls from caregivers. She patiently gathers psychosocial and medical information in order to set up the most effective preparation session. As one parent thankfully stated, “the knowledgeable and caring staff took the time to figure out exactly what would help make our whole family feel more comfortable.” Rachel recognizes that “parents know their child best” and relevant factors such as age, development, individual temperament, the nature of the upcoming surgery, and life experiences help her determine the course of the session. In essence, caregivers and team members become partners in preparation.

The spirit of cooperation and teamwork is obvious among the “Meet Me at Mount Sinai” team members. This multi-

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## School in the Hospital

By Joyce Behar, CCLS

Some children view a hospital admission as a vacation from school. However, for children admitted for a long-term stay, or patients needing many admissions for chronic conditions, missing so much school can be a problem. At Mount Sinai, as well as many

other hospitals, The Board of Education teachers work full-time to take care of the educational needs of patients residing in the New York City area. The Child Life Department has recently contracted for the services of Education Inc. to provide schooling for patients who live outside the five boroughs of NYC. Tu-

tors teach patients from kindergarten through high school years, from one to two hours a day. There is no cost to the students or the hospital for these services. The teachers communicate with the child’s regular school to determine what work the child needs to complete. Best of all, the child is not counted absent

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*“Feeling like you can make a positive impact on the hospital experience is wonderful.”*

## The “Meet Me at Mount Sinai” Team

*(Continued)*

disciplinary group pool together their professional knowledge in order to assess patient and family needs and to offer the most comprehensive preparation experience. Lesley Phillips, CCLS, feels that the strong blend of both medical and psychosocial expertise creates a truly “well rounded program.” Watching the team in action as they help a child dress up like a “doctor” and take care of a

doll “patient”, the exact disciplines of the team members are unclear. They are simply a cohesive group, able to decipher any fears or misconceptions and then provide accurate information.

Preparation is serious business to this group of staff dedicated to improving the hospital experience. Comments such as “I can’t say enough wonderful things

about the Meet Me at Mount Sinai Program” from a grateful mother are the fruits of their labor. For Lesley Phillips, “Feeling like you can make a positive impact on the hospital experience is wonderful.” In fact, to Iris Rivera, CCLS, “seeing the relief on the faces of patients and families and knowing that I made a difference left a smile on my face all day.”

## New Happenings in the Pediatric Hem/Onc Service

*By Marcy Mennella, CCLS*

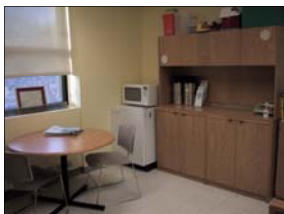
The Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Service at Mount Sinai is delighted to announce the opening of the new Activity Room/Family Lounge on the 4<sup>th</sup> Floor of 1184 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The room has been designed collaboratively by the Medical Director, Dr. Bill Carroll, the P4 Unit Coordinator, Mary Mendes, the Hematology/Oncology Administrator, Jerry Bruno, the Child Life Program Director, Diane Rode, Senior Child Life Specialist, Marcy Mennella, Art Therapist, Kimberly Bush and most importantly, through feedback by patients

and families. The room was created to be multifunctional, serving as a space for therapeutic Parent Groups, Child Life Groups, Art Therapy Groups, Art Therapy sessions and for a place for families to retreat to for an alternative to being in a hospital room.

Additionally, the Activity Room/Family lounge has a kitchenette where morning coffee is provided for families. There is also a microwave and refrigerator available. Sony has donated a large screen television and DVD player and a big bulletin board of children’s artwork is displayed. The room is open

at all times and is intended to be a place where patients and their families can feel comfortable and relaxed.

Future plans include the installation of tiles made by Hematology/Oncology patients, the production of a Creative Arts Close Circuit Broadcast site, and an opening celebration welcoming all staff to the area. This addition to the service is very exciting for the Hematology/Oncology team appears to be well received by the families and children who utilize the room.



## Mount Sinai’s Community Health Day

The Mount Sinai 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Steering Committee designated November 2, 2002 as Mount Sinai Community Health Day. The centerpiece of the Day was a health fair at the Mount Sinai campus, which featured the Child Life Program’s popular “Teddy Bear Clinic”. Over



400 children participated in the clinic in which they relieved their own Teddy Bear and worked one-to-one with Child Life Specialists and volunteers to use medical supplies to “take care” of their fuzzy patients in a clinic setting. A great time was had by all!

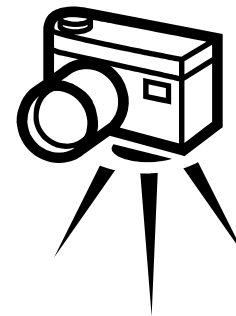
## B&H Photo Plays Santa at Mount Sinai

By Lesley Phillips, CCLS

A very special eleven-year-old girl was here over the holidays in Pediatrics awaiting a heart transplant. She was not really sure whether Santa Claus really exists or not, but just in case he really does, she decided to write him a letter. In her letter she asked for gifts for her brother and sister, her mom, and her dad, and one gift for herself, a digital camera. In her letter, she explained that she and her mom really want her to get her new heart for Christmas.

Unfortunately Santa doesn't bring hearts. So the next best thing is a camera. With her Child Life Specialist (myself, Lesley Phillips), Child Life Intern (Jessica Annenberg), hospital schoolteacher (Carol Bowman), our young patient had been using Carol's camera to document her hospitalization. This therapeutic project has been enabling her to photograph the medical team and her daily activities to process the difficulties of being a child in the hospital. Jessica then contacted several camera stores throughout

Manhattan asking for a donation to answer the letter to Santa. Several stores said no, that economically it just wasn't possible this year...except for one store. B&H Photo did not hesitate; they generously provided a digital camera to fulfill a child's holiday wish. We would like to thank B&H Photo for helping us all believe in the magic of Santa. B&H Photo is located at 420 Ninth Avenue, New York, NY 10001, between 33<sup>rd</sup> and 34<sup>th</sup> Street. You can visit their website at [www.bhphotovideo.com](http://www.bhphotovideo.com) or call them at 1800.606.6969.



## Making Blood Draws a Little Bit Easier for Kids

By Valerie Septer, CCLS

The amount of vital information that is held in a small amount of blood is truly incredible. This information provides essential clues to our medical team that enable them to make informed decisions about the children they care for. Unfortunately, for many children, blood draws and needles evoke a great deal of fear and anxiety. Many patients and families report that one of the most difficult parts of being in the hospital is the frequent blood draws, which occur most

commonly in the early morning hours in order to inform treatment decisions for that day. In response to these concerns, the Child Life Department and Pediatric Nursing have teamed up to form the Blood Draw Program, designed to help alleviate the stress and anxiety surrounding early morning blood draws. As a Child Life Specialist, I work very closely with our phlebotomist to provide consistency, information and support to patients and their families. During the hundreds of blood draw procedures that I have participated in, I have

seen how patients, parents, Child Life Specialists and the medical staff can all work together as a team to make blood draws easier by keeping these 6 simple guidelines in mind.

1. **Provide gentle honesty:** Although it's tempting to tell children "This won't hurt," sugar coating what is going to happen will only mislead the child and will quickly diminish the adult's credibility and trustworthiness. Children want to know what to expect, and we can care-

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*"I want that one!"*

## School in the Hospital

*(Continued)*

when enrolled in the hospital school.

"I think it's good", says 16 year-old student Raul Zepeda, Jr. "Sometimes you get depressed being in the hospital, keeping your mind busy is good." You have to

"try to keep your mind in shape". Lead teacher Maureen Healy is struck by how willing the patients are to do their schoolwork, even though they are often battling difficult obstacles. She feels that "keeping the mind active helps in the healing process of

body, mind and soul".

Hospital school programs are a way to help keep children up to date with their schoolwork, as well as one way to normalize the often-chaotic hospital environment.

*"...keeping the mind active helps in the healing process of body, mind and soul".*

## Making Blood Draws a Little Bit Easier

(Continued)



Frankie picks his own Band-aid

### Next Issue:

*Creating a Safe Haven in the Hospital*

*Making your Pediatric ER Visit a Little Easier*

*Artwork and more!!*

fully choose words that describe what will happen in a softer way while still being accurate. Using phrases such as “Next we’re going to gently slide the needle in,” instead of “Now we’re going to stick the needle in,” or “Some kids tell me that this part feels uncomfortable,” rather than “This part is going to hurt,” prepare children for what to expect without misleading them.

2. **Emphasize that they are not being punished:** A common misconception for children is to think that painful things are being done to them because they have done something wrong. Emphasize the purpose of the blood draw. This varies from a general explanation: “This is to help the doctors know how to make you feel better,” to more specific and medical details for older and curious children.
3. **Give choices wherever they exist:** Children will tell you exactly what they need if you listen care-

fully. Simple questions offer them choices and control and allow you to follow their lead: Would you like to sit up or lie down? Which arm should we try? Are you the kind of kid who likes to watch or do you like to look at something else? Do you want me to tell you what’s happening? What kind of band-aid would you like to have?

4. **Do everything possible to make the child more comfortable:** Simple measures can be taken, such as tying the tourniquet outside of the clothing or over a piece of gauze, making sure that the child’s body and arm is in a comfortable, secure position, or using topical anesthetics such as EMLA.
5. **Be aware of timing and surroundings:** What else is happening in this child’s world right now? Did Mom or Dad just leave? Is it time to eat? Did they just wake up or have another procedure done? Being aware of these things helps to determine when the child

will be best able to cope with a blood draw procedure. Is it possible to wait until later? Could the amount of procedures be minimized and consolidated? (i.e., blood sample taken when the IV is changed).

6. **Encouragement, support and praise:** Let the child know what a great job they are doing. Be specific (“You’re doing a great job holding still!” “You’re taking nice deep breaths...how about one more!”) Encourage them and let them know when it’s almost over. Allow them freedom to react how they want to. Crying, yelling, or watching the procedure may make adults feel more anxious, but are actually a healthy way of coping for many children. Spend time after the procedure is over praising the child and helping them to transition into another activity.

Keeping these guidelines in mind will help us to make necessary blood draw procedures easier for everyone involved!



### Expanded Hours for The Family Library

The Family Resource Center has expanded its services to 27 hours per week. The following are the usual weekly hours; call the Center at (212) 241-6736 to confirm.

To use the Center at other times, please call (212) 241-6797.

**Monday:**  
closed

**Tuesday:**  
10-1; 2-4:30

**Wednesday:**  
1-7 pm

**Thursday:**  
11:30-5 pm

**Friday:**  
1-2 & 2:30-7

**Saturday:**  
10-2 pm

