



Entrance to the Kravis Children's Hospital at Mt. Sinai

*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.*

## Lollipop Theater Network

By Cheryl Strauss, CCLS

Illness and hospitalization disrupt many typical childhood activities. Long hospital stays and compromised immune systems may make seeing the latest movie at a theater logistically or medically unfeasible. To ill children and adolescents, this lost opportunity represents more than simply missing an evening of fun. It is yet another reminder that they are different from their peers. When all of one's friends are talking about Jim Carrey's latest adventure or SpongeBob SquarePants' antics, such a child may feel excluded and alienated.

In 2002, Janis Schodowski, Evelyn Iocolano, and a team of compassionate individuals decided to "bring the magic of movies to hospitalized children facing chronic and life-threatening illness." They es-

tablished the Lollipop Theater Network (LTN), a not-for-profit organization that arranges private hospital screenings of newly-released movies for children. Most of the major motion picture studios joined the cause and subsequently many hospitals in New York City and Los Angeles became beneficiaries of the program.

The Mount Sinai child life program jumped on the bandwagon. LTN volunteers have graciously brought in several high-profile movies for patients of all ages. Most recently, "The Polar Express" rode through the hospital and "SpongeBob SquarePants" entertained several excited youngsters.

Screenings take place in a variety of settings--playrooms, the outpatient hematology/oncology clinic, and even in the dialysis unit. However, for

patients confined to their rooms, bedside viewings are most common and offer a tremendous escape from boredom and, perhaps more importantly, a connection with the larger world.

The movies also provide a therapeutic benefit. As one parent describes, "this movie got (my daughter) into a chair, and she sat up the whole time and watched. After that, she continued to improve. Just getting up and watching the movie helped in so many ways--physically, medically and emotionally. It was great for my husband and me to see her smiling and laughing again."

The Child Life Program eagerly anticipates future movie adventures with LTN. More information about this organization can be found on its website at:

<http://www.lollipoptheater.org>

## Smiles R Us! The Pediatric Dental Clinic's Environmental Enhancement Initiative

By Diane Rode, MPS, ATR, CCLS

The Child Life Program at Mount Sinai has a long history of successful and innovative hospital-wide environmental enhancement projects. Our ongoing focus on creating family centered, child-friendly treatment and waiting areas embraces Mount Sinai's central mission of quality patient care.

In 2004 the Auxiliary Board

awarded the Child Life Program a grant to enhance the environment and in turn the experience of pediatric patients visiting the dental clinic. With our own Child Life volunteer, Maura Surnamer, serving as Auxiliary Board liaison, we identified the dental procedure room and the waiting area as two spaces that required enhancement with the goal of offering a soothing, child-friendly dental experience for all children

seen in clinic. Without specific attention to children's areas, the spaces can appear unwelcoming and frightening.

The Child Life Program has addressed similar issues in the Pediatric ER as well as the Pediatric and Hematology/Oncology clinics on Annenberg 4. In waiting areas we use child-friendly art, developmentally appropriate toys, games, and furniture while in

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Production : Sherry Smith

## Spotlight On...Volunteer Marie-Claire Noel



Marie-Claire Noel, Volunteer

By Joyce Behar, CCLS

Since January of 2003, the Child Life Program at Mount Sinai's Children Hospital has been lucky enough to have an "energizer bunny" of a volunteer named Marie-Claire Noel. Marie-Claire has been at MSMC since 2000, originally working with adults awaiting heart transplants. After two years, she wanted to challenge herself and decided to change her focus to pediatrics.

Marie-Claire's transition from adults to children and teens was smooth. She quickly realized that "even though they were sick, they were children who wanted to play, create things and have fun." Marie-Claire,

who specializes in origami and other paper-related crafts, roams the corridors with a book of samples, encouraging the children to choose a project to try. Despite an initial hesitation about working with infants, she was soon seen in the playroom with a different baby in each arm. Each Friday, Marie-Claire runs groups in the playroom, sees patients and families at the bedside and eagerly does whatever else is needed of her. She often has to be reminded to take a break.

Recently Marie-Claire, a native of France, began to feel that her lack of Spanish skills was preventing her "from breaking the ice with some patients and families." She completed a

beginner's Spanish class here at Mount Sinai, is currently enrolled in an advanced class and has taken advantage of other course offerings. With the energy of three people, Marie-Claire has no plans of slowing down or leaving Pediatrics anytime soon. I know that I personally look forward to her cheery "hellooo!" or "bon jour!" each Friday morning.

Marie-Claire's dedication, enthusiasm, cheerful personality and flexibility have not gone unnoticed. This April she will be receiving the United Hospital Fund's 2005 Auxiliary and Volunteer Achievement Award, with a ceremony at the Waldorf-Astoria. No one deserves it more.



Maura Surnamer (far right) and Dental Clinic staff at ribbon cutting-ceremony

## Smiles R Us! (continued)

treatment rooms therapeutic murals say "welcome" to visitors large and small. Past grants from the Starlight Foundation have enabled us to permanently transform waiting and treatment areas both for inpatients and in many of our Pediatric ambulatory settings.

In collaboration with mural artists from Splashes of Hope and the Dental Clinic staff, the Child Life Program helped conceptualize a room-specific design, conceived and painted with the needs of medically treated children in mind. Re-

search and clinical experience have shown that children can be soothed, distracted, and encouraged throughout painful or stressful procedures through the use of therapeutic murals.

On November 15, Maura presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremony as we celebrated the amazing "under the sea" environment created by Splashes of Hope. As John L. Pfail, DDS, General Dentistry Program Director, remarked in his speech, "You have given my team, patients, and me a renewed spirit," demonstrating that staff benefit from a beautiful environment as



well as patients. Calling the Auxiliary Board's gift "our shining glory," Doctor Pfail thanked the Board, Dr. Katie Capitulo and others for "working so tirelessly to make this possible."

Our sincere gratitude to the Mount Sinai Auxiliary Board for their continued support of our pediatric patients and families.

## Heart-to-Heart Group for Kids



By Lesley Phillips, CCLS

In October of 2004, the pediatric cardiology department began a new support group for a very select group of patients: children that have received heart transplants. Rachel Justus, pediatric social worker,

and Lesley Phillips, senior child life specialist, co-lead the group which provides kids with an opportunity to meet other children who have received heart transplants, as well as to participate in a therapeutic and creative activity. Projects have included making murals,

painting pumpkins, and creating collages. Light refreshments are served for the children. The group meets monthly on Friday mornings during the Pediatric Cardiology Transplant Clinic. Please call Lesley at (212) 241-2940 to learn more about this group.

## Bravery Beads: Helping Kids Tell Their Story

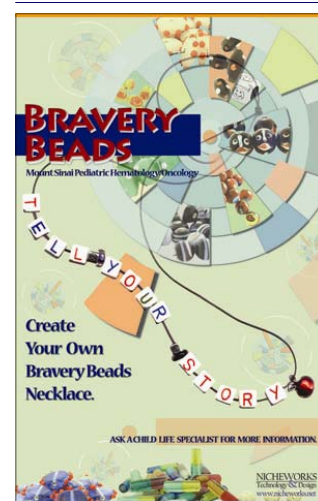
By Valerie Falcone, CCLS

With Mardi Gras a recent memory, a different kind of necklace will soon be seen dangling from IV poles and adorning the necks of kids undergoing treatment for illnesses such as cancer and sickle cell disease. Sponsored by Child Life, this pilot program works by providing supplies for our hematology/oncology patients to create their own special necklace of unique beads.

When patients go through a

challenging or significant part of their treatment, such as having a round of chemotherapy, receiving a blood transfusion or losing their hair, they will collect a special bead that represents that particular treatment or event. By the time many of these patients have completed their treatment, they may have earned as many as 500 beads. The Bravery Bead necklace then becomes a symbolic, visual and artistic way of remembering and recording their experiences and sharing their story with others.

The Bravery Bead Program has been used in several hospitals worldwide as a tool to help children cope with living with a serious illness, and we are thrilled to have received a generous donation to now pilot it here at Mount Sinai. As we begin to see the impact of this program on the patients and families of the hematology/oncology department, we will look for additional funding to make the program permanent, expanding it to include children struggling to cope with other chronic illnesses.



Bravery Bead Program

## Suggested Hospital Books for Children

By Dana F. Wyles, Librarian, Family Resource Center

Below is a selected list of books on illness and hospitalization for children, many of which are available in the Family Resource Center or your local library. Please call us at (212) 241-7636 for assistance.

- Bridwell, Norman. *Clifford Visits the Hospital (Clifford the Big Red Dog)*. Cartwheel Books, 2000. Ages 4-8. Also available in Spanish, published by Scholastic.
- Gordon, Melanie Apel. *Let's Talk About When You Have to Have Your Tonsils Out (The Let's Talk Library)*. Powerkids Press, 2000. Ages 4-8.
- Hatkoff, Juliana Lee, Hatkoff, Craig, Mets,

Marilyn. *Goodbye Tonsils!* Viking Children's Books, 2001. Baby-6.

- Hautzig, Deborah, Elliott, Dan, and Mathieu, Joseph. *A Visit to the Sesame Street Hospital: Featuring Jim Henson's Sesame Street Muppets*. Random House, 1985. Ages 3-7.

- Jennings, Sharon et al. *Franklin Goes to the Hospital*. Scholastic, 2000. Ages 4-8.

- Pace, Betty & Hutton, Kathryn. *Chris Gets Ear Tubes*. University of Chicago Press, 1987. Ages 4-8.

- Rey, Margret and H.A. *Curious George Goes to the Hospital*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966.

Ages 4-8.

- Rogers, Fred & Judkis, Jim. *Mr. Rogers Hospital*. Putnam Publishing, 1988. Ages 4-8.

### For Siblings

- Duncan, Debbie. *When Molly Was in the Hospital: A Book for Brothers and Sisters of Hospitalized Children (Minimed Series: Volume 1)*. Rayve Productions, 1994. Ages pre school- 7.

- Jawarski, Anna Marie and Ball, Linda. *My Brother Needs and Operation*. Babyhearts Press, 1998. Ages 4-10.

- Peterkin, Allan. *What About Me? When Brothers and Sisters Get Sick*. Magination Press, 1992, ages 4-8.

The FRC has been temporarily relocated to the sixth floor of 1184 5th Ave, Rm 626.

## Child Life Celebrates Child Life Month

In March the Child Life Program celebrated with:

- Posters
- Slide show
- Games & prizes
- Inpatient activities
- Ice cream Party

Child Life Specialists are devoted to helping children maintain their normal development while they are hospitalized or receiving care.

## Easing Pain in the ER: Tips for Parents of Infants

### During procedures:

- Talk and sing to your infant; she knows your voice means safety.
- Swaddle the infant during procedures by bringing her limbs to midline. This position feels safe and most like the womb.
- Request that your baby receive pain relief or sedation for medical procedures. Sucrose solutions help infants with quick, painful procedures such as blood draws or IV pokes. Pain relief is achieved after two minutes and lasts for five minutes.
- E.R. procedures can be invasive and over stimulating, so provide one form of stimulation at a time: If you rock your baby, don't talk; if you are feeding your baby, try not to look her in the eyes.
- Pacifiers encourage the development of your baby's swallowing and sucking reflexes. Sucking is familiar and soothing. Crying and sucking cannot be done simultaneously!
- During the E.R. visit keep your scent close to your baby – either by holding infant close to your skin or leaving a piece of your clothing in the crib.
- Hold infants for at least 30 minutes after procedures to facilitate a trusting, calm bond and help normalize body temperature and heart rate.
- Have explanations repeated to you until you understand them. Bring a supportive person with you to write down information you may miss.

## Suggestions on Navigating Through the ER Visit



By Anna Eckhardt, CCLS

Visits to the hospital emergency room (ER) are fraught with anxiety for both parent and child. Below are some tips for reducing stress and discomfort and ensuring that your visit goes as smoothly as possible.

- For children with chronic illnesses who may visit the ER often, have a special activity bag ready by the door. Include comfort items such as pillows, slippers, stuffed animals, pictures of pets and loved ones, handheld games and activities
- Have emergency contact numbers and insurance information readily available.
- Insist that staff introduce themselves to you and your child.
- When explaining an upcoming procedure, describe what your child will see, hear, feel, smell and taste.
- Help translate for your child in simple language such as “IVs are like straws that help give water and medicine to your blue lines (veins).”
- Acknowledge positive behavior and praise your child after any procedure.
- Encourage others to speak to your child at eye level. It is scary for children to have others speak over or down to them.
- Tell the truth to your child! Honesty and your willingness to working out feelings set a positive example and foster trusting relationships with health care providers for the future.
- Stay with your child! Be present during procedures to help alleviate stranger anxiety and fear.
- Use comfort holding to reduce stress. Infants feel more secure sitting up and all ages benefit from sitting in their parents' lap in a “hug hold.”
- Take a break! Everyone has limits. If a procedure is not going well for your child, try to pause so that everyone can re-group.

## Horticulture Therapy Returns to the Child Life Program



By Annelies Rosenthal, CCLS

The beneficial effects of working around growing things have been widely known since ancient times. In more recent times, horticultural therapy has returned to Mount Sinai Children's Hospital as a weekly activity to supplement the varied programs of the Child Life Program.

Collaborating with child life specialists, David Levine, a certified horticultural therapist, provides our young patients with a hands-on introduction to the world of plants and how to grow and care for them indoors. He brings with him a sort of garden on wheels!

Best of all, at the end of each session, patients get to keep the plants that they just “made.”

They “nurse” them in their room while hospitalized---and then take them home at



David, horticultural therapist

discharge. Sometimes they want to give their plant as a gift to a parent or grandparent or to some special member of their healthcare team.

While horticulture definitely has an educational component--learning how plants grow from the roots up

and how to care for them--it provides an interesting, soothing and diverting escape from the daily hospital routine and the stress and frustration often associated with it.

Horticultural therapy can be conducted with small groups of patients in a playroom, but it is most often done one-on-one at the bedside because the children's individual schedules are so varied (medical treatments, physician visits, lab work, physical therapy, etc.). When convenient, roommates can join in and do a horticultural activity together. Other times, a parent or visiting sibling joins the patient for a shared family experience.

