What is The Child Life and the Creative Arts Therapy Department?

A stay in the hospital can be unsettling no matter how old you are. Medical procedures, unfamiliar surroundings, and new faces can be particularly stressful for children and adolescents. The Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department helps young patients cope with their fears and anxieties by offering therapeutic activities tailored to meet their social, emotional, and educational needs. Familiar experiences such as play, art, school, and socializing with peers are offered to help young patients understand and cope more effectively with the often overwhelming world of the hospital. We seek to achieve the following important goals:

- Minimize anxiety and stress experienced by children, adolescents, and families in the medical setting.
- Enhance the young patient’s emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth in the context of his/her family, culture, and stage of development.
- Support parents and encourage their participation in their child’s healthcare.
- Enhance understanding of medical experiences for children and their families.
- Enable children to maintain a sense of security during an illness or surgery.
- Help children and families continue everyday living experiences as much as possible.

The Child Life Video Therapy Program

Support for an onsite Video Therapist can help patients and families to create individualized videos about their experiences, hopes, and dreams. Hospitalized children and adolescents – along with family members - collaborate with Creative Arts Therapists, Child Life staff, and our Video Therapist to create their own video journals, music videos, animation, and short features. Seriously and terminally ill children can create their own video portraits in our award-winning “Through Our Eyes Productions” projects. With the help of our Video Therapist, patients create individually tailored videos about their hospital experience and their lives. A valuable therapeutic and healing process happens when youngsters are able to express, document, and describe their experiences through therapeutic video processes. In 2012, one of our filmmaker-patients won 2nd place in the National Society for the Arts in Healthcare Film Festival.

Pediatric Intensive Care and Palliative Care Child Life Specialist

Funding for a part time Child Life Specialist is critical in providing psychosocial assessments and therapeutic play, as well as educational opportunities and preparation services to all children and families in the Pediatric and Cardiac Intensive Care Units within the Children’s Hospital. In addition, this Specialist, trained in Pediatric Palliative Care, can offer specific developmental services to children living with life threatening and terminal illnesses. End of life support through music, therapeutic presence, and legacy activities (handprints and memory boxes) helps to ease suffering and creates a supportive environment for siblings, patients, and families. This Board Certified Child Life Specialist supervises a team of volunteers and graduate interns to extend programming to patients in the ICU’s that are restricted to bed and unable to attend group activities. Mitigating psychological trauma through creative arts and therapeutic play opportunities is essential in these very high acuity units to facilitate coping and adjustment for patients and families alike.

Visit: www.mschildlife.org
Music Therapy Programming

Philanthropy for Music Therapy programming in Pediatrics allows us to provide services to over 2,000 seriously ill children and families annually in exciting new ways. Physicians, nurses, child psychiatrists, and families themselves continue to refer enthusiastically to Music Therapy services for seriously ill and often isolated children. Health care staff continues to report that children who receive Music Therapy services seem to experience less anxiety and stress during their hospitalization particularly for children isolated for long periods of time. Music Therapists assess patient and family needs and provide unique interventions which mitigate the stress and anxiety of illness and hospitalization. Some of the techniques used include song writing, music improvisation, music for relaxation, and lyric analysis which are shown to reduce pain affect and anxiety.

The Family Resource Center and Project DOCC (Delivery of Chronic Care)

Donations enable the tranquil pediatric Family Resource Center (FRC) to be visited by thousands of parents and families every year. In addition to two computers with internet access, a comprehensive collection of parent guides on a range of pediatric illnesses, a collection of books for children, and DVDs for family entertainment, parents are welcomed to the FRC for weekly coffee hours, crafts and educational programming, as well as for individual and group support. Assistance is also provided by the librarian to other members of the healthcare team in searching literature relevant to clinical practice and in locating community resources - particularly through maintenance of the Cap4Kids website, which is the topic of an article published in The Journal of Hospital Librarianship in 2009. Project DOCC (Delivery of Chronic Care) is a pediatric medical education program that uses parent faculty to teach residents about the challenges faced by families of children with chronic illness. All physician interns have received the Project DOCC curriculum, which includes a chronic illness history, two-hour home visit, and a conference panel presentation by parents, as part of their ambulatory block rotation. From all reports, this aspect of the ambulatory experience has been extremely successful. Residents are enthusiastic about the knowledge gained from parents, while parents are gratified by their ability to help shape the practice of the pediatricians of the future. Currently, there are eleven parents actively participating.

KidZone TV Weekend Producer

Support will continue to make live, interactive KidZone TV programming available to pediatric patients and families seven days a week. The Weekend Producer generates and implements entertaining, educational, therapeutic, and interactive shows on Saturdays and Sundays, a time when patients often report increased feelings of boredom and loneliness. As the pace of the busy week slows and hospital staffing thins, patients eagerly tune to KidZone TV channel 114 twice a day to watch a myriad of programs including interactive game shows, art shows, and special performances. Patients that are unable to leave their rooms can call a designated phone line to participate, while others crowd into the studio to take part as co-hosts, technical assistants, and audience members. On weekends, when visits from siblings, friends, and relatives increase, the producer journeys to patients’ rooms to encourage show participation and offer everyone a chance to be involved. A room full of guests quickly becomes a “team” of callers vying for a game show prize and a chance to lift the morale of an ill loved one. Thanks to the presence and leadership of the Weekend Producer, KidZone TV is also home to a group of dedicated weekend volunteers who generously donate their time and talent to the pediatric population.
Patient and Family Centered Care Services

Patient and Family Centered Care is an evolving approach to health care that fosters effective partnerships between patients, families, and providers and responds more effectively to the needs and priorities of patients and families. This philosophy leads to improved health outcomes, wiser allocation of resources, increased quality and safety, and greater staff and patient/family satisfaction. Spearheading this effort is the Patient and Family Centered Care Coordinator. Under their supervision, the formal implementation of this care philosophy has included the provision of medical education as well as staff training and development, the revision of policies and procedures, and the formation of or participation in advisory, safety, and quality committees. With funding, our Patient and Family Centered Care Coordinator can continue to actively recruit families to participate in these diverse activities, thereby enabling relationships and roles of family advisors to continue to expand.
Art Therapy in Child Life

Support for Art Therapy services provides both group and individual arts therapy interventions to our hospitalized patients and youngsters being treated in the hematology/oncology clinic seven days a week. Board Certified Art Therapists offer a wide range of creative arts to children and families struggling to cope with a new diagnosis, extended hospitalizations, and pain management. Art Therapy can help children work through traumatic experiences, boost self esteem and body image, and encourage expression of thoughts and feelings related to illness and hospitalization. Creating art through ceramics, painting, collage, drawing, and other forms offers our patients ways to express their fears and work through them. Art can both normalize the hospital experience and offer opportunities for a patient to experience their inner resilience. Art Therapy staff supervises graduate interns, expanding the scope of creative arts programming. Our goal is to provide Art Therapy Programming on all medical / surgical pediatric units and in The Zone.

KidZone TV Engineer / Editor

Both a technical expert and a mentor to patients, the KidZone TV Engineer assures our TV studio acts as a bridge connecting our many patients into one community. Inside the state of the art broadcast studio, the KidZone TV engineer expertly manipulates lights, cameras, and other multi-media equipment before, during, and after live television broadcasts. Day after day, these efforts result in the high caliber look and sound of KidZone TV channel 114. On screen images of visually appealing, computer generated backgrounds such as city and country landscapes or outer space galaxies help to set the stage for a range of programs and offer the pediatric viewing audience the opportunity to symbolically escape the confines of the hospital setting. While a televised game show is always fun, the engineer ups the excitement by adding special sound effects such as a round of applause when a player answers a question correctly. The technological components are appealing and often patients and family members want to try their hand at this dimension of show production. As such, The KidZone TV Engineer readily mentors children and adolescents in the role of technical assistants. In the medical environment, where feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty are common, patients who learn new skills and actively collaborate in the creation of programs feel a unique sense of mastery. As a skilled editor, the KidZone TV Engineer reviews hours of recorded KidZone TV programming to determine which shows can be recalibrated to air on the channel in a looped format 24 hours a day.