

## 2007 Child Life Wish List Party: Humanizing Healthcare for Seriously Ill Children and Families

Child Life Specialists and Creative Arts Therapists help patients and families cope and adjust through play, creative arts, technology, holistic therapies and a wide range of innovative programming. On April 6, 2007, Nancy and John Levene of The Mount Sinai Children's Center Foundation hosted this year's very successful Child Life Wish List Party. Funding was secured for ten innovative and therapeutic projects coordinated by Child Life at Mount Sinai for pediatric patients as described within this special edition of *The Child Life Times*. We are grateful for the generous support of the programs, and we proudly announce that all ten initiatives were fully operational within a month of the Wish List event. These programs have enhanced the experience of



Nancy and John Levene.

living with serious illness for thousands of children at Mount Sinai and their families.

At this year's Wish List Party we were honored to hear John Levene describe his family's pediatric hospitalization experience with their son and the impact Child Life Services made on his coping and adjustment. We also had the privilege to hear a longtime Mount Sinai patient, fifteen-year-old Nicole

Melendez, speak about the healing impact of creative arts, therapeutic play and child life interventions in her recuperation process. Nicole described her gratitude for the Wish List Party's efforts, "With your generous donations, patients like me will be able to experience a more normal life. With activities like knitting, art, music and KidZone TV, we



**"With your generous donations, patients like me will be able to experience a more normal life. With Child Life activities like knitting, art, music, and KidZone TV, we can feel our own strength and creativity." – Nicole Melendez**

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We honor the vision, caring, and generosity of all of the Children's Center Foundation, the Levenes and all of our donors, whose continued empathy and desire to humanize healthcare for children have motivated so many to step forward in support. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to the Wish List Hosting Committee, Dr. Fred Suchy, and Megan Morgan for their tireless dedication to the children and families that we serve.

### DIANE RODE

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## KidZone TV and Video Therapy Programs

Thanks to generous funding from our wish list parties, KidZone TV provides 24/7 programming to the Mount Sinai pediatric population. In our professional-caliber broadcast studio, live shows such as Hospital Bingo, Pictionary, and Hollywood Squares (starring Mount Sinai pediatricians and others) are aired twice daily to patients and families throughout the hospital. To counter the isolation of young patients who may be unable to leave their rooms, viewers are encouraged to call in and hear their voices live on television to win a prize or play a game show with the talent onscreen. Seven days a week patients actively participate in the process of filming a live television show on or off camera. Siblings, friends,



Magic Johnson and a young patient appear on KidZone TV.

relatives are all welcome in the KidZone TV broadcast studio space and editing facilities to further education, entertainment, therapeutic, and interactive possibilities.

In addition, our video therapist enables patients and families to create their own videos about their experiences, hopes, and dreams. 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 videographer, patients create individually tailored videos about their hospital experience. A valuable therapeutic and healing process happens when kids are able to express, document, and describe their experiences through video journaling.

## Evening and Weekend Child Life Specialist

In life, first impressions are often the most important. For children and families admitted to the Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital, first experiences are critical to overall coping and adjustment. The supporters of the 2007 Wish List Party have been instrumental in ensuring the highest standard of developmentally appropriate care through our Child Life Evening and Weekend program.

As part of a comprehensive team approach, a four-year-old admitted on a Friday evening can now be assessed by a trained professional and receive developmentally appropriate medical preparation. At the same time, a teenager can "hang-out" in The Zone, engaging in a tie-dye activity with a group of peers, thus minimizing the risk of social isolation.



Sarah Roffe ensures that children admitted on weekends receive a full range of child life services.

Offering a range of full-time weekend activities, staff have also expanded services to parents, creating Weekend Wellness Spa events to ease the stress of caring for their chronically or acutely ill child. As weekend child life specialist Jessica Davies states, "Life doesn't stop on the weekends, so we make sure childhood continues no matter what day it is!"



Kate O'Brien, weekend music therapist, coaxes a smile.

### Weekend Music Therapy Program

Funds raised at the 2007 Child Life Wish List Party enable us to provide music therapy services to pediatric patients seven days a week. Our two certified music therapists assess individual patient and family needs and provide unique interventions designed to mitigate the stress and anxiety of illness and hospitalization. Some of the techniques used include song writing, music improvisation, music for relaxation and much more.

While the traditional work week ends on Friday, many patients remain in the hospital over the weekend. This can be a challenging time as fatigue, boredom, and anxiety may set in. A session with the weekend music therapist can address these feelings. In fact, large bodies of research support the positive effects that music has on the brain, immune system, emotions, speech, and coping with difficult experiences.

## Zone Child Life Weekend Assistant

Open seven days a week, The Zone is an innovative, therapeutic environment where pediatric patients and their families can play, learn, laugh, and relax. Stocked with art supplies, games, computers, video game equipment and more, patients eagerly anticipate the opening of The Zone each morning.

Funds from our 2007 Child Life Wish List Party support child life staffing in The Zone on weekends. With our child life assistant at the helm, there is no interruption in Zone programming as the weekday excitement continues seamlessly into the weekend. Twice daily groups on Saturday and Sunday feature abundant play opportunities, creative activities, and a chance to participate in live KidZone TV programming.



Chaplain Mollie Cantor and friend share a happy moment.

### Pediatric Chaplaincy Program

Through the generous support of its donors, the pediatric chaplaincy program continues to flourish at Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital. Our pediatric chaplain, Rabbi Mollie Cantor, works with patients and their families of all faiths and cultural backgrounds. By offering spiritual care and support, Mollie enables families to turn to their own faith resources to help cope with their child's illness. Spiritual care can take the form of storytelling, active listening, a simple prayer before surgery seeking god's protection, or a prayer of thanksgiving as the child recovers.

## Creative Arts Therapy

Creative Arts Therapist Lauren Edelstein provides individual and group art therapy sessions to children and families struggling to cope with new diagnosis, extended hospitalizations, and pain management. With this year's funding, we have been able to continue and enhance evening art therapy groups in the Zone and to create two art shows on KidZone TV.

Art therapy helps children work through traumatic experiences, can boost self-esteem and body image, and encourages self-expression of thoughts and feelings related to illness and hospitalization. Creating art offers patients a way to express their fears and work through them.



Art Therapist Lauren Edelstein helps a child work with clay.

## Emergency Room Child Life Specialist

The Emergency Department (ED) is most often a patient's gateway to the hospital where initial experiences can drastically alter the course of coping and healing. Child Life Specialists normalize and ease the trauma of a child's visit through procedural preparation and emotional support using relaxation and

pain management techniques. Mastery of these experiences is achieved when patients and family members are empowered to be part of the medical experience and fully understand upcoming procedures.

This ER patient is clearly relaxed, thanks to Child Life Specialist Anna Eckhardt.

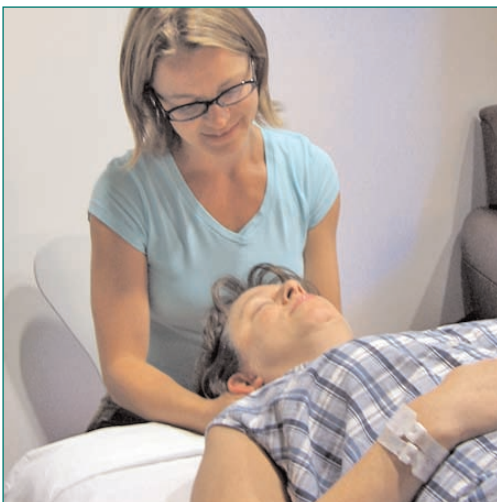


## Holistic Healing Therapies

Illness and hospitalization impact the entire family. Parents and other caregivers spend extended periods of time at the hospital under high levels of stress. Wish list funding enables the child life program to provide a broad range of holistic services designed to care for, re-energize, and support all members of the family.

Meditation, massage, and knitting nurture the mind and body and soothe the souls of parents who may spend weeks sleeping at their child's bedside. Expert consultants work with child life staff throughout the week to offer these complementary modalities. Patients and families have reported that these services enable them to cope more effectively with serious illness and to better process their hospital experiences.

Massage therapist Molly Brooks cares for a tired mom.



## As You Wish...

*As You Wish... gifts allow us to identify programs that need additional funding to promote growth, such as creative arts therapy initiatives and video therapy projects. As You Wish gifts also enable us to develop pilot projects that have had overwhelming success with children and families, such as the Therapeutic Knitting Program, Ceramics, and Horticulture Therapy programming.*



### WISH PARTY ALBUM 2007



*The 2007 Child Life Wish List Party Gallery*

## Child Life In Pediatric Radiology

X-ray, MRI and CT equipment can be terrifying for any child. So that visits to Mount Sinai's Pediatric Radiology Department are welcoming and kid-friendly, Wish List funding has made possible the provision of such environmental enhancements as books and toys in the waiting area. In addition, treatment rooms are now equipped with televisions and DVD players that offer welcome distraction and facilitate coping for children undergoing radiological tests and procedures. Although modest, these changes are already being appreciated by children who are now more relaxed, less stressed, and more cooperative during radiological procedures.

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