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– Dr. Christian Schaaf

Dr. Schaaf’s work at the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital has already resulted in several breakthrough discoveries related to autism and other neurological disorders. Your gift helps ensure that Dr. Schaaf can continue his important research — and keep his promise.

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IN THIS ISSUE ...
2017

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 6
Join us as we celebrate champions in the community and champions in the fight against pediatric cancer.

BAD PANTS OPEN

October 12
You don’t need to bring your best golf game — just your worst pants. All proceeds benefit Texas Children’s Newborn Center.

TOSS FOR TEXAS CHILDREN’S HEART CENTER

October 26
It’s a fun-raising fundraiser that’s like nothing else. Come out for great food and good times as we raise support and awareness for Texas Children’s Heart Center.

FALL FORUM LUNCHEON

November 13
Featuring Dr. David G. Poplack, director of Texas Children’s Cancer Center and Hematology Services

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To view this issue, or for access to previous issues, visit aspire.texaschildrens.org. And don’t forget to share with friends!
When **Becky and Kevin Hostler** attended The Forum Luncheon The Woodlands in April 2015, it was not their first exposure to Texas Children’s Hospital. They had been familiar with the hospital’s reputation since the late 1980s as a place where health care miracles happened.

Neither was this their first Forum Luncheon. They had attended once before at the invitation of their good friends, Shirley and Ralph Alexander, residents of The Woodlands and Texas Children’s supporters. There, they heard about Promise: The Campaign for Texas Children’s Hospital and preparations for an enormous expansion that would enable the hospital to provide its unmatched services to even more children and families. It left an indelible impression on the Hostlers.

“No one is more vulnerable than a child,” Kevin Hostler said. “We were initially drawn to Texas Children’s because of how they are uniquely equipped to care for the most vulnerable children and families in difficult circumstances.”

That day at their second Forum Luncheon, the Hostlers had come prepared to make a commitment of their own to the Promise Campaign — a gift in honor of their five grandchildren: their daughter Kathy’s children, Jackson and Liam, and their son Jonathan’s children, Isabella, Aiden and Norah.

The program that afternoon featured the stories of three brave children from The Woodlands who had all survived life-threatening illnesses thanks to the experts at Texas Children’s. Unfortunately, they had also faced a literal race against time to receive the care they desperately needed at the Texas Medical Center campus. Through a virtual tour, the audience caught a glimpse of Texas Children’s solution to this challenge and its promise to those communities: Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands, a state-of-the-art community pediatric hospital, will provide specialty outpatient, inpatient and emergency care for tens of thousands of families closer to home.

At the program’s conclusion, the lights came up and the people began to disperse. But Becky and Kevin Hostler remained — sitting quietly, stirred by echoes of the past and the memory of their family’s personal struggle.

In 2007, Becky and Kevin’s daughter, Kathy, was expecting her first child in Anchorage, Alaska. Tragically, she lost the baby at 28 weeks, a little girl she and her husband, Tony, had decided to name Hazel. The family’s grief was profound. When Kathy and Tony learned they were pregnant with twin sons the following year, they were overjoyed. But they were also anxious after the trauma of losing Hazel.

For three months, Kathy received wonderful care around the clock, and though the twins were born six weeks early, they required only a brief stay in the neonatal intensive care unit.

As Becky and Kevin sat listening at The Forum Luncheon all those years later, they were reminded of their own journey in the stories that had been shared.

“It was serendipitous,” Becky Hostler said. “We were overwhelmed by how those families’ experiences resonated with us. We had already decided to make a gift, but after the program, we both knew we wanted to give more.”

Becky and Kevin decided they wanted to make gifts in honor of each of their grandchildren. But as they were discussing, Kevin suddenly stopped and looked at his wife, and asked, “What about Hazel?”

To honor their five living grandchildren, and in memory of Hazel, the Hostlers donated $150,000 to Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands to name six examination rooms in the new Outpatient Building.

“When we first heard about Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands, we related to the need,” Kevin said. “We had seen firsthand how important it is for families to be together when they have to be in the hospital and to have that hospital close by. Every person we’ve met at Texas Children’s — from the doctors and nurses to the administrative staff — are all remarkable.”

Learn more about how you can make a tribute gift at [texaschildrens.org/tribute](http://texaschildrens.org/tribute)
Thanks to the extraordinary support of generous donors in the community, Texas Children’s Hospital is keeping its promises to children and women in need of the finest health care available. These are just a few of the milestones we have met on two of the chief priorities of Promise: The Campaign for Texas Children’s Hospital.

On October 4, 2016, we marked the opening of the Outpatient Building of Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands with a private welcome celebration that included breakfast, comments from organization leaders, and tours of the six-floor, 209,973-square-foot facility.

The new building houses almost 20 areas of specialized care including cardiology, sports medicine, neurology and hematology/oncology. “Everything about Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands is about improving the health and wellness of children and families in this community,” said Dr. Charles Hankins, chief medical officer.

A state-of-the art sports medicine gym is on the first floor, check-in and check-out stations resembling a child’s clubhouse are at the entrance of each clinic, and spacious exam rooms and provider work stations line many of the building’s halls. In addition, Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands will be home to a state-of-the-art motion and human performance lab and special gait lab, which will serve the entire Texas Children’s system.

Human performance improvement spans the spectrum from correcting a congenital heart defect, to improving a disabled child’s gait, to correcting the throwing motion of an elite high school baseball pitcher to avoid injury. The motion and human performance lab has what it takes to achieve these goals including the technology and expertise to assess vestibular dysfunction, examine human motion, and assess pulmonary and cardiac function.

The new hospital is already making a big impact. “We hear weekly about the positive effect we’re already having on patients,” said Dr. Jeffrey Shilt, chief surgical officer at Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands. “The convenience for many of our sickest patients to receive the best care close to home is creating a tremendous boost to their quality of life. But the most overwhelming thing for me has been the support from the community. People are proud to have this hospital here. The community’s input has been integral in creating this hospital, and the philanthropic support we’ve received has been instrumental in delivering that vision.”
When John Brock with Tellepsen Builders signed up to work on Texas Children’s Hospital West Campus, he never imagined his relationship with the hospital would be anything more than business. But a turn of events in his teenage daughter’s life changed that very quickly, making Brock’s experience with Texas Children’s extremely personal.

At the age of 14, his daughter was diagnosed with scoliosis by her Texas Children’s Pediatrics primary care physician. When her condition worsened, her doctor recommended surgery. Today, she is 22 years old and is doing very well, thanks to the care she received at Texas Children’s.

Brock, who is the senior supervisor for the hospital’s facilities, shared his personal story with many of his crew members who in turn shared similar stories of their own. Because of the shared connection, he asked his crew if they would be open to making a donation to Texas Children’s. The crew answered with a resounding yes and started pitching in.

Months later at the opening ceremony of the outpatient facility, Brock, with his entire crew in the background, presented almost $10,000 to Texas Children’s President and CEO Mark A. Wallace.

“I am so humbled and grateful for this donation, made by a tremendous group of people dedicated to the health of children and women,” Wallace said. “It speaks volumes about the impact Texas Children’s makes on our patients, their families and beyond.”
The inpatient facility at Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands opened on April 11, 2017. On its very first day, there were 23 surgeries, 42 visits to the emergency center and two babies admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit.

Those busy days continued, leading up to the official celebration of the hospital’s grand opening on the evening of Friday, April 28, when nearly 600 guests gathered for a gala event that was filled with emeralds and sapphires and diamonds — oh my!

Chaired by Johnna and Ryan Edone and Tracey and Sean O’Neal, the gala grossed almost $900,000 — including $373,000 raised at the event through an auction, raffle and donations.

The evening was filled with glitter-dusted surprises around every corner of the spectacular tent erected for the occasion. Following a three-course dinner provided by A Fare Extraordinaire, guests enthusiastically bid on once-in-a-life-time auction items, the most popular being a Bahamas-bound super yacht! After the bidding frenzy ended, donors were treated to a performance by Grammy-nominated artist, Jewel, who delighted the crowd with songs and stories of her life.

In attendance were Board members Michael C. Linn and his wife Carol, as well as Joe Cleary, along with Texas Children’s leadership including Michelle Riley-Brown, executive vice president and president, Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands; Dr. Charles Hankins, chief medical officer; Dr. Jeffrey Shlt, chief surgical officer; and Texas Children’s Hospital in-chiefs Dr. Mark W. Kline, Dr. Dean Andropolous, Dr. James Versalovic, and Dr. George S. Bisset. Also celebrating on Friday evening were Kathy and George Bishop, Candice and Gerald Glenn, Judy and Glenn Smith, Pam and Gary Whitlock, Carol and Phil Garner, and newlyweds Kristy and George Lindahl.

The gala concluded with late-night snacks and dancing.

Flipping the tent overnight, the evening celebration venue was transformed for the official ribbon cutting ceremony the next day. Early Saturday morning, nearly 400 guests gathered to celebrate the new community hospital with remarks by Riley-Brown, Hankins and Shlt. They all painted a picture of what an impact Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands had made in just the three short weeks since it opened. An inspirational video featuring the new hospital’s milestones followed. To conclude the official opening, confetti flew as the new hospital’s leaders officially cut the commemorative ribbon.

Next up was a gathering of more than 1,500 members of Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands staff, volunteers and community members, who lined up for the inaugural Family Fun Run. Following pre-race stretching with Dr. Kristen Ernest, sports medicine physician, as well as the national anthem from the College Park High School Herald Trumpets, the runners were off with a sound of the horn. Along the one-mile course, runners were greeted by hoopla stations from the Oak Ridge High School Sparkle Cheer Team, the College Park High School Drum Line and Let them Drum. Upon crossing the finish line and receiving their medals, runners enjoyed the post-race Family Fun Zone, presented by H-E-B, which included bounce houses, face painting, arts and crafts, and much more.

See more from the event at aspire.texaschildrens.org/PromiseUpdates
Slated to be completed in 2018, the Legacy Tower will house additional acute care cardiology beds and critical care beds dedicated specifically for surgery patients and for neurology patients, along with state-of-the-art operating rooms, including one with an intra-operative MRI.

Texas Children’s Heart Center will be completely relocated to the new Pediatric Tower and will include a dedicated pediatric heart failure intensive care unit — the first of its kind anywhere.

The unit, which opened in 2015, is the result of innovative thinking from Dr. Paul Checchia, medical director of the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit and services at Texas Children’s, and his devoted team.

“We were looking for inventive ways to expand the number of beds available for cardiac patients,” Dr. Checchia said. “We realized that we had six to ten patients at any given time who were in some stage of critical heart failure, whether from infection or congenital abnormality, or who were pre-transplant. And we also had patients who needed more specialized care post-transplant. So we realized that this cohort needed a unit purposefully designed for their unique needs that would deliver specific specialized physician care, nursing, physical therapy and nutrition care, along with the right kind of equipment resources.”

The results have been remarkable, with improvements in every marker of quality of care, including patient and staff satisfaction. Dr. Checchia also cited the recent proliferation of pediatric ventricular assist devices for children as a reason for the unit’s success.

“Over the past five years, there’s been a true sea change in the miniaturization of technology and what we can do for pediatric patients,” Dr. Checchia said. “Children who would not have survived seven or eight years ago now have these ventricular assist devices and are in the heart failure unit receiving cutting-edge care and getting better.”

Dr. Checchia and Dr. Lara Shekerdemian, chief of Critical Care Medicine at Texas Children’s, oversee the unit. Drs. Antonio Cabrera and Jack Price serve as associate medical directors. Already, the unit has earned a national reputation, with experts coming from other institutions across the country to see the unit in action.

Texas Children’s current expansion, supported by the Promise Campaign, is a reinvestment in the programs needed by the hospital’s most critically ill patients.

“At the end of the day, it’s not about the building,” Ann Lents said. “It’s all about the patients and being sure that today, in five years and in 20 years, we can help the children who need the care and treatment that only Texas Children’s Hospital can give them.”

Hear more from the Fondren Family at aspire.texaschildrens.org/PromiseUpdates
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“WHAT’S UP, DOC?” Turns Twenty-One

November 2016 Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women

More than 200 guests were held in rapt attention as they listened to Texas Children’s Hospital’s best and brightest at the 21st annual “What’s Up, Doc?” event, chaired by Rachael and Jason Volz and catered by Rachael’s catering company, A Fare Extraordinaire.

Promise Campaign chair Carol Linn welcomed guests and kicked off the evening, with some of the world’s finest physicians, surgeons, scientists and health care specialists hosting tables and speaking on a broad range of topics. Orthopedic surgeon Dr. John Dormans and adolescent and sports medicine physician Dr. Al Hergenroeder talked with their guests about sports injuries, while Plastic Surgery Chief Dr. Larry Hollier educated his guests about plastic surgery that is not cosmetic, but life-saving.

Other special discussions focused on the bright future that lay just ahead for Texas Children’s. Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands Chief Medical Officer Dr. Charles Hankins and Chief Surgical Officer Dr. Jeffrey Shilts spoke about the newly opened hospital and how it is already changing the medical landscape for the communities north of Houston. Senior Vice President Mallory Caldwell and Texas Children’s Surgeon-in-Chief Dr. Charles D. Fraser, Jr., focused on the current expansion of the hospital’s world-renowned surgical enterprise.

The evening was made all the more poignant because of the venue, which overlooked the construction of the new 19-floor Legacy Tower. This expansion will provide an additional 600,000 square feet of space for critical, surgical and cardiac care services and will enable Texas Children’s to provide the highest level of care for even more children in need.
HOUSTON FAMILY DRIVEN TO DO GOOD
THE JEROLD B. KATZ FOUNDATION

Houston businessman and philanthropist Jerold B. Katz had humble beginnings, growing up in the America of the 1930s and 1940s. Born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, he was a child of the Great Depression, and his family struggled to make ends meet. Katz’s youth was one of hardship and toil, so he took on multiple jobs as a youth and into his early adulthood to scrape together funds for his family.

It drove Mr. Katz and his family foundation, the Jerold B. Katz Foundation, to fund CARESQUAD — a bright yellow, fully equipped mobile medical clinic, which is the newest addition to the Texas Children’s Mobile Clinic Program.

“My father still vividly recalls his impoverished youth, when health care was a luxury that his family could not afford,” said his son, Evan H. Katz. “His family needed help — and it simply did not exist. This gift speaks to that simple notion: lending a hand to our neighbors in need.”

To meet the growing need for basic health care in low-income communities across the greater Houston area, Texas Children’s Hospital launched the Mobile Clinic Program in 2000 with the fully-equipped SuperKids Pediatric Mobile Clinic. In 2006, the Ronald McDonald Care Mobile joined the fleet. Since the program’s inception, nearly 90,000 patients — many of whom are uninsured — have been treated, receiving services that include physicals, medical examinations, vaccinations and immunizations, routine laboratory tests, and hearing and vision screenings. The clinics also provide valuable education in areas such as injury prevention and nutrition, and assist families in applying for public health insurance.

The new CARESQUAD Mobile Medical Clinic provides the same Texas Children’s care as the two larger mobile clinics but with a smaller physical “tire print.” The mini-mobile clinic enables Texas Children’s caregivers and volunteers to reach families in neighborhoods all over the region with narrow streets and limited parking where the larger mobile clinics can’t travel.

The Mobile Clinic Program is made possible only through the extraordinary generosity of Texas Children’s supporters. Without this philanthropy, families in these underserved areas would be forced to seek care elsewhere or even do without.

“The addition of the CARESQUAD to the Mobile Clinic Program is already making a huge difference in the lives of so many children and their families,” said Dr. Sanghamitra Misra, medical director of the program. “We are so grateful to the Jerold B. Katz Foundation for making the clinic possible.”

For the Katzes, this gift is near and dear to the family. The family is proud to do their part in helping care for the community’s underserved children.

“This clinic helps to serve those who are most in need,” said Evan H. Katz. “This is very much at the heart of what the Foundation has always tried to do.”
On October 20, the 19th Annual Bad Pants Open golf tournament, presented by RBC Wealth Management and Capital Markets, raised funds that will support life-saving programs and services for the tiniest patients at Texas Children’s Newborn Center who are in need of premier medical treatment. Each year since 1997, the turnout at the annual golf outing continues to soar.

“As a grateful parent and a representative of the presenting sponsor, it’s very exciting to see how much the tournament has grown over the years,” said Les Fox, Bad Pants Open committee member and managing director of RBC Wealth Management. “We filled three golf courses with nearly 400 golfers wearing some really bad pants to raise funds that will directly support the care of premature babies and their families. I can’t wait to celebrate our 20th year in 2017!”

The Bad Pants Open Golf Tournament included a check presentation to Texas Children’s Newborn Center. The proceeds will advance innovation and excellence in the research, treatment and care for the more than 2,500 critically ill and premature infants who are treated at one of the nation’s largest and most experienced neonatal intensive care units (NICU) each year. Proceeds from the tournament will also benefit the new NICU at Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands.

Crystal Cruz, recipient of the 2016 Bad Pants NICU Nurse of the Year award, said this generous donation will go a long way to improve patient outcomes. “Giving is an act of charity, and every year The Bad Pants Open Golf Tournament helps Texas Children’s continue to make miracles happen,” Cruz said. “I am extremely grateful for this event and all that is donated to help us save these precious, tiny lives we are entrusted to care for.”

See more event photos at aspire.texaschildrens.org/badpantsopen2016
Becca Schiff is no stranger to caring for tiny babies. As a nurse in Texas Children’s NICU for the past nine years, she has helped to care for the smallest, sickest and most vulnerable patients. But Becca would see the NICU in an entirely new light when her twins, Elliott and Jonah, were born at only 24 weeks and had to fight for their lives in the very hospital where their mother provides care every day.

The night the boys were delivered was one of the most difficult nights of Becca’s life. Through her experience in caring for premature infants, she knew the chance of survival for a 24-week baby was about 50 percent. Having two babies meant she really only had a 25 percent chance of bringing both of them home. She also knew that it was very likely they would suffer many complications from being born so early.

Despite knowing all that could go wrong, Becca was also absolutely certain that she was in the best possible place to face this challenge. The team of experts at Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women, who had cared for her throughout her pregnancy, took incredible care of her that night. When she awoke after the delivery, the first question she asked was: “Are they alive?”

Her neonatologist, also one of her best friends, was right there to tell her, “Yes.” Jonah and Elliott each weighed only 1 pound, 6 ounces. During their six-month journey in the NICU, the twins faced many challenges including brain bleeds, liver failure, bowel perforations and pulmonary hemorrhages. Jonah had an extensive six-hour liver surgery to save his life. Against the odds — and thanks to the specialized care they received in the NICU — Jonah and Elliott continued to grow stronger.

Today, the twins are thriving. They recently celebrated their 2nd birthday and are walking, talking and playing with their big sister, Charlotte.

Some friends assumed she would never return to work as a NICU nurse. In fact, the opposite was true.

“I felt like I could be one of the most qualified and empathic people to care for these families after my experience — and I had a duty to do just that.”

– Becca Schiff
BRINGING HOPE TO ALL CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES

In the early 2000s, as HIV/AIDS ravaged the lives of children across Africa, a small Texas Children’s Hospital program stepped in to help. Known as the Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI) at Texas Children’s Hospital, the program built the first stand-alone pediatric HIV clinic on the continent through a public-private partnership with the government of Botswana and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

A few short years later, this program operates more than a dozen clinics serving nearly 300,000 patients with a variety of health conditions. While HIV/AIDS remains a significant focus, Texas Children’s is also providing maternity care and treatment for other childhood illnesses including tuberculosis, malaria, malnutrition — and now, cancer.
In February 2017, in Gaborone, Botswana, Texas Children’s and Baylor College of Medicine broke ground on the first of a network of pediatric cancer facilities in southern and east Africa. The initiative, known as Global HOPE (Hematology-Oncology Pediatric Excellence), will also treat serious non-cancerous blood disorders such as sickle cell disease, severe anemia and hemophilia.

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation made a gift of $50 million over five years, which turned the $100 million project from an idea into reality. BIPAI will raise an additional $50 million for the program.

“If there is a silver lining to come out of the AIDS pandemic, it’s that we learned a tremendous amount about delivering care to sick children in Africa,” said Texas Children’s Physician-in-Chief and BIPAI founder Dr. Mark W. Kline. “Now, we can apply that knowledge to cancer and other life-threatening conditions that have been ignored.”

Texas Children’s has provided limited cancer care in Africa for about 10 years as an offshoot of the HIV/AIDS project because certain cancers are common in HIV-positive children.

The Bristol-Myers Squibb funds will be used to train health care providers and to provide support for clinical infrastructure and operations.

“This commitment will help support the training network and the construction, equipping and operation of two regional pediatric hematology-oncology clinical sites in Botswana and Uganda, along with an additional national program in Malawi,” said Dr. Giovanni Caforio, chairman of the board of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation and chief executive officer of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. “This initiative builds on 18 years of success of the Foundation’s SECURE THE FUTURE program and will offer new hope to families impacted by pediatric blood disorders and cancer.”

The Global HOPE initiative will train about 4,800 health care professionals from Botswana, Uganda, Malawi and other African countries, including doctors and nurses specializing in pediatric hematology-oncology and social workers. They, in turn, will train other health care professionals. An estimated 5,000 children will receive care in the first five years, most of whom would not have been able to access care before.

“With only five pediatric oncologists currently working in Botswana, Malawi and Uganda combined, there are simply not enough expert doctors to treat all the children who have blood disorders and cancer,” said Dr. David G. Poplack, director of Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers. “Our goal is and must continue to be that no child — anywhere in the world — should die from cancer. But at a minimum, all children should have the same fighting chance. Global HOPE will help build capacity in the region to diagnose and care for children with blood disorders and cancer, offering the potential for transformational change in survivorship for these children.”

“Bristol-Myers Squibb has partnered with Texas Children’s for nearly two decades, and we are proud of what we have accomplished together,” said Jon Damonti, president of the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation and vice president of Corporate Philanthropy at Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. “Working together through Global HOPE, we continue our commitment to increase access to health care in underserved communities across the world.”
When Desiree Bradley delivered her daughter, she wasn’t sure how long the little girl would survive because of an extremely rare genetic disorder called Jarcho-Levin Syndrome, which affects the spine, ribs and respiratory system. Nine years later, however, Deonc Bradley is a sassy, joyful girl who can periodically be seen bouncing down the halls of Texas Children’s Hospital, where she sees 13 different specialists who help manage her condition.

“If Deonc were cared for anywhere else but Texas Children’s Hospital, I truly believe she would not be here,” Desiree said. “So anything I can do to help Texas Children’s be the best place it can be, I’m willing to come out here and do.”

The Bradley family was one of several patient families that participated in the 2016 Texas Children’s Radiothon. Hosted by Cox Media Group Houston, the two-day event was held December 1 and 2 on the third floor of Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women near the Bistro Café.

Throughout the 48-hour period, people opened their hearts and their wallets and donated $655,039 to the radiothon while listening to radio personalities from Houston’s Eagle (106.9 & 107.5), Country Legends (97.1) and The New 93Q (92.9) interview patients, their families and many Texas Children’s physicians and caregivers. Texas Children’s employees gave $4,000 to the cause. Executive leadership matched those donations and added their own, bringing the total amount given by Texas Children’s employees to $9,000. The Snowdrop Foundation — which was started by Kevin Kline with The Q Morning Zoo on The New 93Q — made a donation of $150,000. The foundation is dedicated to assisting patients and families at Texas Children’s Cancer Center by providing funding for continued research to eliminate childhood cancer and for scholarships for college-bound pediatric cancer patients and survivors.

“This event makes a huge difference, and it tells our story,” said Jennifer Smart, manager in the Office of Development and program director for the hospital’s Children’s Miracle Network Program. “We couldn’t do it without all these people who give of their time and talent. We are very grateful for everything they do for our patients and families.”

Funds raised through the radiothon benefit Texas Children’s Cancer Center, the Legacy Tower and Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands.

Christi Brooks with the New 93Q and Country Legends 97.1 has participated in the radiothon since its inception and said that she has met so many families over the years who have been touched by the “miracles” that happen every day at Texas Children’s Hospital.

“Thank God we have a facility like Texas Children’s Hospital here in our back yard,” Christi said. “This really is truly an amazing place of miracles.”

Desiree agreed and said Texas Children’s is a home away from home for her and Deonc. “Until you step through these doors, you don’t understand just how special this place really is.”
MEGA 101 HOSTS CHART-TOPPING RADIOTHON

CBS Radio’s Spanish Pop station, Mega 101 – KLOL, hosted its 6th annual Spanish-speaking Radiothon benefiting Texas Children’s Hospital on December 8 and 9. Radio DJs have raised more than $2.4 million from loyal listeners since they started this event, including over $405,000 raised during their 2016 broadcast.

CHILDREN’S MIRACLE NETWORK HOSPITALS 2016 TOP PARTNERS

Walmart & Sam’s Club

Walmart and Sam’s Club have supported Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals (CMNH) for 30 years. In 2016, Houston-area Walmart stores and Sam’s Clubs raised more than $700,000 during their six-week Miracle Balloon fundraising campaign in September.

Ace Hardware

Ace Hardware became a CMNH partner in 1991. Participating Ace Retailers — like the Greater Houston Area Ace Retailers Group, made up of 33 Ace Hardware retailers — raise money each year through their Ace Cares for Kids program. Their success stems from the creative fundraising efforts of the Ace Hardware Foundation and generous contributions of Ace retailers, Ace Customers, vendor partners and Ace team members. Ace Corporation and Retailers host a number of regional fundraising events each year including golf tournaments, an icon campaign, blue CMNH Bucket Promotion, Change Canister’s Change Round-Up World’s Finest Chocolate Candy Program, CMNH Ornament Sales and BBQ events to raise funds locally.

In 2016, Ace’s events in Houston raised over $445,000 for Texas Children’s Hospital, and the Houston market had several stores ranked first and second in fundraising in the country.

• Cypress Ace Hardware was the No. 1 fundraising single store in the country, raising $66,239. Cypress Ace hosts an annual grilling contest — Grill Your Ace Off — where 20 teams compete for the distinction of best grilled dish by a panel of judges. The public is invited to participate in judging the People’s Choice, where $10 gets guests a plate of BBQ from each team.

• Alsapugh’s Ace Hardware, with locations in The Woodlands and Kingwood, was the No. 1 multi-store retailer in the country, raising over $124,116.

• Central Ace Hardware was the No. 2 store retailer in the country, raising $58,585.

Love’s Travel Stops & Musket Corporation

Love’s Travel Stops has been a CMNH partner for over 15 years. They were ranked No. 7 on Forbes Magazine’s annual listing of America’s largest privately held companies. Along with their subsidiary company, Musket Corp., Love’s raised over $342,800 through their annual Miracle Balloon Campaign and Musket Corp’s fourth annual Drive for a Child event at Top Golf.

Corner Store

Corner Store has been a CMNH partner for 20 years and now has over 180 locations throughout Houston and the surrounding area. Corner Store’s dedicated staff and customers helped raise over $267,000 in 2016 for Texas Children’s.

Kroger Co.

Kroger Co. has helped raise funds for member hospitals for over 30 years. Kroger believes in supporting charitable causes that are important to its customers and associates, who raised over $220,000 for Texas Children’s Hospital in 2016.
USHERING IN A NEW ERA OF DISCOVERY

“Great science requires a lot of courage. Finding new paths means going into the unknown.”

— Dr. Huda Zoghbi, Director, Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute

For the first several months of her life, Kayla Schwartz was a perfectly healthy baby girl. But when she was about nine months old, her parents, Roberta and Lee, began noticing the first unsettling signs of potential developmental delay. She couldn’t keep her food down. She didn’t seem to want to crawl. Some advised them just to wait, because surely she would grow out of it.

Kayla’s initial diagnosis was inconclusive, but she began therapy at Texas Children’s to gain a foothold against the symptoms she was exhibiting. It was during this time that the Schwartz family finally received a definitive diagnosis: Rett syndrome.

“At the time, most of the available information revolved around extreme cases — girls in wheelchairs, with breathing problems and gastric tubes, many of whom didn’t make it through adolescence,” Lee said. “When you first face that, it seems overwhelming.”

Then came a phone call that gave them a new perspective. On the line was Dr. Huda Zoghbi, who spoke to them about the future — a future not of desperation, but of hope — because of the research that was happening in the field.

Over the next several years, Texas Children’s became a partner to Kayla and her family, and by age three, she was walking. Today, she enjoys school, has many friends, wants to be a fashion model and is living a meaningful life. Through every milestone, Dr. Zoghbi has been there for the Schwartz family, reassuring them and giving them hope about the possibility that one day the neural pathways in Kayla’s brain can be restored.

Kayla, pictured here with her parents, Roberta and Lee, is also featured on the cover of this issue of Aspire. Hear more of Kayla’s story at aspire.texaschildrens.org/NRI.

JAN AND DAN DUNCAN NEUROLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

1993

- Identified mutation in the gene ATXN1, responsible for spinocerebellar ataxia Type 1, a deadly neurodegenerative disorder
Neurological disorders. They have names like Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, autism, epilepsy, Rett syndrome and Batten disease.

The symptoms and severity of the diseases vary, ranging from merely disruptive to utterly debilitating. Some of them rob the patient not only of their motor function and physical abilities, but also of their personality and identity.

To date, there have been more than 600 distinct neurological disorders identified, with more being discovered every year. Determining the root causes for specific disorders remains a monumental challenge. Less than a generation ago, there was little hope at all for treating most of them, with many academic institutions conducting siloed research with limited or no collaboration whatsoever between scientists and clinicians.

But much can change in a short time. Today more researchers are studying these diseases than ever before — looking for answers to previously unasked questions, searching for the tools to unlock the secrets of these diseases, develop new therapies and eventually find cures.

And standing at the forefront of this movement is the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital.

“The Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute doesn’t belong just to Texas Children’s Hospital. It belongs to the world.”

– Mark A. Wallace, President and CEO, Texas Children’s Hospital

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In the six years since the doors opened, the outcomes have been nothing short of extraordinary.

The remarkable work of the 25 accomplished faculty and 250 trainees and lab personnel who have been brought together there has surpassed the most ambitious expectations, earning the NRI international esteem in the scientific community. Ask any researcher, scientist or clinician at the NRI what sets it apart from other research institutes around the world, and they are likely to give some variation of the same answer: The NRI was specially and carefully designed to foster conversation and collaboration among the faculty and trainees who work here — all thanks to the vision and leadership of Dr. Zoghbi.

There are geneticists, biomathematicians, biochemists, structural biologists, molecular biologists, neuropathologists, theoreticians and many more, all working together alongside clinicians, sharing data and spurring on dynamic interactions and new discoveries.

“I can honestly say that this is the best environment I’ve ever been a part of,” said Dr. Roy Sillitoe, director of the Neuropathology Core Laboratory at the NRI. “The interactions here are organic. Immediately next door to my office is a neurosurgeon. Next door to him is a human geneticist. Next door to him is a molecular biologist. In that one hallway, we have people coming from very different areas trying to understand neurological disease, specifically pediatric neurological disease, and our collective interests and specialties all come to fruition in the lab. There’s no single place I’ve ever seen where you can accomplish so much.”

“There’s not a single day that goes by where a new gene is not identified or a new mechanism is now being understood,” said Dr. Christian Schaaf, a medical geneticist at the NRI. “Being here speeds up the whole process of discovery.”

Additionally, the NRI leads a collaborative, multi-institutional effort within the Texas Medical Center with institutions such as MD Anderson Cancer Center, UT Health and Rice University.

“It’s a unique setting in an academic world where we get to pair up with such diversity, and especially including a clinical facet to the research institution,” said Dr. Benjamin Arenkiel in the Department of Molecular and Human Genetics at the NRI. “You get this idea that anything is possible.”

On April 10, more than 600 guests attended The Forum Luncheon at the Marriott Marquis in downtown Houston to meet internationally renowned neurogeneticist Dr. Huda Zoghbi and learn about the remarkable breakthroughs being made at the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital. ABC13 Anchor Melanie Lawson moderated the presentation.

Dr. Huda Zoghbi was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1955. In 1975, she began her medical training at American University of Beirut. During her first year in school, civil war erupted. It soon became too dangerous for her to make even the short trip to campus, so she and fellow students lived on the campus instead.

After her brother was injured, her family insisted they leave Lebanon to live with relatives in the United States. She performed exceptionally well at Meharry Medical College, graduating in 1979. But perhaps because of her unorthodox background — having come from overseas after only one year in medical school and starting off-cycle at Meharry — Dr. Zoghbi was passed over by several Ivy League medical schools.

Dr. Ralph Feigin, then physician-in-chief at Texas Children’s Hospital, saw something truly special in her and recruited her. It was during this time that she was drawn to the study of neurological disorders. But she found herself heartbroken by the children she was seeing in the clinic.

So she began considering another option: research. She went to Texas Children’s own Dr. Arthur Beaudet, a giant in the world of genetics, and asked if she could work in his lab. This set her on the path to becoming a brilliant physician-scientist. As a researcher, she was able to use her unique clinical perspective to enrich her work and the lives of patients.

In 1993, Dr. Zoghbi co-discovered the gene for spinocerebellar ataxia, a devastating disease that affects balance and speech … and then the Math 1 gene causing deafness … and then the gene responsible for Rett syndrome, the second-leading cause of intellectual disability in females. These would prove to be watershed discoveries that would reveal many of the mechanisms for other neurological diseases.

Today, Dr. Zoghbi is not only director of the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute, she is one of the world’s leading neurogeneticists.
The NRI’s overwhelming success in just six years has positioned Texas Children’s Hospital to take the next step of translating discoveries made in the laboratory into patient therapies. Through the Promise Campaign, philanthropy will help us move in this direction by providing endowment support that will secure the future of the NRI and help recruit and retain leading experts, expand existing lab space, and add state-of-the-art equipment.

A team of researchers headed by Dr. Ignatia Van Den Veyver, investigator at the NRI and director of Prenatal and Reproductive Genetics at Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women, has discovered that mutations in an early embryonic development gene may provide some clue to unexplained female infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss.

A large study led by Dr. Joshua Shulman has revealed five strong candidate genes for Parkinson’s disease. Researchers performed genetic testing and analysis on 1,148 unrelated Parkinson’s cases before narrowing their search based on functional relevance.

A study carried out by a team of researchers led by Dr. Christian Schaaf has linked the ABL1 gene, well known for its association with cancer, to a genetic disorder that causes heart defects and skeletal conditions.

A study from the lab of Dr. Benjamin Arenkiel recently brought to light the fascinating possibility that activating or inhibiting the neurons in the cholinergic basal forebrain feeding circuit could help regulate food addiction and food aversion behaviors.

“Philanthropy is absolutely crucial. It allows researchers to think outside the box and do things a little more boldly. We can tackle bigger questions. And in Houston, I have seen the community really embrace research, and I am always impressed by that.”

– Dr. Benjamin Arenkiel

Our promise is to advance research of neurological and neuropsychiatric disorders and ultimately alleviate the impact of these devastating disorders on human lives.

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To learn how you can support the NRI and other Promise Campaign priorities, please visit texaschildrens.org/promise.
More than 500 guests donned their boots and Texas-chic apparel at the Houston Polo Club for the 4th annual Toss for Texas Children’s Heart Center event, which raised more than $180,000. Texas Children’s Hospital is ranked No. 1 in cardiology and heart surgery by U.S. News & World Report.

The bean bag tournament featured light bites and cocktails by A Fare Extraordinaire and a special performance by country music singer, Gary P. Nunn. The event was chaired by Staci and John Donovan and Brooke and Scott Hutson, both of whom have children who receive expert care at Texas Children’s Hospital and at the Heart Center. The “Toss” trophy was presented at a special awards ceremony to conclude the evening’s festivities.
When Staci and John Donovan attended the 2013 Toss for Texas Children’s Heart Center event, Staci was pregnant with John William, the couple’s third child. After he was born, a routine six-week appointment revealed that he had a heart murmur. Physicians at Texas Children’s Heart Center diagnosed him with an atrioventricular canal defect — there were two holes between the heart’s chambers and a problem with his mitral valve, which regulates blood flow to the heart. Texas Children’s Hospital Surgeon-in-Chief Dr. Charles D. Fraser, Jr., and Dr. Carolyn Altman, a world-renowned heart surgeon at Texas Children’s Hospital, recommended waiting a year for surgery so John William could grow bigger and stronger.

When John William was just 18 months old, Dr. Fraser performed open heart surgery, which was a huge success. After the operation, Staci and John were amazed by the incredible, compassionate care John William received while in the cardiovascular intensive care unit.

Today, he is an active, healthy and thriving little boy, and Staci and John are so grateful for Texas Children’s Heart Center’s amazing team of doctors and nurses who helped give their son a second chance at life.

A team of intervention specialists gave Caroline an in utero blood transfusion to fight the anemia, but they still feared that her heart had become so stressed that she wouldn’t survive the night. But Caroline fought. A week later, another ultrasound revealed that the virus had also caused bleeding in her brain. Physicians leapt into action to combat both the anemia and the bleeding. Caroline needed close monitoring for the next two months. Astonishingly, her anemia, brain bleed and heart condition all healed. Brooke carried Caroline to full term, and her doctors agree that she was truly a miracle baby.

We felt so blessed to have a world-renowned heart center in our city and to have access to the best pediatric cardiovascular surgeon in the world. Dr. Charles Fraser.

– Staci & John Donovan

“We are so grateful not only to have had our daughter’s life in the hands of world-renowned fetal intervention specialists, but also for their sincere care and personal touch as they treated us like family.”

– Brooke & Scott Hutson

When Caroline was in utero, her mother, Brooke Hutson, contracted parvovirus B19 — a virus that causes fifth disease in children. While the virus is harmless to adults, it can be fatal to unborn children. Brooke’s symptoms took her and her husband, Scott, to Texas Children’s Pavilion for Women, where an ultrasound confirmed that the virus had caused Caroline to become anemic. Brooke was immediately transferred to Texas Children’s Fetal Center to begin treatment that would save Caroline’s life.
Community members attending The Forum Luncheon Houston last September got to meet some of the top surgical leaders at Texas Children’s Hospital, learn about the incredible ways they are making history in pediatric surgery, and hear about their vision for the future of the hospital’s surgical enterprise.

Following lunch and remarks from President and CEO Mark A. Wallace about the steady and rapid growth of Texas Children’s — including the Department of Surgery — Senior Vice President Mallory Caldwell moderated a panel discussion with Surgeon-in-Chief Dr. Charles D. Fraser, Jr., Chief of Otolaryngology Dr. Ellis Arjmand, Chief of Plastic Surgery Dr. Larry Hollier and Chief of Neurosurgery Dr. Howard Weiner.

Caldwell focused on questions that highlighted why Texas Children’s Department of Surgery is bigger, better, faster and stronger than any in the nation, and how the core mission of the department is to have the depth and breadth of expertise to deliver a surgical solution for every child in need of one.

Topics discussed included the importance of outcomes measurement and how that work is approached at Texas Children’s; the fact that Texas Children’s expertise is in treating common illnesses as well as complex, rare conditions; the strength and unique value in the department’s many multidisciplinary teams; and the hospital’s ability to recruit the best and brightest as we continue to grow and strengthen our team.

“When I came down here and learned about what is going on at Texas Children’s and the future trajectory of the organization, I knew I had to be here,” said Dr. Weiner, who recently joined Texas Children’s from New York University where he led a world-renowned neurosurgery program. “The leadership, the can-do attitude and the drive to grow as a world-class institution providing high-quality, attentive care to all children is very exciting.”

When Texas Children’s Hospital opened its doors in 1954, it did so with the one and only pediatric surgeon in the city of Houston. Today, Texas Children’s Hospital has more than 90 surgeons and is one of the first two hospitals in the U.S. to be verified as a Level I Children’s Surgery Center by the American College of Surgeons.

Texas Children’s surgeons have performed more than 350 heart transplants, making the heart transplant program one of the most experienced and active programs in the nation. They launched an MRI-guided laser ablation surgery — the first of its kind in the world — for epilepsy treatment and also recently performed a 26-hour procedure to separate conjoined twins in one of the most difficult such cases to date.
“Every time we have expanded, it has been successful because we’ve done it for the right reasons,” Dr. Fraser said. “We are filling a specific need.”

The need for quality pediatric surgical care continues to grow and is a factor that convinced hospital leadership to construct a new Legacy Tower, which will allow Texas Children’s to treat even more children who need complex cardiac, critical and surgical care.

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– Dr. Howard Weiner, Chief of Neurosurgery

When the new building is complete, it will house much-needed pediatric and cardiovascular intensive care beds, as well as new operating rooms with the latest technology. It will also house the new and expanded Heart Center, including the outpatient clinic, cardiovascular operating rooms and catheterization labs.

Ultimately, Wallace said, the expansion will allow Texas Children’s Hospital to continue to provide the best possible family-centered care and best outcomes for the nation’s sickest children who come to us for help.
Starting this past October, Texas Children’s Hospital patients and families may have noticed a new employee walking the halls wearing a bright green vest emblazoned with the Texas Children’s logo. But she isn’t your typical employee. She’s furry, has four legs and is only two years old. She’s Elsa, Texas Children’s new therapy dog and part of the Facility Dog Program developed by Texas Children’s Child Life team. The program uses animal-assisted therapy to enhance the emotional well-being of pediatric patients by reducing their anxiety, perception of pain and fear of hospitalization.

In the year prior to the program’s launch, the Child Life team collaborated with Canine Assistants, a non-profit organization in Atlanta, GA, that has matched more than 1,500 service dogs, making both individual and hospital placements. Together, the two organizations gathered benchmarking information and worked on program development. And this past December, the Development team and Child Life leadership presented the facility dog program to the Shackouls family, who graciously decided to support the program.

“It is our hope that the support and love these therapy animals provide will help countless children in making their treatment and recovery journeys brighter,” Judy and Bobby Shackouls said. “We look forward to watching this program grow into something even bigger because every child, no matter their age, gender, background or health condition, deserves to feel the unconditional love and comfort these animals can provide throughout the healing process.”

“Elsa provides goal-oriented therapeutic interventions to patients, families and staff,” said Mary Tietjens, assistant director of Clinical Support Services at Texas Children’s. “She offers support to patients and families who may be having trouble coping with hospital stays, a new diagnosis or other traumatic experiences. She also provides distraction and motivation to patients undergoing certain medical procedures.”

During her training with Canine Assistants, Elsa demonstrated strong competencies geared toward working in a pediatric hospital environment. She spent additional time training at Children’s Hospital of Atlanta working with pediatric patients alongside her handler, Sarah Herbek, a Child Life specialist and animal-assisted therapy coordinator at Texas Children’s.

Then, just like any new employee, Elsa spent the first few weeks at Texas Children’s getting acclimated to her new surroundings with Sarah before seeing patients in the West Tower at the Texas Medical Center Campus.

The positive response to Elsa’s arrival has been overwhelming.

“We are so excited to finally bring this program to fruition at Texas Children’s Hospital,” Tietjens said. “This was a collaborative team effort and would not have been possible without the support of the Shackouls family and the hard work of everyone involved.”

“We believe in the hospital’s mission of healing children. This program not only provides children with a sense of companionship but has proven to be a significant resource in treating patients who may be physically, socially, emotionally or cognitively challenged. Elsa provides a sense of fulfillment to the children in a way that only the love, affection and attention a therapy dog can provide.” – Bobby and Judy Shackouls, Promise Campaign donors
Texas Children’s new four-legged employee is making a big difference in the lives of our patients. Katie Schommer, who also works with Elsa, shared the story of a recent patient encounter.

“Elsa and I were walking by the physical therapy gym on the rehabilitation unit and overheard a patient becoming frustrated with doing his therapy,” Schommer said. “When we walked by, his whole attitude switched, and he called out excitedly, ‘Elsa is here!’ His physical therapist asked if Elsa could join in for the therapy session. It was clear from her insistent tail-wagging that Elsa was excited to help!

“The patient stood to pet Elsa and then initiated a game of fetch. The physical therapists were so proud to see the boy standing on both legs because that’s what they had been trying to get him to do for 15 minutes! Elsa continued to check in to provide encouragement and motivation for this boy to continue with his rehabilitation therapy. She also enjoys a good game of fetch whenever she can get it in! Each time Elsa came, this patient’s face lit up with excitement as she joined his therapy sessions and made them much more fun.”

“It is our hope that the support and love these therapy animals provide will help countless children in making their treatment and recovery journeys brighter.”

– Judy and Bobby Shackouls
In a program featuring astonishing accounts of the work being done at Texas Children’s Hospital, Surgeon-in-Chief Dr. Charles D. Fraser, Jr., for whom Fraser’s Friends is named, confidently delivered his vision for the hospital’s future. “Texas Children’s Hospital is poised to be the best,” he said. “Other children’s hospitals have had their time. It’s Texas Children’s time to be the leader.”

Citing incredible surgical achievements in 2016 (a staggering 30,810 surgeries and 87 transplants, including 27 heart transplants), Dr. Fraser explained that more and more, Texas Children’s is being recognized as having one of the preeminent surgical departments in the country.

He shared the stories of Ella Fondren and Lauren Dunwoody, two little girls who, if not for the expertise and ingenuity of the physicians and surgeons at Texas Children’s, might not have had their time. It’s Texas Children’s time to be the leader.”

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Bailey grew up just down the street from Texas Children’s Hospital, Surgeon-in-Chief Dr. Charles D. Fraser, Jr., for whom Fraser’s Friends is named, confidently delivered his vision for the hospital’s future. “Texas Children’s Hospital is poised to be the best,” he said. “Other children’s hospitals have had their time. It’s Texas Children’s time to be the leader.”

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He shared the stories of Ella Fondren and Lauren Dunwoody, two little girls who, if not for the expertise and ingenuity of the physicians and surgeons at Texas Children’s, might not have survived complex, life-threatening medical situations. He then turned the program back over to Bailey McCarthy, who not only hosted the event, but also experienced as a parent the life-saving care that Texas Children’s provides.

Guests gathered at the beautiful home of Bailey and Pete McCarthy for a special evening with Fraser’s Friends, a passionate philanthropic group dedicated to advancing patient care, education and research for the nine divisions of Texas Children’s Hospital’s surgical enterprise: Congenital Heart, Dental, Neurosurgery, Ophthalmology, Orthopedic, Otolaryngology, Pediatric General Surgery, Plastic Surgery and Urology.

A.

The condition required a level of expertise found in few hospitals in the country, and Texas Children’s had recently performed a successful SCT surgery. Bailey and Pete returned to Chicago to consider their options.

But by week 28, the tumor had doubled in size, and fear of anemia in their unborn baby had
grown. They decided to return to Houston to deliver their daughter.

Grace McCarthy was born at 39 weeks via C-section. Now the matter turned to the safe removal of her tumor. Three days after the birth, world-renowned surgeon Dr. Oluyinka Olutoye successfully performed the operation. After two weeks in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), Grace was released, and the McCarthys went home for the first time as a family.

Their journey with Texas Children’s didn’t end there. Two years later, Bailey and Pete welcomed their second child, Harry, after a normal pregnancy. But after just three months, Harry exhibited symptoms of neuroendocrine cell hyperplasia of infancy (NEHI), a rare lung disease. Once again Bailey and Pete feared for their child’s life — and once again Texas Children’s was there to provide expert care and ensure that Harry would return to good health.

“That’s the gift Texas Children’s is able to give families. We have to stop and remember how lucky we are.”

– Bailey McCarthy

Center campus, and the all-important necessity to raise funds expressly for the recruitment and retention of the world’s finest doctors, surgeons and scientists. “Mike and I made a promise: to devote ourselves to raising the funds necessary to make it possible for Texas Children’s Hospital to always have the capacity to accept critically ill children who need our help.” Carol Linn said.

Texas Children’s promise has always been to provide care for all children who need it. With the support of individuals and philanthropic groups like Fraser’s Friends, Texas Children’s will continue to carry out that mission and to offer the finest pediatric health care available.

See more event photos at aspire.texaschildrens.org/FrasersFriends
Long-time Texas Children’s supporters Sidney Faust, Elsie Eckert, Judi McGee and Scott Basinger chaired their ninth annual Celebration of Champions event, raising $260,000 for Texas Children’s Cancer Center. FOX 26 news anchor, Melissa Wilson, emceed the event and helped Texas Children’s patient Crew Cones ‘light’ the Torch of Hope to kick off the event. Guests enjoyed watching the 2016 Community Champions strut down the runway in fall fashions from Saks Fifth Avenue while escorting our special Patient Champions dressed in the latest fashions from Dillard’s.

Plans are underway for a special 10th anniversary celebration on Friday, October 6, 2017, at River Oaks Country Club.
2016 Community Champions!

Cathy and Joe Cleary
Jo and Jim Furr
Diane and Harry Gendel
Susan and Dick Hansen
Betty and John Hrnčir
Mady and Ken Kades
Carmen and Butch Mach
Joanna and Brad Marks
Trini Mendenhall
Macy and Mayes Middleton
Sharon and Douglas Owens
Dr. Timothy Porea
Nathalie and Charles Roff
Lindy and John Rydman
Sharleen and Ron Walkoviak
Dancie and Jim Ware
Jane and Jim Wise

Event Chairs

Sidney Faust
Judi McGee
Scott Basinger
Elsie Eckert

See more event photos at aspire.texaschildrens.org/Champions2016
The cries of my seven-month-old son, Keller, awakened me in the early morning hours just after my 40th birthday. My husband, Reggie, and I attempted to comfort him, but he would not stop crying. Around 7:00 a.m. that day, June 12, 2011, we took him to the St. Luke’s Emergency Center near our home in The Woodlands. I knew something was wrong, and by the time we arrived at St. Luke’s, his lips had turned blue.

After assessing Keller, the Emergency Center staff promptly arranged for his transfer to Texas Children’s Hospital Texas Medical Center Campus via the Kangaroo Crew — a specialized transport service for critically ill babies and children.

I rode with him on what seemed like the longest and scariest 40-mile trip ever. Knowing that my son needed the expert care Texas Children’s provides to the sickest children was frightening to me, but the comfort of the Kangaroo Crew staff encouraged me so much that I sang to my sweet baby boy along the way.

The medical staff at Texas Children’s intubated Keller shortly after we arrived at the hospital. The examining physician diagnosed him with asthma, a collapsed lung and double pneumonia. The news shocked Reggie and me, because Keller had seemed perfectly healthy the day before and had no prior health issues.

Unfortunately, the news got worse. The oral steroids Keller needed could not be administered for another 48 hours — after he had passed the 21-day surveillance period from the possible time of his exposure to chickenpox at his daycare. We waited, and as the clock ticked, Keller’s health declined. The next day, one of the critical care specialists gently said, “Keller is the sickest child in the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) right now, and we are preparing for his other organs to start shutting down.”

Nothing prepares a parent to hear that your son may die. We wailed. Then, we dropped to our knees and prayed. The hospital staff comforted us again in that awful moment when hope seemed dim.

“I vigilantly prayed and read the Bible out loud to Keller all night,” Reggie said. “Family and friends also prayed.”

On June 14, Keller was able to receive oral steroids. His body responded well to the medication, and he showed signs of improvement a little each day. We watched a miracle take place as health returned to his small body. What a precious gift it was for my husband to finally hold our son again on June 19 — Father’s Day.
Keller remained in the PICU for one more week. I never left the hospital and was grateful for access to the on-site Ronald McDonald House, where we could eat meals, take showers and lie down in a bed. The greeting cards created by family and friends through the hospital’s online greeting card program also brought us comfort and encouragement during this tough time.

From our first interaction with the Kangaroo Crew, we knew Keller was in good hands — and so were we. An entire team of family-centered pediatric specialists came together to consistently provide compassionate, high-quality care. They let us listen in on rounds, ask lots of questions and advocate for our son.

“The staff was so kind and personable. It felt like a bunch of friends were with us, watching over our child.”
— Reggie Gray

“The staff was so kind and personable.” Reggie said. “It felt like a bunch of friends were with us, watching over our child.”

Reggie and I are so thankful for Texas Children’s. Knowing that the same level of pediatric care we received at the hospital’s Main Campus in the Texas Medical Center is now available to us much closer to home at Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands gives us such peace of mind. Our experience with Keller strengthened not only our faith, but also our devotion to Texas Children’s. We now serve as Ambassadors to tell others about this wonderful place where miracles happen and to raise awareness and funding that will help Texas Children’s continue providing the best care to all children in need.

Keller is a healthy 6-year-old boy. He still has asthma and is on a daily treatment regimen, but he has never had to go back to Texas Children’s for critical care. Perhaps because of the wonderful doctors he has interacted with his entire life, he wants to be a doctor someday.

“Knowing that the same level of pediatric care ... is now available to us much closer to home at Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands gives us such peace of mind.”
— Kristina Gray
mbassadors for Texas Children’s Hospital is a vibrant group of like-minded individuals who share a commitment to the hospital’s mission. Through active social engagement and generous philanthropic giving, they serve as a strong voice for children and women in need of the most specialized health care available.

Each year, Ambassadors raise significant funds for the hospital’s area of greatest need. Now that Texas Children’s has expanded its world-class care both at the Texas Medical Center campus and in the communities north of Houston, the need for support is greater than ever. That’s why last year, Ambassadors expanded their reach to meet that need with the formation of Ambassadors for Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands. Throughout 2016 and early 2017, Ambassadors have held numerous kick-off events in private homes. Hosts included Candi and Gerald Glenn, Vicki and Michael Richmond, Johnna and Ryan Edone, Tracey and Sean O’Neal, Rachael and Mark Terry, and Carol and Phil Garner. These events raised more than $600,000 for Texas Children’s Hospital.

In addition to raising funds, Ambassadors also participate in a wide array of events, such as Ambassadors On Call luncheons — which feature Texas Children’s experts and offer guests an opportunity to see the hospital’s world-class facilities firsthand — and annual favorites like Family Fun Day and the Holiday Party. Ambassadors also make use of special Navigation Line services for assistance with referrals, appointments, and health and safety information — an invaluable resource for parents and grandparents alike.

AMBASSADORS CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAYS AND TEXAS CHILDREN’S IN THE WOODLANDS AND HOUSTON

DECEMBER 2016

More than 250 revelers gathered at the home of Promise Campaign co-chairs Judy and Glenn Smith for the inaugural Ambassadors for Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands Holiday Party.

Michelle Riley-Brown, executive vice president of Texas Children’s Hospital and president of Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands, welcomed attendees and shared the success of the new hospital’s outpatient services thus far. Following personal remarks from Glenn Smith, a check for more than $1 million was presented to Riley-Brown on behalf of Ambassadors for Texas Children’s Hospital The Woodlands.

Sarah and Gregg Snyder hosted more than 400 guests at their Houston home for the seventh annual Ambassadors Holiday Party Promise Campaign co-chairs. Cari and John Griggs accepted the annual check, which totaled more than $2.1 million, and shared why giving to Texas Children’s is so important.

More than 20 bins of toys, games and art supplies were donated to the Child Life team from the two parties.

Become an Ambassador today at ambassadors.texaschildrens.org
Medical Marijuana: Miracle or Myth?

Dr. Christopher Greeley, Chief, Section of Public Health Pediatrics

As chief of the Section of Public Health Pediatrics, Dr. Greeley works with state and local agencies to study and pilot strategies, interventions and policies directed toward addressing adversity and strengthening resilience for children and their families.

Q. What is a cannabinoid?
A. A cannabinoid is an active substance found in marijuana. The cannabinoid most people are familiar with is tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC. Though THC is the main ingredient in marijuana, there are 60 to 70 other active cannabinoids.

Q. How long have people been using marijuana for medical purposes?
A. Marijuana has been used in treatments of various kinds in many different cultures dating back to Old Testament times. Ancient Chinese writings from 2700 B.C. discuss its healing properties. Egyptians around 1500 B.C. used it for something resembling pinkeye. And Romans documented using it for arthritis pain around 79 A.D.

Q. What are some of the issues hindering medicinal marijuana research?
A. Marijuana is a Schedule 1 drug, meaning it can’t be studied without special government approval. There’s only one legal grower of medicinal marijuana in the country, and that’s the University of Mississippi. So that’s the only place that can guarantee quality control or how much THC is in a dose. This also means that marijuana hasn’t been studied enough. So though there appear to be some interesting benefits, we still just don’t know enough about all of the different cannabinoids in marijuana and their effects on the human body.

Q. If given the opportunity to participate in a medicinal marijuana study, what would be your focus?
A. First, I would research its effectiveness in the treatment of childhood epilepsy and seizures. I think that’s where the biggest potential public health benefit lies to be able to make inroads for children and their families. I also think it would be worth exploring potential benefits for autism.

Social Cruelty, Cyber Citizenship and Building a Community of Connection

Dr. Amy B. Acosta, Adolescent Medicine Section

Dr. Acosta is a licensed psychologist at Texas Children’s and currently provides mental health services through Texas Children’s inpatient adolescent clinic. Her clinical specialties include eating disorders, body image concerns, and anxiety and depression, while her academic and research interests focus on bullying, parenting in the digital age and digital wellness.

Q. How do you know when a specific behavior is bullying?
A. What one person perceives as bullying or an act of harassment, another person might not. People’s feelings can be hurt by something that was unintentional, like a joke gone wrong. But the three criteria prevalent in instances of bullying are intentionality, repetition and power imbalance. For example, when we talk about peer victimization, this would be repeated harassment, an imbalance of power in the relationship and the intention to cause harm. And that can be either verbal or nonverbal, and can include exclusion of the victim.

Q. What is cyberbullying?
A. Cyberbullying is harassment that occurs online, and it happens most frequently among peers. One of the biggest differentiators between cyberbullying and in-person bullying is the idea of minimal physical and social cues. When we adults were teens, we were granted an end to the stresses of the day at 3:00 when we went home. There’s this idea that with today’s teens, stress is ongoing and is being broadcast out to a larger complex social network.

Q. Is there a personality type that tends to be more victimized?
A. What we know is that a child who has been bullied is more at risk to bully others. And if you think of that more broadly, that could even mean at home. Maybe the person who’s hurting or bullying a child is a parent or family member. So then that aggression comes through the child to school. And that can have long-term physical and mental health effects. It hurts everybody.

Q. What kinds of health problems can stem from bullying?
A. Obviously bullying can have a negative impact on health, especially over time. It can cause depression, anxiety, self-esteem issues and physical health problems, which of course can all lead to school absences, refusal to go to school and lowered grades.

Hear more from these experts at aspire.texaschildrens.org/ambassadors2016
A GIFT FOR CAROLINE
ELIZABETH AND ANTHONY DELUCA

Our journey with Texas Children’s began when our youngest daughter was just two days old. I found Caroline unresponsive and turning blue in her bassinet and began CPR on our kitchen floor. When the ambulance arrived, I immediately said, “She needs to be taken to Texas Children’s Hospital” — and thus began new lives for me and my husband, Anthony, and for our other daughters.

Caroline had seizures for the first three months of her life. She did not meet any of her developmental milestones, but we had a reprieve from the seizures until she turned three. When the seizures returned, though, we were told that her condition was severe and untreatable — catastrophic epilepsy, they called it.

At four years old, Caroline suffered a stroke, which paralyzed her on her right side and affected even her swallowing function. Even so, after a little while, Caroline began to come out of her extreme illness, learning to walk for the first time in her life and learning to swallow again. We began to believe that we just might beat the odds.

Caroline was always a fighter, and she was determined to get well. She was asked several times to donate samples of her blood for genetic testing. We always gave Caroline the opportunity to say yes or no to the blood draws. She always said yes — and she would grin, because she knew she was helping others.

The seizures continued and always seemed to happen at the worst times, like when she was getting ready for a Special Olympics swim meet. She participated in several different clinical trials — we tried everything we could to bring her relief. When we heard that Dr. Huda Zoghbi was going to be the director of the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute (NRI) at Texas Children’s Hospital, we immediately wanted to learn more. Anthony and I felt strongly that if a cure for catastrophic epilepsy were to be found, it was going to be at the NRI.

When she was 11, Caroline lost her ability to walk. About this time, we began hearing about genomic testing, which ultimately found the culprit for Caroline’s condition in the STXBP1 gene. We finally had a mission for our donation to the NRI — finding a cure for catastrophic epilepsies, beginning with STXBP1.

Dr. Zoghbi had a researcher in mind, Dr. Mingshan Xue, and she was trying to convince him to come to Houston. She decided to introduce him to Caroline. They immediately hit it off. During that visit, Caroline began having a series of very bad seizures — and Drs. Xue and Zoghbi saw firsthand what she was dealing with. As they left our home that day, Mingshan whispered to me: “99 percent sure I’ll be back here in Houston.” Mingshan did come, and he developed a mouse model for STXBP1 — and the mice seized exactly as Caroline did.

The NRI is at the forefront of efforts to solve the myriad neurological issues affecting children. We believe it’s going to happen not in the far-flung future, but in the near future.

In March of 2016, our beautiful Caroline passed away in my arms. Thanks to Texas Children’s, she lived 18 years, far surpassing her expected life span. She was the bravest, strongest, silliest, most amazing person I will ever know.

“During the worst year of our lives, Anthony and I became even more committed than ever to helping solve the riddle of catastrophic epilepsy. In Caroline’s memory, we will solve it, and we will solve it at the NRI — of that I am sure.”

— Elizabeth and Anthony DeLuca, Promise Campaign donors