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2019

UPCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 26

Through the Lens, presented by Chevron

A photography exhibit celebrating the 20th anniversary of Baylor International Pediatric AIDS Initiative, or BIPAI, at Texas Children’s, which provides HIV/AIDS care to 300,000+ children worldwide.

SEPTEMBER 28

The Woodlands Spirit of the Woods Gala

Enjoy a performance by a high-energy aerial acrobatics group. All proceeds help Texas Children’s care for underserved families in our community.

OCTOBER 2

RBC Wealth Management Bad Pants Open

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

OCTOBER 11

Celebration of Champions

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

OCTOBER 14

The Forum Luncheon

Dr. Julie Kaplow, vice chair of Behavioral Health and director of Texas Children’s Trauma and Grief Center, will share how her team helps children find hope and healing in a whole new way.

Learn more and register for our upcoming events at waystogive.texaschildrens.org.

Visit aspire.texaschildrens.org.

All the amazing stories and Texas Children’s news you love in Aspire are just a touch, swipe or click away. Visit online and gain access to:

full articles

more photos

To view this issue, or for access to previous issues, visit aspire.texaschildrens.org. Share this with your friends!
In Lilongwe, Malawi, a 14-year-old girl is giving birth. She is hardly more than a child herself, and the baby’s head is too large to pass through the birth canal. He really needs to be delivered by Caesarean section, but unfortunately, that simply is not an option because the young mother does not have access to this level of care.

In excruciating pain, she must continue with her labor. For 75% of women in this situation, labor lasts for more than three days. For some, it can go on for a week. Pressure will continue to increase until the soft tissue in the pelvis compresses so much that it creates a hole, called an obstetric fistula, which will leave the mother completely incontinent.

After she gives birth, this new mother will be ostracized by her own family and by every part of society. She will not be allowed to participate in religious and social activities. The lack of voluntary control over her bladder and/or bowels renders her incapable of working.

In the United States—even in the poorest parts of the country—the condition is virtually non-existent. In sub-Saharan Africa, on the other hand, World Health Organization estimates indicate that there are approximately two million young women living with untreated obstetric fistula.

When Jan Duncan heard about women in Africa who were suffering from this heartrending childbirth injury and the subsequent neglect and poverty that results from it, she embraced the opportunity to help them. Her transformational gift established the Jan E. Duncan Global Women’s Health Initiative at Texas Children’s Hospital. With her help, women with obstetric fistula at the Area 25 Maternal Health Center in Lilongwe, Malawi, are receiving care that changes their lives.

“Jan’s support of our work was a godsend—an absolute godsend,” said Dr. Jeff Wilkinson, who holds the Jennifer and Wil VanLoh Chair in Global Obstetrics, Gynecology and Surgery. He has been caring for women and girls with obstetric fistula in Africa for more than 17 years, performing the relatively simple procedure that can correct the injury and restore health.

The Fistula Care Center where Dr. Wilkinson carries out his life work offers women much more than physical healing. At the center, women learn important job skills and receive the tools they need to start their own businesses. Emotional healing also comes to these women as they find new purpose for their lives and again become accepted and valued members of society.
**Promises Made, Promises Kept**

**Thank You To Our Generous Donors**

Texas Children’s Hospital was founded on a commitment—a promise—to meet the medical needs of children in our community. The **Promise Campaign** was a $475 million fundraising effort launched to help ensure that we can continue fulfilling that commitment and keeping that promise as our community grows and changes and as our patients’ needs evolve over time.

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### Oliver's Journey of Hope

On September 25, Texas Children’s Heart Center patients were moved to the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower. One family shared with us some special memories of that day.

“*When I was pregnant, we learned that our baby had a heart condition that would be fatal without intervention. We did our research and learned that Texas Children’s was ranked No. 1 in the country for cardiology and heart surgery by U.S. News & World Report. We relocated to Houston because we knew that it would be the best place to give our baby a chance at life.*

*Oliver was born at the Pavilion for Women and had his first surgery when he was only seven days old. His case has been complicated, and he has remained in the cardiovascular intensive care unit (CVICU). Texas Children’s is the only home he has ever known.*

The move to the new Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower is a highlight in our journey. On move day, Oliver was the very last one to leave West Tower’s cardiac unit, and he was treated like a celebrity. There was a lot of fanfare as we made a final lap around the old unit, wheeling past countless people who have invested a piece of themselves in our baby.

*We love being in the new building—it’s a beautiful space and everything is so well thought out. Being able to room in with Oliver while we wait for his second open heart surgery makes this difficult time in our lives a little easier. No matter what the future holds, making the choice to come to Texas Children’s Hospital is one we will never regret.*

—The Blankenship Family

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### Funding Priorities

**1. THE LESTER AND SUE SMITH LEGACY TOWER...**

- to ensure that children who require complex care always have a place to go for treatment in a new state-of-the-art facility at our Main Campus in the Texas Medical Center.

**2. TEXAS CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL THE WOODLANDS...**

- to bring a dedicated pediatric hospital to serve the growing communities north of Houston.

**3. DIVISIONS AND CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE...**

- to advance the science and practice of pediatric medicine.

**4. CHARITY CARE...**

- to offer quality care to children in our community regardless of their families’ ability to pay.

**5. ENDOWED CHAIRS...**

- to recruit and retain world-class physicians and scientists.

Thanks to the extraordinary generosity of Texas Children’s friends and supporters like you, we exceeded our goal in November 2018, raising $578.4 million and finishing two years early.

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To learn more, visit aspire.texaschildrens.org to view the full Impact Report.
IN LOVING MEMORY OF LESTER SMITH
AND IN CELEBRATION OF A LIFE LIVED TO THE FULLEST

Legendary Philanthropists Make Landmark Gift
for Texas Children’s Future

Whatever the occasion, Lester and Sue Smith commanded attention. Whether it was nabbing championship ballroom dancing trophies or sharing their wealth with the community, they always went big.

And they really went big at the Legacy of Motown Gala on September 29, 2018. The event was, by all counts, simply incredible and raised more than $83 million, breaking the Texas record for the highest-grossing fundraising gala ever. The Smiths let it be known ahead of time that their foundation would match the gifts made that evening, which inspired others to give generously.

The biggest hit of the night was the announcement of the naming of Texas Children’s Hospital’s most recent expansion project: the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower. The Smiths, much loved and admired for generously sharing their private wealth for public good, made a transformational gift of $50 million to support the hospital’s newest facility that is now home to Texas Children’s Heart Center, as well as expanded surgical and critical care services. Their generosity also supported Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers.

This was not the first time the Smiths had overwhelmed Texas Children’s with their generosity. They had several philosophies by which they lived their life together, and one of them was “You Gotta Dance Like No One’s Watching”—also the title of a book authored by Lester. Putting this philosophy into practice, they hosted the 2012 Disco Legends event and matched the funds raised that night with a personal gift. In recognition of their extraordinary leadership, the Lester and Sue Smith Clinic at Texas Children’s Cancer Center was named in their honor.

Drawing from a place of gratitude for the life-saving care Lester received during his battles with cancer, this dynamic couple has dedicated more than $150 million over the years to support research at numerous institutions including Texas Children’s, Baylor College of Medicine and Harris Health System.

In addition to medical research, the Smiths enriched the arts, education, social services and humanitarian causes of Houston while raising the bar on giving with passion and creativity. They advanced the mission of dozens of nonprofits, leaving a legacy of support for generations to come.

“Another of Lester’s philosophies in life was: ‘To whom much is given, much is expected,’” noted Mark A. Wallace, president and CEO of Texas Children’s.

The Smiths also supported:
• Texas Children’s Purple Songs Can Fly program.
• University of Miami’s FDA-approved stem cell research.
• The Lester Smith Cardiovascular Training Center at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston.
• The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.
• The Smith Distinguished Lecture Series at the Holocaust Museum Houston.

View the Smiths’ timeline of giving at aspire.texaschildrens.org

“I was honored to call Lester Smith my friend. He lived his life honorably, and among his greatest joys was his dedication to the service of others. Texas Children’s is so fortunate to be a beneficiary of the extraordinary philanthropy that defined everything that he and his wife, Sue, did in their lives. Their commitment to our patients and their families was unmatched.”

Mark A. Wallace, President and CEO
Phase 1: Opening the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower

On May 10, 2018, we held a grand celebration to officially cut the ribbon on Texas Children’s newest building, the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower, which added 19 stories and 640,000 square feet to our Main Campus in the Texas Medical Center.

On May 22, seven specially trained clinical teams safely transported 45 critically ill patients from the pediatric intensive care unit and progressive care unit in West Tower to their spacious new rooms in the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower.

The next day, the first operation was performed—a successful craniofacial procedure on a 9-month old boy. Following the surgery, he went to the hospital's new neurological intensive care unit—a first-of-its-kind unit dedicated to patients who need the most specialized neurological care.

The event marked the culmination of several years of strategic planning and hard work and the realization of a vision to serve even more patients with the most complex needs—patients who need the highest level of critical, surgical and cardiac care services.

Phase 2: Moving Texas Children’s Heart Center

On September 25, over the course of about eight hours, six specially-trained clinical teams with more than 200 members transported 64 Texas Children’s Heart Center patients—some of them critically ill—safely to their new, state-of-the-art rooms in the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower. The patients ranged in age from 3 days to 22 years old.

The following day, a ribbon cutting ceremony was held to commemorate the opening of our four new catheterization labs, one with an integrated MRI. Dr. Charles E. Mullins, the pioneering Texas Children’s physician and father of modern interventional pediatric cardiology for whom the suite of labs is named, cut the ribbon along with Dr. Henri Justino, director of the Mullins Cardiac Catheterization Laboratories. Just a few minutes later, an 11-year-old from Dallas became the first patient to have a cardiac catheterization procedure in the new space.

On September 27, Associate Chief of Congenital Heart Surgery Dr. Jeff Heinle cut the ribbon to officially open the Heart Center’s new cardiovascular operating rooms and to usher in a new era of cardiac surgery at Texas Children’s. Later that morning, he performed the first cardiac operation—a Fontan procedure—on 4-year-old Rizan in the expansive new space.

Comprising eight floors, the Heart Center is equipped with the most up-to-date, sophisticated equipment used to treat the most complex cardiac anomalies and defects. In addition to the catheterization lab suite and four dedicated cardiovascular operating rooms, there are three cardiovascular ICU floors with 48 private rooms, two cardiac acute care floors with 42 private patient rooms, an outpatient clinic, and dedicated space for families.

On October 1, the new Therapy Gym opened. It is a powerful resource to help children—and their families—learn and focus on what they can do, rather than what they can’t. Features include machines for building core strength and balance, exercise bikes, a bathtub and a set of stairs for parents to practice everyday tasks at home with their children.

Early on the morning of November 7, the final piece fell into place when an excited group—including Texas Children’s clinical leadership, executives and members of the Kangaroo Crew and Mission Control teams—gathered on the roof of the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower for the opening of our new helistop. We are grateful to have this resource, which enables transport of critically ill children and women to Texas Children’s Hospital’s Main Campus to receive the highest level of critical care.

EXPANDING AND ENHANCING OUR CRITICAL, SURGICAL AND CARDIAC CARE SERVICES

Opening the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower

On May 31, 2019, nearly 100 guests attended the official dedication and blessing of the Lester and Sue Smith Legacy Tower. Prior to the event, Lester’s children and their spouses—Michelle and Brian Hendry and Stuart and Limor Smith—were surprised at the unveiling of two patient floors named in their honor. All of us at Texas Children’s are so grateful for the dedication and generosity of the entire Smith family and honored that their legacy will live on here for generations to come.
Shock. Fear. Sadness. These are just a few of the emotions parents and family members experience when a child they love is first diagnosed with cancer.

Then there are all the things they need to learn. What are the treatment options? Where is the best place to be treated? Will insurance cover it? So many decisions have to be made, and of course there is urgency around every single one of them.

And for so many families, there is an additional layer of stress to handle: finances. At Texas Children’s Hospital, we are fortunate to have generous philanthropists in the community who are dedicated to helping alleviate this burden for families. In 2006, Houston Children’s Charity made an incredibly generous commitment to establish the Houston Children’s Charity Family Emergency Fund at Texas Children’s Cancer Center. Ten years later, they renewed that commitment at the same level to support the fund for another 10 years.

More than 50% of the patients at Texas Children’s are covered by Medicaid or by the Children’s Health Insurance Plan, neither of which covers the full cost of many kinds of necessary therapies. Even with the best insurance coverage, families will still be faced with co-pays and medications, parking fees and everyday necessities like meals. It can be an overwhelming burden. To further compound the issue, it is not uncommon that a parent or caregiver will need to quit a job to be with and help care for their child, or that absence might cause another to lose their job. How will the mortgage or the rent and all the other bills be paid?

Houston Children’s Charity’s generosity has been a game changer for so many families who come to Texas Children’s trusting our dedicated team to give their children the very best care and the best outcomes possible. Because of the commitment and dedication of this wonderful organization, the hospital is able to provide funding for lodging, groceries, meals for family members, car payments, mortgage and rent, utility bills, phone bills, clothing and more—the basic necessities of life that can suddenly become major challenges.

Houston Children’s Charity is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for children in the Greater Houston area. Their motto is “Our Kids Are Everybody’s Kids,” and their goal is to leave no legitimate request for assistance unanswered. That makes them a perfect partner for Texas Children’s, which was founded on a promise that every child will receive the very best care regardless of their family’s ability to pay for it.

“The mission of Houston Children’s Charity aligns perfectly with Texas Children’s mission, and we are so honored to have their partnership and support,” says President and CEO Mark A. Wallace. “For 22 years, their generosity has made so many families’ burdens easier to bear. What an amazing gift they offer, and what an incredible blessing they are.”
Before the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Children’s Cancer and Hematology Clinic opened in 2001 in McAllen, Texas, local children suffering from cancer and blood disorders had to travel to cities like Corpus Christi, San Antonio and Houston for care and treatment. For many families, this created enormous physical, emotional and financial hardships—and as a result, many children in the area went untreated or did not receive the specialty care they needed.

There was a huge need to address this issue, and a joint venture between the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Cancer Foundation, Texas Children’s Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine did just that, created the Vannie E. Cook Jr. Children’s Cancer and Hematology Clinic as an extension of Texas Children’s Cancer Center.

The mission of the region’s first and only comprehensive pediatric oncology and hematology clinic is to provide cancer and hematology patients in the Rio Grande Valley with the highest level of care without the need for them to travel and regardless of their families’ financial capacity. Over the past 18 years, the clinic has recorded more than 83,000 patient visits and cared for 9,500 children.

The Clinic continues to absorb the ever-increasing costs of chemotherapy, which averages to $3 million per year.

“Unfortunately, some of our patients’ families have to choose between putting food on the table or gas in their car,” said Dr. Juan Carlos Bernini, the clinic’s medical director. “Most of our patients come from low income families. Having a cancer clinic in the Rio Grande Valley means that children can receive state-of-the-art care right here. They don’t have to travel 300 miles to Houston and spend lots of money on gas, lodging and food. They can stay close to home with their families.”

My personal journey at the Vannie Cook Clinic began when I was 17. I was so excited to start my senior year in high school and enjoy football games, homecoming and prom with my friends—but instead I was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma, and I now had to fight for my life.

While my friends were enjoying normal teenage activities, I was getting chemotherapy, seeing my hair, eyelashes and eyebrows fall off, and dealing with nausea and severe bone pain. When my hair fell out, I told myself that it would grow back, but we underestimate how much power our hair adds to who we are as a person. I couldn’t help but be depressed.

I remember people saying that Hodgkin lymphoma was the “easy” cancer. Let me tell you: there is nothing easy about it. My body made me feel like I was in a constant emotional struggle thinking that this was the end of my life. I forced myself to be strong for myself and my family.

However, it seemed as if life had kept going and forgotten about me. My friends were enjoying their last year in high school, and I was happy for them, but I couldn’t help but feel angry with my situation. I wanted to enjoy the same things they were enjoying, but I couldn’t.

Through it all, I felt fortunate to have the Vannie Cook Clinic so close to home. Everyone at the clinic was great, especially Dr. Rodrigo Erana, who always made me laugh. I can’t imagine having to travel far away for treatment, and how difficult it would have been for my parents.

I finished my treatment in December 2017, but just when it was time for my family to close this chapter of our book, my brother Nathan, who was 16 at the time, was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma as well.

I thank God for my parents and the strength they give us all. My brother and I are fortunate to maintain a life as close to normal as possible by being with friends and hanging out with family, and this was all because of the clinic being so close to home.

The Vannie Cook Clinic allowed us to stay near family while receiving treatment and the support that we needed. Dr. Erana and the entire clinic have become part of our extended family.
Ten years ago, **Brittany Hebert** founded **Sky High For Kids**, which has supported Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers for several years, most recently through a truly transformational gift.

“We are incredibly grateful for Sky High’s generosity,” said **Dr. Susan Blaney**, director of Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers. “We are proud to put their generosity to work to support immunotherapy research and training of pediatric hematology-oncology specialists who will treat children in underserved countries in sub-Saharan Africa.”

**Sky High for Kids Cancer Immunotherapy Center: Supporting Cutting-Edge Research**

The overall cure rate for childhood cancer in the U.S. has improved dramatically over the past 50 years. Physicians and researchers at Texas Children’s have pioneered many therapies that are now the standard of care for pediatric cancer and hematology patients. Unfortunately, some survivors continue to face quality-of-life challenges resulting from treatment with chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy—which is why our experts never stop exploring more effective innovative treatments.

Immunotherapy is quickly emerging as a treatment method, which uses a patient’s own immune system to fight their cancer, targeting cancer cells more precisely to avoid damaging non-cancerous normal tissues. Scientists believe that in the next 10 to 15 years, immune therapies will be employed in the treatment of most childhood cancers.

With Sky High’s generous gift, Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers are proud to establish the **Sky High for Kids Cancer Immunotherapy Center**. The discoveries made here will be shared with the scientific community around the world, exponentially magnifying the benefit for children and families everywhere.

**Global HOPE: Training Specialists to Treat Children in Sub-Saharan Africa**

In sub-Saharan Africa, 90,000 children die each year from cancer. The survival rate is only 10% (versus 80% in the U.S.) because of extreme poverty and the scarcity of medical facilities and providers in these vast areas.

The Global HOPE (Hematology Oncology Pediatric Excellence) program, a partnership between Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers and Baylor College of Medicine’s International Pediatric AIDS Initiative (BIPAI), is changing these statistics.

Global HOPE is built on the successful model of care employed by BIPAI, which has operated seven Centers of Excellence in six sub-Saharan African countries since 2001.

Texas Children’s is proud to establish **Sky High for Kids Training Centers** across Africa and in Houston, which will enable pediatric hematology-oncology specialists to treat children in Botswana, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Lesotho and eSwatini (formerly Swaziland), dramatically improve their outcomes, and build long-term capacity for outstanding care by training local caregivers.

“The gift from Sky High for Kids will ensure that children with cancer and blood disorders in Africa receive the most effective, state-of-the-art therapies available and experience treatment outcomes comparable to those in the United States and Western Europe,” said **Dr. David G. Poplack**, director of Global HOPE and associate director of Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers. “With Sky High’s amazing gift, the potential to achieve this goal is unlimited, and we are so excited and grateful.”
Throughout the year, Texas Children’s has fundraising events to benefit our hospital. These are some examples of fun events we held in 2018. You can read these stories by visiting aspire.texaschildrens.org.

**MainStreet America Gala**
This event raised more than $520,000 benefiting the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital.

**An Evening with a Legend**
Honored guest and NBA legend Shaquille O’Neal helped raise more than $800,000 for Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers.

**The Forum Luncheon**
Texas Children’s friends and supporters attended last spring’s Forum Luncheon, which highlighted the amazing work of Texas Children’s Heart Center.

**Dinner for a Cure**
This event raised $50,000 in support of the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children’s Hospital.

**Bad Pants Open**
Golfers wore their baddest pants, played their best golf and raised more than $500,000 for Texas Children’s Newborn Center at the Clubs of Kingwood.

**Celebration of Champions**
Patient and Community Champions were honored and funds were raised for Texas Children’s Cancer and Hematology Centers’ Long Term Survivor Program.

**The Forum Luncheon**
Last fall at the Forum Luncheon, OB/GYN in Chief Dr. Michael Belfort highlighted the successes of the Pavilion for Women since opening its doors in 2012.

**Family Fun Day**
In May, more than 800 guests gathered at Minute Maid Park and enjoyed fun activities, such as running the bases, pitching in the bullpen and taking photos with Orbit.

**Holiday parties**
In December, Ambassadors in Houston and The Woodlands celebrated the $1.1 million raised for Texas Children’s and donated more than 30 bins of clothing for our patients.

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