A Letter of Gratitude

Dear Child Life Department,

Thank you so much for everything you gave me. My favorite is definitely the signed Ken Daneyko Jersey. I framed it and it’s hanging next to my bed in my room. I really love it!

But the best thing you did was play Battleship and Rummikub, helped me make a Devils pool, and get me any game or movie. I thank you for making my stay here at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital so bearable. Keep doing great work. I’ll be back in August!

Love,
Frank Kemper and Family

Parents know that going to the hospital or a doctor’s appointment can be a terrifying experience for a child. The unfamiliar faces, scary beeping sounds from over sized equipment and painful procedures may be all too much for a child.

Today, hospitals across the country, including the Goryeb Children’s Hospital (GCH) at Morristown Memorial Hospital, are helping young patients cope with their fears and anxieties by enlisting their Child Life Specialists to offer therapeutic activities tailored to each child’s social, emotional, and educational needs.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, Child Life programs have become the standard in large pediatric settings to address the psychosocial concerns that accompany hospitalization and other health care experiences. Child Life Specialists hold bachelor or masters level degrees in child life, child development or related fields and complete at least 480-hour internships as part of their professional training. Most sit for the Child Life Professional Certification Examination and become Certified Child Life Specialists.

Child life programs facilitate coping and the adjustment of children and families in three primary service areas:

- providing play experiences;
- presenting developmentally appropriate information about events and procedures; and
- establishing therapeutic relationships with children and parents to support family involvement in each child’s care.

“Our Child Life Department has grown from a staff of one Certified Child Life Specialist to four Specialists and a part-time Music Therapist due to the growing needs of our patient population,” said Lisa Ciarocco, Child Life Manager, Goryeb Children’s Hospital. In 2006, Child Life Specialists spent time with more than 5,600 patients. It is our hope that we can increase our staffing even
Every year we are honored to have patients who are willing to tell their stories. We hope you enjoy this newsletter feature and will contact us if you have a story to tell.

Pediatric Ambassador Program

Claudia Newport

Five-year-old Claudia Newport experienced nausea and vomiting every morning for eight weeks prior to being diagnosed with a brain tumor. A CT scan showed a cerebellar tumor on November 21, 2005.

Two days later, she was in surgery having the tumor, which was the size of a ping-pong ball, removed from her cerebellum. After seven days in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, Claudia was released to the pediatric inpatient floor where she stayed for three days. After a few weeks of rebuilding her strength, Claudia began an intense treatment of radiation followed by chemotherapy the week of Christmas.

Claudia’s first experience with the Child Life Specialists at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital was right after her surgery, while still in the PICU. The Child Life Specialists had placed a basket of individual craft projects in the small lounge area located in the PICU and Claudia choose to make a dream catcher – which she still has hanging in her bedroom. Amy Goldberg and Kristin Holtzman, two of the four Child Life Specialists, introduced themselves and explained their role to the Newports. “Amy and Kristin would visit Claudia everyday and bring her movies to watch,” said Mrs. Christine Newport, Claudia’s mom. “They even helped us adjust her bed so she could see the television since it was difficult for her to move her neck after the surgery.”

Claudia underwent intense radiation therapy at the Carol G. Simon Cancer Center – five days a week for one month. Immediately after completing radiation, Claudia started chemotherapy treatments at the Valerie Fund Children’s Center of the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. Her chemotherapy cocktail required a two-three day hospital stay at the beginning of the cycle then a weekly injection for two weeks, followed by a recovery time of three weeks before the next cycle began again. As of January 2007, Claudia has completed a full year of chemotherapy, which consisted of nine cycles all together. Claudia and her family, which also includes a twin sister, Jennifer, and a three-year-old sister, Amanda, were at the Goryeb Hospital sometimes every few days or at least once a week.

During this time, Child Life Specialists spent individual and group time with Claudia – whether it was distracting her during a treatment or keeping her company when the Newports were speaking with doctors or tending to their other daughters. “Claudia loves any kind of craft project and the Child Life Specialists always made sure they had something planned for her stays in the hospital or for her regularly scheduled appointments,” said Mrs. Newport. “They would even decorate her hospital room with pictures and notes when she was being admitted due to treatments or illness.”

Claudia added that she really loved her time with the child life specialists, especially when she was admitted to the hospital. “They always made time for me and I enjoyed the art show that included my scrapbook,” said the proud first grader.

The Newports said that the entire Child Life Staff has consistently been loving and supportive towards all of their girls, as the stress of this illness reaches far beyond the patient. One day while at the Valerie Center, Child Life Specialist Kelly Blanchette played Barbie’s with Claudia’s younger sister, Amanda for hours, on a day that Claudia needed a transfusion. Because the Newports did not anticipate this, the distraction for their youngest daughter helped them to focus on Claudia.

“Everyone, whether it be Amy, Jennifer, Kristen or Kelly, always asked my husband and me if we needed anything and asked Claudia about her sisters, if they were not with us that day,” added Mrs. Newport. “They would send Claudia home with a craft project or toys for her sisters so they wouldn’t feel left out.”

Today, Claudia is completing the first grade at Walnut Avenue School in Cranford with her twin sister, Jennifer. Though she is able to keep up with her classmates academically, Claudia’s energy level doesn’t allow her to attend school for more than a few hours each week. Some weeks her blood counts were too low to allow her to be with other children, so the Child Life Department and Cathy Cerutti, the social worker at the Valerie Fund Children’s Center, have arranged for Claudia to receive in home tutoring through the local board of education. Claudia is enjoying math and learning to read.

“It takes a tremendously strong person to work with very sick children everyday and I know that the Child Life Specialists made our experience much more tolerable – they are truly angels.”

—Christine Newport
more which will enable us to cover our outpatient clinic population.”

The GCH Child Life Specialists help children, teenagers and their families understand and manage the hospital experience by providing the following programs/services:

**PLAY EXPERIENCES**

While children are in the hospital, they can enjoy a variety of activities in the playroom and at their bedside, from arts and crafts and medical play (use of medical dolls, photo teaching books and hospital equipment) to video and board games. The playroom is a safe place where children can feel free to play and medical procedures are not allowed.

**EDUCATION INC.**

Education Inc. is a hospital tutoring company that provides tutors for the students who are patients at the GCH. Coordinated through the Child Life Department, every student working with an Education Inc. teacher will receive full attendance credit for each day they work, staying on top of their regular classroom curriculum.

**MUSIC THERAPY**

A part-time board-certified music therapist is available to patients and families for private or group sessions at the GCH. The therapist works to facilitate relaxation, decrease anxiety, reduce stress, improve mood and pain management, and provide comfort and support, depending on the needs of the patient or family.

**CHILDREN FACING CRISIS**

Child Life Specialists are on call throughout the hospital for children of adult patients with chronic/acute illness or involved in a trauma. Child Life Specialists also help siblings of young patients understand what is happening to their brother or sister. When a child becomes ill and goes to the hospital, the experience can be just as frightening for the brother and sister as it is for the patient.

At the GCH, the Child Life Specialists help to eliminate these fears for siblings. By practicing Family Centered Care, treating the entire family of a patient, Child Life Specialists care for the emotional needs of parents, as well as siblings, through age appropriate preparations prior to hospital visits, diagnosis education, and facilitating support groups.

**OUTPATIENT SERVICES**

Child Life Specialists also work in the Emergency Department, Aresty Day Hospital and Valerie Fund Children's Center providing a variety of services such as distraction and support through procedures, teaching, recreational activities and emotional support for children and families. Child Life Specialists provide support for the patients and families during wait times, while in triage, and during exam room experiences. In 2006, more than 7,000 patients were seen by a Child Life Specialist during their outpatient service.

“It is our hope that we can serve all children and families who come through our hospital doors,” added Ms. Ciarrocca. “With increased staffing, we will be able to continue to develop our programs and expand them to areas which we now do not serve.”

For more information about ways you can support the Child Life Department or other pediatric specialties within the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, please contact Geraldine Kling at (973) 593-2414.
If you are interested in hosting an event or promotion to benefit the Goryeb Children’s Hospital at Morristown Memorial Hospital, please contact Eileen Heltzer, director of annual giving, at (973) 593-2412 or eileen.heltzer@atlantichealth.org.

GIFTS from the HEART

Putting a smile on a child’s face at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital is made possible by many people who give of their time, talent and treasure. Listed below is just a sampling of the many donors who give to make life better for children and families who rely on us for help.

Molly Knapp, a fourth grade Shongum Elementary School (Randolph) student, hosted a birthday party on February 4 and collected items for the comfort cart at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital in lieu of presents. Thank you Molly for the wagon full of items that will help both the pediatric patients and their families.

Our gratitude goes to three of the New Jersey Devils – John Madden, Colin White and Brian Rafalski – who signed jerseys, pennants and cards, and posed for picture with patients of the Goryeb Children’s Hospital in December. This is the third year that the Devils players have visited the children in the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, which is coordinated through the Child Life Department.

Kids Count is published for friends of the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. For more information, please call (973) 593-2400 or visit our Health Foundation web site at www.mmhf.org.

Donations can be made online or can be mailed to us at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, c/o Morristown Memorial Health Foundation, P.O. Box 35558, Newark, NJ 07193-5558.

Morristown Memorial Health Foundation

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