A Letter of Gratitude

I am writing today to express my sincere appreciation to your staff for the outstanding service they provided my daughter and me on May 23, 2006. On that day, my 12-year-old daughter, Maureen, was scheduled for an endoscopy procedure by Dr. [Richard] Mones. Understandably, she was a little nervous. From the point of check-in until we left, the hospital staff was courteous, helpful and efficient.

I would like to mention four women who made the experience as painless as possible for my daughter. Nurse Carol started us off with some of the prep work. Then Diana explained just what to expect before, during and after the procedure. That seemed to help keep her [Maureen] calm. Then Kristen from the Child Life Department joined in with her colorful bag to explain the intravenous routine to Maureen. Kristen was upbeat and full of enthusiasm and knew how to make a girl feel at ease. After they left the room, my daughter turned to me and confidently said, “I can do this.” When the procedure was over, we were joined by Nurse Barbara who continued to monitor Maureen until she awoke.

“Thank you” to all and I apologize if I have not included others who helped us that day. The excellent level of care we received was second to none. You were professional and skillful, yet friendly and personable. At Goryeb, we were treated like guests, not just someone’s patients.

Appreciatively,

Janice A. Duguid
Pediatric Ambassador Program

Tabitha Lynne Gessling

After seven years of trying to conceive, Robert and Bonnie Gessling were blessed on October 26, 2001, with a healthy baby girl, Tabitha Lynne. Not uncommon in infants, Tabitha was diagnosed with a milk allergy and placed on soy based formula and then, when she reached her first birthday, soymilk. Tabitha was a happy, healthy, energetic little girl for the first three years of her life.

This all changed in November 2004, when she began to experience severe abdominal pain and nearly 10 bloody stools a day. At first, her pediatrician thought it was salmonella, but after two weeks, the Gesslings were referred to Joel Rosh, M.D., Director of Pediatric Gastroenterology at Morristown Memorial Hospital’s Goryeb Children’s Hospital. That December, following several tests including a colonoscopy, Tabitha was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis, an inflammatory bowel disease. She was given medication to treat her symptoms and after a few weeks, her disease went into remission.

With her symptoms in a manageable state, Tabitha began preschool in September 2005. Tabitha was just beginning to feel like every other three-year-old when her symptoms returned and she had to be hospitalized for eight days that November. “At this point we knew all of the nurses on the third floor and always received top notch care,” said Mrs. Gessling. “The child life specialists kept Tabitha occupied and happy, which gave me a break once in a while since this disease left me exhausted.” Once again, Tabitha sprang back quickly and she was back home and back to being a kid.

In March 2006, Tabitha’s symptoms returned and were worse than ever. On April 12, Tabitha’s disease had become so aggressive that she had to return to the hospital where she was given all of the latest treatments possible but her disease did not respond at all. This little girl was not only dealing with the physical aspects of the disease, but the emotional ones as well. Tabitha had a fear of soiling the hospital bed and felt safest when curled up in her blanket on the floor of her hospital room. “Instead of telling her to go back in her bed, the nurses brought in a mat for her to lay on,” said Mrs. Gessling. “Additionally, the child life specialists would bring her games and toys to play with – everyone showed her so much love.”

It was during this hospital stay that the Gesslings met Eric Lazar, M.D., a pediatric surgeon in the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. Dr. Lazar explained to them exactly what would happen should it come to surgery. “He had such a kind face and a great bedside manner that our whole family took to him,” said Mrs. Gessling. “Sometimes just seeing someone with a personality as his during such a dark time in your life makes all the difference.”

Tabitha went home in early May in hopes that her condition would improve as it had in the past. This time was different because Tabitha had become so emaciated and weak. Her legs had lost muscle tone from being curled up on the floor so much.

“She was skin and bones and I felt like her soul was leaving us, said Mrs. Gessling. “I felt that she was not going to make it.” On May 18, the Gesslings met with Dr. Rosh who said that Tabitha would need surgery to remove her colon. Dr. Lazar spoke with the Gesslings and scheduled Tabitha’s surgery for the next morning. Following her surgery, Dr. Lazar explained to the Gesslings what to expect in terms of pain and how to handle the colostomy bag.

Tabitha was doing well and on September 14, she had reversal surgery.

The Gesslings said that Dr. Lazar gave his best yet again and were spoiled by the exceptional care of the nurses and child life team.

“Through all of this, I knew Tabitha was being cared for by the best doctors and nurses in the world and that the Goryeb Children’s Hospital is one of the most innovative hospitals in the country,” said Mrs. Gessling.

Before the Gesslings left the hospital, Drs. Lazar and Rosh went to say good-bye to Tabitha. Mrs. Gessling said that Tabitha began to cry because they spent the past two years of her life with her and she thought of them as her friends and was sad that she would not see them very often.

Mrs. Gessling added that when asked about Dr. Lazar, Tabitha says “he gave me the bag and it made my tummy feel better and then he took the bag away because I didn’t need it anymore.”

“Tabitha still has a little pain and frequent bowel movements, which is common after recently having surgery, but underneath it all I still have my child, my angel, my life, and Dr. Lazar helped give her back to me.”

—I know in my heart that if these two doctors [Drs. Rosh and Lazar] didn’t work so well together and be willing to do anything to help my baby, that she would not be here today.”

—Bonnie Gessling
the game." One example given by Dr. Lazar is of a newborn with a diaphragmatic hernia. The baby is cared for initially by the neonatologist who focuses on the potentially lethal pulmonary disease that accompanies this birth defect. Then, the pediatric surgeon performs a procedure that may include special patch material to reconstruct the diaphragm and abdominal wall. As the child grows, he is often followed by pediatric pulmonologists, gastroenterologists, orthopedists and cardiologists to ensure a thriving childhood.

Members of the Division of Pediatric Surgery are available for elective surgical consultation weekdays by appointment and on a 24 hour/7 days a week basis for emergencies, offering expertise in all areas of general and thoracic surgery for children including:

**Pre-natal consultation:** diaphragmatic hernia, gastrochisis, omphalocele, tracheo-esophageal fistula, duodenal atresia, bowel obstruction and atresia

**Neonatal surgery:** congenital anomalies (birth defects) as listed above; emergency surgery of the chest and abdomen in newborns and premature infants

**Tumor Surgery:** Wilms™ tumor (kidney), neuroblastoma, and hepatoblastoma (liver), as well as soft tissue tumors (muscle)

**Full Range of Gastrointestinal Surgery:** esophageal surgery, inflammatory bowel disease, intussusception, pyloric stenosis, reflux surgery, bowel obstructions, appendicitis

**Abdominal Wall Surgery:** hernias and hydroceles

**Genital Surgery:** undescended testicles, ovarian masses and cysts

**Thoracic Surgery:** lung surgery for tumors, masses, cysts, infections, chest wall malformations

**Head and Neck Surgery:** masses and cysts (lumps and bumps) of the face, head and neck including consultation for vascular malformations

The Division of Pediatric Surgery at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital has about 2,500 office visits per year and performs more than 1,200 procedures each year with outcomes that favorably compare to other major children's centers nationwide.

Growth in pediatric surgery has come from the realization that children’s surgical problems are different and must be handled differently from adults. Increasingly, children’s specialists are doing more of the surgery in children. This growth is supported by outstanding expertise in radiology and anesthesiology, resulting in the Goryeb Children’s Hospital surgeons caring for children from central southern New York State, northeastern Pennsylvania, and northern New Jersey. Patients come from as far as Staten Island and Long Island to receive care at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital.

Whether it is a minor problem or a complex surgical procedure, the pediatric surgical team at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital makes every effort to ease the experience for both child and parent where children are the top priority. All of the Division’s services and health-care providers are devoted specifically to the child's needs.

For more information about the Division of Pediatric Surgery at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, please call (908) 522-3523.

For more information about ways you can support the Division of Pediatric Surgery or other pediatric specialties within the Goryeb Children’s Hospital, please contact Geraldine Kling at (973) 593-2400.
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.

★ Many thanks to Mary Hobin and Sue Abely for hosting a tennis tournament on September 18 at the Copper Springs Beach and Tennis Club in Gillette. There were 50 participants who helped raise more than $2,300 to benefit the BD Diabetes Center at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital.

★ Thank you to the Township Twig, a committee of the Women’s Association of Morristown Memorial Hospital, for holding “BOOTS ‘N’ BANDANNAS” a “hoe-down” on Saturday, October 21, at the Carriage House at the Upton Pyne Estate in Bernardsville. This event was attended by 100 people who helped raise more than $8,000 in support of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit expansion.

Sports Car Club Donates Race Car Transporters

★ Our gratitude goes to the Northern New Jersey Chapter of the Sports Car Club of America who donated $1,000 to the Goryeb Children’s Hospital towards the purchase of a Race Car Transporter from the Children’s Hospital Wish List. These transporters are an alternative to wheelchairs for kids and are used to transport patients to x-ray and treatment areas, and can also be used for parents to take their child on a “fun-ride.”

★ The Morristown Memorial Health Foundation recently moved its offices to 475 South Street, first floor, in Morristown. Our main telephone number is (973) 593-2400. Look for all of our new contact information on our web site at www.mmhf.org.

SAVE THE DATE

COW PLOP BINGO

to benefit the BD Diabetes Center at the Goryeb Children’s Hospital

May 6, 2007
at Sun High Orchards, Randolph

For more information, please contact Eileen Heltzer, director of annual giving, at (973) 593-2400 or eileen.heltzer@atlantichealth.org

The Health Foundation has RELOCATED!

The Morristown Memorial Health Foundation recently moved its offices to 475 South Street, first floor, in Morristown. Our main telephone number is (973) 593-2400. Look for all of our new contact information on our web site at www.mmhf.org.

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) 593-2400 or eileen.heltzer@atlantichealth.org

Kids Count is published for friends of the Goryeb Children’s Hospital. For more information, please call (973) 593-2400 or visit our 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.

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