Dear Friends,

When you walk through the hallways at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital, you may see a young patient riding in a red wagon, or several generations from one family enjoying the garden atrium. You will see patients doing homework, volunteers choosing a book for a child, or maybe even children waving excitedly to window washers dressed as superheroes. You may notice that the doctors, nurses, and staff walk with purpose, but are always happy to hold the door for you or answer a question. Above all, you will see smiles.

Every member of our faculty and staff is united—our goal is to pour compassion, intelligence, and determination into the care we give our patients and their families. We believe in the importance of working together, because teamwork helps us provide the best possible care.

In this Children’s Fund Update, you will see how teamwork saved the life of a little boy from Chico and supported his family through their darkest time. Last year, Children’s Fund donors like you gave a total of more than $7.5 million. Your support sustains world-class care for all families, regardless of their ability to pay, as well as innovative research, and important programs like recreation therapy.

Thank you for ensuring many more smiles in the years to come.

Sincerely,
Hugh O’Brodovich, MD
Pediatric Pulmonologist
Adalyn Jay Physician-in-Chief, Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital
Aline and Pete Hansen Professor and Chair, Department of Pediatrics, Stanford University School of Medicine
Director, Child Health Research Institute at Stanford

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Innovating for Results

One of the many doctors treating Dominic was David Cornfield, MD, director of critical care medicine at Packard Children’s and the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor in Pediatric Pulmonary Medicine at the Stanford School of Medicine. To address the bleeding in Dominic’s lungs, Cornfield’s team came up with a creative solution. Dominic became the first patient on ECMO to receive an aerosol version of a coagulating compound typically administered intravenously. This innovative approach minimized the side effects and increased his chances of eventually breathing on his own.

Jessica and Jesse were by Dominic’s side as surgeons finally began the delicate process of removing tubes from Dominic’s neck and aorta to take him off ECMO. “We were waiting for his vital signs to start dropping and it didn’t happen,” recalls Jesse. “It was a complete shock. He was able to maintain his breathing.”

Today, even the most seasoned doctors are still talking about Dominic, calling him one of their “biggest saves ever.”

Building a Future

In the two months that followed, Dominic was weaned off respiratory support and medications. He returned home just in time for his second birthday, but had to re-learn how to stand, move his hands, and walk. His best source of physical therapy? Keeping up with his 4-year-old brother, Joey.

“Dominic and Joey eat every meal together at their little red table,” Jessica says. “They love LEGOs and Play-Doh, which have really helped Dominic’s coordination and muscle strength.” Though he will always have some scarring in his lungs, Dominic is now healing nicely.

Cornfield estimates that more than 150 caregivers and staff played a direct role in helping save Dominic’s life. “The fact that we could bring so much expertise, focus, and dedication to one incredibly ill child for such a sustained period of time is a wonderful testament to the work that goes on here on a daily basis.”

High-Tech, High-Touch Care

After several unsuccessful attempts to clear Dominic’s collapsing lungs, doctors at Packard Children’s placed him on extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, or ECMO, a machine that pumps blood for the heart and lungs, giving them a chance to rest and heal. However, ECMO required that Dominic be placed into an induced coma and posed the risk of blood clots, bleeding, infection, and dangerous air bubbles.

All told, Dominic was on ECMO for 41 days. Doctors estimate the odds of a patient surviving that long are less than 10 percent.

His doctors, nurses, child life specialists, social workers, respiratory therapists, chaplains, and many others supported the Vega family through their scariest and darkest moments. “I asked one nurse if she had children, and she said that those were all her children,” Jessica recalls. “Another nurse would massage his arms and talk to him. They decorated his bed with a string of letters spelling ‘Dominic,’ his nickname.”

Meet Some of Our Champions for Children

In 2013, Champions for Children like Alexander, Cyrus, and the Dorcich family raised nearly $500,000 to ensure our patients and their families receive the best care possible. To learn how you can be our next Champion, visit supportLPCH.org/champions.

For his 6th birthday, Alexander invited his friends to a super fun LEGO party! Instead of gifts, Alexander asked for donations to Packard Children’s. Cyrus and his swim teammates kicked things up a notch and raised more than $7,000 at their 3rd Annual Kick for Kids event last fall.

The Dorcich family inspires us by running in the Big Sur Half Marathon and Kids’ 3K in memory of their son, Stephen, raising money for the Recreation Therapy and Child Life Department.

One year ago, Jessica and Jesse Vega watched a team from Packard Children’s work to save their son Dominic’s life in the back of an ambulance. Just days earlier, the Vega family had been at home celebrating New Year’s Eve when 1-year-old Dominic showed signs of respiratory distress. As he struggled to breathe, they hurried to a nearby hospital, where he was diagnosed with a severe case of respiratory syncytial virus. When his lungs began to fail, Dominic was rushed in an ambulance to Packard Children’s Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

“They looked into our eyes and calmly explained the plan to get him to the hospital, and asked if Dominic had a blanket or stuffed animal he would like to have with him,” Jessica remembers. “From the beginning, it was all about trust.”

Toddler from Chico One of the “Biggest Saves Ever”