New Approaches to Youth Mental Health Care
THIS FALL WE SAW many reasons for hope—children returned to school in person, and the COVID-19 vaccine for ages 5 to 11 finally became a reality! Yet along with this boost of optimism, we know our work isn’t done. The stress, fear, grief, and uncertainty of the pandemic have weighed heavily on children and young adults. That’s why we’ve dedicated much of this issue to sharing how Stanford experts are responding to youth mental health needs with new approaches.

One of the most exciting is an innovative model called allcove (see page 3), a welcoming space where youth can find community, support, advice, or even just a moment of pause. At the first two locations in Palo Alto and San Jose, which opened last summer, young people can now easily access services at no- or low-cost, before they reach a point of crisis.

Another unique program is the Stanford Parenting Center (see page 5), which began offering free webinars during the pandemic, educating and empowering parents to support their children’s development and well-being in these challenging times. They’ve reached thousands of parents worldwide.

None of this would be possible without donors like you! Philanthropy allows us to take on the greatest challenges in children’s health, from mental health to congenital heart disease (see page 8) to childhood cancer (see page 10). Philanthropy fuels the work of brilliant physician-scientists transforming out-of-the-box ideas into real-life solutions. And philanthropy ensures that funding won’t be a limiting factor in delivering life-saving care and cures to the children who need them most.

This holiday season, I am filled with hope and appreciation for your enduring support. Best wishes to you and your loved ones for a healthy and happy 2022!

With gratitude,

Cynthia J. Brandt, PhD
President and Chief Executive Officer
Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health
There are colorful, comfortable chairs and couches. Open, airy spaces. As you enter the center, a friendly peer support staff member greets you. Sign in and choose from a range of services tailored for youth ages 12 to 25. These go beyond mental health counseling to include physical/sexual health advice and treatment, peer and family support, education support and career coaching, and substance use treatment support. There’s also room to simply chat with peers, relax, catch up on homework, or have a lively game of Uno or Jenga.

Developed by the Stanford Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing in partnership with local and state government and community groups, allcove offers a safe place where youth and young adults can find community, support, advice, and a moment of pause before turning to face the challenges of their daily lives again.

“It’s very important that we create these spaces for young people to get the care and support they need before things move to a crisis point,” says Steven Adelsheim, MD, director of the Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing. “We don’t often have spaces where young people can explore issues like stress with a friend, or bullying, or worry about a test, or sexual orientation questions. That’s what we’re trying to create. We want allcove to be a model for state- and nation-wide mental health support for young people.”

Adelsheim championed the allcove model after learning about a program in Australia called headspace, which has over 130 centers. Like headspace, allcove is community-based with a focus on equity and youth input. Centers offer a wide variety of services that youth and young adults need, on a walk-in basis or by appointment, and at no cost or for a low fee regardless of health insurance status. The goal is to support and empower young people to meet mental health challenges before they become more serious—or reach a crisis point.

The first two allcove centers opened in June 2021.

When it comes to supporting children and teens’ mental health, Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital and Stanford are part of a comprehensive system of care that includes community partnerships, school resources, wellness centers, informative research, and clinical care.

For more information, call (650) 723-5511 or visit stanfordchildrens.org.

Left: Ria joined an allcove Youth Advisory Group to increase resources for her peers who might be struggling with mental health issues.
We want a young person to know that yes, this is where you can be you and have your needs met.”

EMILY WANG, YOUTH ADVISORY GROUP MEMBER

with seven more in the planning stages in San Mateo, Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Orange counties and other California locations. Meanwhile, communities across the country have reached out to find out more about allcove, Adelsheim notes.

allcove’s powerful approach comes directly from the people it serves: youth. Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) design each allcove center’s environment and processes, creating an atmosphere that meets each person’s and each community’s needs, explains Ana Lilia Soto, youth development manager for the Center for Youth Mental Health and Wellbeing.

“The Youth Advisory Groups were involved, through a shared decision-making model, in choosing the locations for the first two centers so they would be easy for young people to reach. They created the identity and name for the program—allcove, meaning a place where everyone can come and find a moment of pause,” Soto says.

Each YAG is a racially, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse group of 16- to 25-year-olds from that center’s local community.

“The YAG members stay involved,” Soto says. “If they hear that other services are needed, like connections to food banks if there’s food insecurity, they make that a priority.”

Overcoming the stigma of asking for mental health help and making it available to more youth are important goals, says YAG member Emily Wang, 17, a high school senior from San Jose.

“We’re trying to understand and implement what youth will need and like, and what will make people feel safe and comfortable,” Wang says. “We want a young person to know that yes, this is where you can be you and have your needs met. Everyone is working together to uplift each other’s mental health and their own, whether the need seems large or small.”

allcove’s approach could help overcome barriers that deter youth and young adults from accessing more traditional mental health care, says Toby Ewing, executive director of California’s Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission.

“To get out in front of the mental health crisis that young people are facing, we need to embrace their strengths and perspectives and support them in healthy ways,” Ewing says. “This is among the most ambitious efforts in California to design services through the lens of the clients: our young people.”

The Commission allocated $15 million in Mental Health Services Act innovation funds for allcove San Jose and allcove Palo Alto. In addition to the Sand Hill Foundation, other donors—including the California Health Care Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Greathease Family Foundation, Hearst Foundation, and McKenzie Foundation—have given their support to this bold new approach.

When a child has a mental health need—whether it’s a little reassurance at bedtime or coping with a behavioral disorder—parents can be their child’s best ally, says Mari Kurahashi, MD, MPH, clinical associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the Stanford School of Medicine.

“Parents are the most important figures in children’s lives,” she says. “You don’t have to be the ‘perfect parent’ to help foster your child’s healthy development. Using a few core practices can make a meaningful difference.”

In 2020, Kurahashi and her colleague Elizabeth Reichert, PhD, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, co-founded the Stanford Parenting Center to offer parents a playbook of practices that foster children’s mental health. Their approach of putting parents first has proven to work. Studies show that parenting interventions can be as effective—if not more effective—in treating children’s psychiatric conditions than those that focus directly on the child.

Resources for parents everywhere

“We provide support to parents by tapping into existing parenting abilities while teaching additional capacities grounded in science,” Kurahashi says. “We believe all parents have the ability to strengthen the parent-child relationship and help their children grow. Parents gain confidence and enjoyment in parenting.”

The Stanford Parenting Center offers skill-building programs that help parents foster their child’s resilience and intervene effectively if signs of mental health challenges emerge, reducing the potential for mild symptoms to become more severe. The center also offers scientific parent-based treatments for their child’s severe psychiatric disorders.

The Stanford Parenting Center has grown into one of the most comprehensive digital parent-based treatments offered by any university in the country. It’s also a prime example of Stanford’s mental health community outreach, increasing access by providing affordable services to parents anywhere.

When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, the center responded quickly, launching a free online series of positive parenting webinars in April 2020.

“It has reached 7,000 parents from California, the United States, and around the world,” Kurahashi says.

The center is also offering online, small-group Positive Parenting Consultation Groups that focus on a common childhood mental health issue such as anxiety, destructive and challenging behaviors, and substance abuse.

Kurahashi, who is also director of the Mindfulness Program in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Stanford, says mindfulness is a powerful tool parents can use to be more present with their children.

“Every day, take a moment to really look into your child’s eyes, to really see them,” she says. “It’s so helpful for both of you. Children sense it when you’re really with them.”

To learn more about the Stanford Parenting Center, visit stanfordchildrens.org.

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To learn more about allcove, visit allcove.org. To support allcove in reaching more young people, contact Rachel Olinger at (650) 497-8166 or Rachel.Olinger@lpfch.org, or give now using the enclosed envelope or at supportLPCH.org.
Irene Loe, MD: Promoting a Growth Mindset

As kindergartners and first- and second-graders settled into in-person learning this fall at San Francisco’s Tenderloin Community School, Stanford pediatrician Irene Loe, MD, launched a research project aimed at fostering a “growth mindset” as they learn to read.

A growth mindset is important because it opens a world of learning and creates resilient thinking and attitudes. Loe wants teachers and parents to have the resources they need to nurture it.

“Growth mindset is the idea that your intelligence or abilities are malleable and can be grown through effort—that they are not fixed traits,” explains Loe. “Kids with growth mindset see their mistakes as a chance to grow. They feel their intelligence can be improved with hard work. In contrast, kids with a fixed mindset see their intelligence as something they were born with. They worry that mistakes mean they’ve failed.”

Loe is working with Stanford pediatric surgeon Claudia Mueller, MD, PhD, and pediatrician Kara K. Wright, MD, MPH. Their study, backed by $500,000 in funding over five years from Stanford’s Maternal and Child Health Research Institute, will measure parents’ growth mindset before and after an intervention that provides books to kindergartners through second-graders and offers parents education and videos, available in four languages, about how to read with children using the principles of growth mindset.

“When you tell parents that rather than telling kids they’re smart, it might be better to praise their effort, it might be counterintuitive,” Loe says. “But growth mindset is linked to better academic achievement and task persistence. Data suggest it may also be associated with better health.”

Victor Carrion, MD: Studying How Mindfulness Relieves Traumatic Stress

“STRESS IS NOT ALL BAD,” says Victor Carrion, MD, the John A. Turner, MD, Endowed Professor for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and director of the Stanford Early Life Stress and Resilience Program. “In small amounts, it’s important for a child’s development.”

But traumatic stress has devastating consequences for children. According to Carrion’s research, it can actually alter the structure of their brain and how it functions, as well as children’s ability to regulate their emotions, process information, and remember things.

“Children living in underresourced communities may be especially vulnerable if they live with multiple stressors, such as community violence and poverty, and if their community lacks resources to aid in these challenges,” he notes. Furthermore, these conditions are a recipe for poor sleep.

“Children can be resilient if we help them activate their strengths and learn the skills to adapt.”

Enabling these kids to sleep better isn’t just a matter of telling them to sleep more or keep regular bedtimes, however.

“To fall asleep you have to relax, but they have a hard time letting their experiences go,” Carrion says. “They don’t feel safe and may have nightmares and fears at night.”

Carrion and a team of Stanford colleagues wanted to give children tools to better manage the effects of living in a stressful environment. They partnered with the nonprofit PureEdge to bring yoga and mindfulness practices into elementary schools in the Ravenswood School District in East Palo Alto. Then they studied the results.

They found that third- and fifth-graders who practiced mindfulness skills like deep breathing exercises twice a week at school gained 74 more minutes of sleep each night—including 24 more minutes of deeper, more restorative sleep—compared to a control group in another school district that didn’t learn mindfulness techniques.

The researchers are now looking at the program’s effects on children’s brains and behaviors. And they’re working with PureEdge to make the curriculum available to more schools. The need, Carrion says, has only grown.

“The study was conducted pre-pandemic,” he says. “We see more trauma now. Children can be resilient if we help them activate their strengths and learn the skills to adapt—to bounce back to a better place because now you have experience and knowledge to reach for better mental and physical health.”

Bringing Wellness to Schools

Two Stanford clinicians shed light on the effects of adverse childhood experiences and test real-world solutions.

Victor Carrion, MD: Studying How Mindfulness Relieves Traumatic Stress
Baby Nataly is home for the holidays after six months in our hospital.

BY KRISHNA FAROL-SCHENCK

Pablo and Damaris Sánchez found out they were having a little girl 20 weeks into their pregnancy. But the exciting news took an unfortunate turn when they were informed that their baby, soon to be named Nataly, had a critical congenital heart defect (CHD). The aorta in Nataly’s heart was narrower than usual. This could lead to normal or high blood pressure in the head and arms, and lower blood pressure and weak pulses in the legs. Fortunately, a corrective surgery could be performed immediately after birth.

When Nataly came into the world on July 9, 2020, doctors discovered the true extent of Nataly’s condition: She had a hole on the left side of her heart and a rare condition called “anomalous left coronary artery from the pulmonary artery,” which required emergency surgery. At just 1 week old, Nataly would have to undergo not one, but two life-saving surgeries.

Luckily, they were in the best hands. Nataly was being treated in the Betty Irene Moore Children’s Heart Center at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford, one of the leading pediatric heart centers in the nation.

“The plan was for her to get strong,” says her father, Pablo. Nataly persevered through many complications, including low blood pressure, blood clots, and a stomach infection. The care team members and specialists at our hospital made the Sánchezes feel comforted in knowing that Nataly and their whole family were being looked after and loved.

“We are grateful to have had Dr. Meghna Patel as our primary attending doctor,” Pablo says. “She always gave us hope that everything is going to be fine.”

Caring for the whole family

While Nataly was being taken care of, our hospital also brought comfort to her family. Even though her 3-year-old brother, Pablo Jr., couldn’t be in the hospital due to COVID-19 protocols, our Child Life and Creative Arts team helped from afar, providing books and resources to help big brother understand what was happening with his baby sister.

“For six months, [our son] Pablo was going from house to house. No one else could be at the hospital, just my wife and me. It was hard,” says Pablo, thankful for their supportive family and friends. “Everyone was rallying around us.”

Meanwhile, Nataly did get stronger. Five months after she was born, she was extubated from her breathing tube, and six months later she left the hospital with her family. The Sánchez family is forever grateful for Nataly’s care team of doctors and nurses who cheered them on as they departed from our hospital and went home to Daly City to meet her big brother for the first time.

“I felt that I was supposed to be the one clapping for them instead of them clapping for us. If it wasn’t for them, we wouldn’t have been able to go home,” Pablo says. “It was a team effort.”

Nataly’s fight continues—she will need further monitoring and frequent visits to our hospital. Thanks to your generous donations to our hospital, Nataly and other patients like her will receive world-class care, and their families can be comforted during the most challenging moments of their lives.

“As a father who went through this ordeal,” Pablo says, “I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“I felt that I was supposed to be the one clapping for [Nataly’s care team] instead of them clapping for us. If it wasn’t for them, we wouldn’t have been able to go home. It was a team effort.”

PABLO SÁNCHEZ, NATALY’S FATHER

The Sánchez family was excited for Nataly to be a Summer Scamper Patient Hero in 2021.
Tanja Gruber, MD, PhD, knows firsthand the power that philanthropy can have in saving lives. She is an expert in leading clinical trials for infants with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), a disease that is fatal in two-thirds of children under age 1. Using the science that emerged from her lab, Gruber and her fellow researchers identified a promising treatment approach that is now being evaluated in a clinical trial. Early data emerging from the study demonstrates a significant boost in the cure rate for newly diagnosed infants with ALL.

“All of this was possible because of philanthropy. Without investment, we know what’s possible, but we can’t do it—and that’s heartbreaking,” she says.

Gruber plans to continue the infant ALL research that she started at St. Jude Children’s Hospital at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital and internationally, with the goal of raising the cure rate to 80 percent. She was recruited to Stanford in 2020 as the new division chief of Hematology, Oncology, and Stem Cell Transplantation and Regenerative Medicine in the Department of Pediatrics at the School of Medicine, and director of the Bass Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Diseases at Packard Children’s Hospital.

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“Our program is about translating science into cures,” says Gruber. “We still don’t understand what drives cancers, so the research coming out of our laboratories aims to uncover the underlying biology to inform which treatments will improve outcomes. Then we need to make the leap from the laboratory to the clinic and bring patients who have poor prognoses to Stanford to receive those new, innovative treatments. It’s not enough for us to deliver the standard of care. We need to set new standards of care. That’s really my dream.”

**The philanthropic difference**

Philanthropic giving has fueled Packard Children’s Hospital since its inception. A visionary gift of $70 million by David and Lucile Packard in 1986 launched construction of the new hospital, the culmination of Lucile’s lifelong dedication to children’s health.

Our hospital continues to rely on philanthropic support to recruit specialists; fund research; expand and equip buildings; and, of course, provide care for thousands of children with serious health conditions, including cancer, heart defects, autoimmune diseases, and more.

The key to solving difficult medical problems—whether in children or adults—lies with research, and research is expensive. However, the primary public funder of medical research, the National Institutes of
Health, reserves disproportionately less funding for research focused on children. For instance, only 4 percent of government funding for cancer research is directed toward pediatrics, according to the Children’s Cancer Research Fund.

In addition, the pharmaceutical industry is reluctant to invest in early-stage, high-risk research. Gruber says this has left pediatric oncologists like herself with only a handful of drugs approved for children and many young cancer patients without alternatives if those therapies fail.

Over the years, Packard Children’s Hospital and the School of Medicine have recruited some of the leading scientists in the world to find new solutions to the most pressing childhood illnesses. Fortified by a collaborative culture and shared commitment to driving bold ideas, these innovators are making incredible progress. Yet breakthroughs are possible only because of the heroes behind the scenes: donors like you.

Philanthropy fuels cutting-edge patient care in two significant ways:

■ Recruiting talent. With top-level pediatric experts in high demand, children’s hospitals face enormous competition in their recruitment efforts. Philanthropic support empowers Packard Children’s Hospital to attract and retain the best and brightest doctors, nurses, and other medical staff.

■ Funding research. Before drugs can be approved for a specific use in a defined population, scientists must prove both safety and efficacy through clinical trials. The trials then form the evidence required for FDA approval.

One of the most powerful tools to recruit preeminent faculty is endowed professorships, which provide a permanent source of funding for pediatric leaders who want to pursue high-risk, high-reward research. These two areas of philanthropy—research and talent—are intertwined. When the hospital has funding to support exciting and promising research trials, innovative scientists want to take part. And when those scientists come, research thrives.

Investing in people

Elaine and John Chambers have made many significant contributions toward talent and research over their 16-year relationship with our hospital. They funded the endowed professorship that helped bring Gruber to Stanford. They also responded to a matching gift opportunity by Jeff Chambers, chair of the hospital board of directors, and his wife, Andi Okamura, to establish an endowed professorship in cancer biology, held by Julien Sage, PhD. Like Gruber, Sage is focused on developing novel treatments for children with some of the most lethal cancers. His work centers on discovering what suppresses tumor growth and what allows cells to proliferate at the molecular level.

Elaine and John Chambers, and donors like you, are funding critical research that will lead to better treatments and cures.

“Dr. Gruber let us know clinical trials are the critical part of moving forward. How can you improve a child’s health until we have better, safer medicines?” says Elaine, who previously served as chair of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. “As a society, we want the best and latest innovations, but there’s no way to have that unless you invest in it.”

Clinical trials are essential to bring newer, more effective, and safer treatments to children and save lives. To achieve her vision, Gruber plans to build a “dream team” by recruiting several leading clinicians and scientists to Stanford. But it will require substantial philanthropic support over the next few years.

“The future is ours,” says Gruber, compelled by a sense of urgency. “With the breadth of expertise across Stanford, leading-edge laboratories and care facilities, and key investments by the hospital and School of Medicine, we have the foundation to advance new therapies and bring hope to kids with cancer who have run out of options. Now we need philanthropy to unlock our potential. Honestly, with the support of the community, I feel there are no boundaries. We’re unbeatable if we all work together.”

The Chambers have generously committed to matching all gifts in support of cancer clinical trials up to $1.25 million. If you’d like to make a gift, contact Dawn Mitchell at (650) 724-5765 or Dawn.Mitchell@lpfch.org.
Alok Patel, MD:
Connecting Media and Medicine

SOMETIMES WHEN Alok Patel, MD, walks into a patient’s room, he’ll catch a glimpse of his own face on the television. It can come as a surprise to his patients, who may not know that their doctor wears two different but complementary hats. By day, Patel is a medical journalist and media expert, explaining complicated public health issues.

At night, he works as a hospitalist at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital, where he cares for children throughout the hospital—in collaboration with primary care physicians, specialists, and surgeons—to provide comprehensive care during their stay.

“By having a career in media while working in pediatric medicine, I get to exercise every side of my personality,” says Patel.

On at least one occasion, he played both roles back to back, appearing on the news still wearing his scrubs from his hospital shift the night before.

“With the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, Patel became a sought-after medical expert. “I remember doing a spot in February of 2020,” says Patel, recalling how he shared the spotlight with a network news host. “We kept the conversation casual but informative. It was like a chat between friends, and that’s how I developed my style for talking about the pandemic.”

Patel now appears frequently on local and national media, providing a pediatrician’s perspective on timely topics such as vaccine safety, mask mandates in schools, and the science behind the latest headlines. His on-camera messages about COVID-19 aren’t that different from the conversations he has with patients and their families every day. “Essentially, we communicate about the risks to keep people prepared but not anxious,” he says.

It also helps to put himself in the viewers’ shoes. Whether speaking to an older audience on broadcast TV or to Generation Z on social media, Patel frames his tone accordingly, often sprinkling in some humor.

Meanwhile, he encourages his fellow health care providers to join the conversation. “I tell them that if we don’t talk about medicine, somebody else is going to do it,” Patel says, “and they might be misinformed and spread misinformation to millions of people.”

The politicization of the pandemic has added a layer of complexity to his communication approach. “The last thing we want to do is alienate someone who may believe something different than we do,” Patel explains. “We’re trying to spread information in an understandable, relatable fashion. I think doing this broadly, without insulting people, is what we have to do.”

As for the future, Patel hopes both sides of his career continue to evolve. He is always looking for new ways to answer people’s most common health questions and make sense of complicated medical headlines so that they can keep themselves and their families healthy.

“If we don’t talk about medicine, somebody else is going to do it, and they might be misinformed and spread misinformation to millions of people.”

ALOK PATEL, MD

Thank You

Every day, donors like you make gifts of all sizes to build a healthier future for children and expectant mothers. Your support makes our hospital a special place for our patients and families, and we are tremendously grateful.

And America.

Wanting to help other children live their fullest lives, Jay recently donated $500,000 to support the Betty Irene Moore Children’s Heart Center at Packard Children’s. When the Steins return for Sadie’s next routine visit, they will see a plaque hanging in the newly named “Jay, Sadie, Asher, Mischa, and Tali Stein Waiting Room.” There is a reason Jay wanted the gift to be from him as well as Sadie and her triplet siblings.

“My kids have friends who have kids—other kids—except appointments.” That means Sadie can keep doing the activities she loves—lyrical and jazz dance, cheer, and swimming—and, for that, Jay is extremely grateful.

Above: Heart patient Sadie Stein has relied on Packard Children’s Hospital for its life-saving care since she was born (shown here in 2009). Top right: Stephen Roth, MD, MPH, thanked Jay and Sadie Stein for their gift to the Children’s Heart Center.

“Like everything I do, hopefully they’ll learn a lesson from it,” says Jay, explaining that he is teaching his children the Jewish concept of “tzedakah” or charity. “I want them to understand this is the model and hope they’ll continue to do this. If they do, the world will be a better place.”

“Thank you, Jay, for helping heart patients and their families receive the best possible care and for raising the next generation of philanthropists.”

ALOK PATEL, MD

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Thanks to Good Planning, One Couple Is Making an Impact

WE’RE GRATEFUL to Valerie and Robert Fox for planning ahead and including Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital in their estate plans.

Valerie and Robert tragically passed away from COVID-19 earlier this year. Their daughter Lorraine Fox says they “were the most loving individuals you would ever meet.”

Fortunately, Valerie and Robert had prepared their finances years in advance to provide for their family and the charitable causes they cared most about, including Packard Children’s Hospital.

“You want to do good; you want to have a lasting impact,” says Lorraine, describing her parents’ thoughts on philanthropy.

Lorraine, a professional wealth adviser, helped her parents set up their trust in a way that would both take care of their family and benefit charity. At the end of their daughters’ lives, the remainder of the Foxes’ estate will go to their chosen philanthropic causes.

The Foxes decided to fund an endowment for pediatric oncology research at Packard Children’s Hospital. It was a win-win since they were committed to supporting cancer research and wanted to make a gift to support children’s health. Pediatrics was where they felt they could make the biggest difference, says Lorraine.

“It is really about helping the next generation survive and thrive.”

If you want to learn about how to include Packard Children’s Hospital in your estate plan, contact our Gift Planning team at giftplanning@lpfch.org.

Thank You

NOTES

Thank You

WE ARE GRATEFUL to Bala and Raju Vegesna for their donation to advance Packard Children’s Hospital’s care for children with complex brain vascular conditions. Bala and Raju’s twin son and daughter are now 19 years old. But as they grew up, they went to Packard Children’s for routine checkups. “The treatment we had at Packard Children’s was excellent and world-class,” says Raju.

During one such visit, Bala and Raju met Gerald Grant, MD, FACS, chief of pediatric neurosurgery at Packard Children’s Hospital, and were impressed with his work. Over the years, the couple continued to follow progress being made by Grant and his team in treating complex neurovascular conditions. “We think this work is very important,” Raju says. “And a lot more can be done.”

Grant, the Joatha Chan Endowed Professor, and his team already use powerful MRI scanners to understand the anatomy of the brain. However, the gift from Bala and Raju will fund an MRI physicist or scientist who will work side by side with clinicians and analyze conditions such as brain aneurysms more deeply by looking at their physiology and flow dynamics through MRI imaging. For example, with the use of MRI imaging technology, doctors will be able to see the direction of blood flow or changes in blood flow velocity before and after a child undergoes brain surgery for a condition called arteriovenous malformations (AVMs). Previously, the child would have needed a catheter angiogram, an invasive treatment that introduces added risk.

Thank you, Bala and Raju, for your generous gift to improve surgical outcomes for our patients.

NICU Parents Pay It Forward

SUE AND JON DUNCAN first experienced extraordinary health care at Stanford in 1979, when their daughter, Sara, was born prematurely and spent three months in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU).

The Duncans still recall the wonderful care their daughter received from neonatologist Philip Sunshine, MD, and his team. The couple also felt fortunate to have a strong support system of friends and family and understanding employers, which made it easier to cope with the stress of having a baby in the NICU. “We met other families during our daughter’s stay who were not so fortunate and saw firsthand the added burden this can place on NICU families,” says Sue and Jon.

Today, Sara is thriving and working as a social worker. When they revisited their estate and financial plans this year, Sue and Jon decided to include a planned gift to Packard Children’s Hospital from their individual retirement accounts. The funds will be used to create an endowment that will support NICU families who need financial assistance to pay for expenses such as gas, food, and hotel stays.

We are so grateful to all families who include a planned gift to our hospital in their estate plans. Thank you, Sue and Jon, for supporting our NICU families by giving them one less thing to worry about during a stressful time.

Teen’s Bat Mitzvah Project Is Music to Our Ears

THANK YOU, SOPHIA, for using your bat mitzvah project to give back to the community! Sophia, 14, chose to raise awareness and money for the Music Therapy Program at Packard Children’s after learning about how staff helped a young patient and family friend named Andrew.

“I used to hear about his love for his iPad and how music lifted his spirits along with the spirits of his family, nurses, and doctors in the hospital,” Sophia says. “The song ‘Happy’ by Pharrell Williams was his favorite song, and it’s my life theme song, too.”

In memory of Andrew, Sophia has raised nearly $7,000 for the Music Therapy Program and brought many moments of joy to children in our hospital’s care.
Wildfire Smoke Exposure Raises Risk for Preterm Birth

BREATHING POLLUTION FROM WILDFIRE SMOKE increases a pregnant woman’s risk of giving birth three or more weeks early, according to a Stanford study published in Environmental Research.

Each day of smoke exposure raises a pregnant woman’s risk of premature birth, regardless of her race, ethnicity, or income, the study found. A week of smoke exposure raised the risk of early delivery by 3.4 percent, with the strongest impacts when women were exposed to smoke during their second trimester of pregnancy.

One possible explanation for the link between wildfire smoke exposure and preterm birth, the authors say, is that the pollution may trigger an inflammatory response, which then sets delivery in motion. The increase in risk is relatively small in the context of all the factors that contribute to the birth of a healthy, full-term baby.

“However, against a backdrop where we know so little about why some women deliver too soon, prematurely, and why others do not, finding clues like the one here helps us start piecing the bigger puzzle together,” says co-author Gary Shaw, DrPH, a professor of pediatrics and co-primary investigator of Stanford’s March of Dimes Prematurity Research Center.

In the NEWS

Michelle Monje Awarded ‘Genius Grant’

NEUROSCIENTIST AND NEURO-Oncologist Michelle Monje, MD, PhD, was awarded a 2021 MacArthur Fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

“I was very surprised and incredibly honored,” says Monje, associate professor of neurology and neurological sciences, describing her reaction to the phone call during which she was informed she was a recipient of the $625,000 grant. The prestigious fellowship, unofficially known as a “genius grant,” is given “to talented individuals in a variety of fields who have shown exceptional originality in and dedication to their creative pursuits,” according to a statement from the foundation.

Monje’s research focuses on understanding healthy brain development, especially the role of glial cells, which surround and support neurons and contribute to brain plasticity. Her team also studies how the cell’s development goes awry in a group of pediatric brain tumors known as high-grade gliomas, such as glioblastoma and diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma.

Her work to understand both healthy and cancerous glia is providing new hope for better therapies to treat gliomas.

“Dr. Monje’s research is driven by a combination of deep scientific curiosity about healthy neurological development and compassion for children who are affected by deadly brain tumors,” says Lloyd Minor, MD, dean of the Stanford School of Medicine. “Her work is a fantastic example of the type of multidisciplinary creativity that is honored by the MacArthur Fellowship, and we are thrilled that she was selected.”

Infectious Disease Expert Joins Foundation Board

THE LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN’S HEALTH announced the appointment of Yvonne “Bonnie” Maldonado, MD, to its board of directors.

Maldonado is the Tauke Professor of Global Health and Infectious Diseases and professor of pediatrics at Stanford University School of Medicine. She also directs Stanford’s Global Child Health Program and serves as the medical director of Infection Prevention and Control at Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she has been at the forefront of Stanford’s research and clinical efforts and an adviser to policymakers on how to stop virus spread.

“We’re honored to welcome one of the world’s leading experts in children’s health to our board,” says Cynthia J. Brandt, president and CEO of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. “Beyond her role in solving public health crises, Dr. Maldonado is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion, which aligns with the Foundation’s goals to advance health equity. She also has extensive fundraising knowledge that will help us to unlock philanthropy to transform health for children and families everywhere.”

Maldonado attended the Stanford School of Medicine and was a resident and fellow in pediatric infectious diseases at The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Her leadership and accomplishments in diversity and inclusion have been widely recognized and led to her appointment as the senior associate dean for faculty development and diversity at Stanford Medicine.

“Dr. Maldonado is a champion for children’s health, and the impact of her work has been felt around the world,” says Elizabeth Dunlevie, board chair for the Foundation. “I am confident that she will bring that same dedication to advancing the Foundation’s mission of equitable access to high-quality care.”

U.S. News & World Report Names Packard Children’s Among the Top 10 Children’s Hospitals in the Nation

LUCILE PACKARD CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL STANFORD has once again been named among the top 10 children’s hospitals in the nation, according to the U.S. News & World Report 2021-2022 Best Children’s Hospitals survey.

The rankings name Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford as the top children’s hospital in Northern California and include it on the Best Children’s Hospitals Honor Roll. A designation awarded to pediatric centers that deliver exceptionally high-quality care across multiple specialties.

In addition, the 2021-2022 survey introduced state and regional rankings for the first time. Packard Children’s Hospital ranked second among all Pacific region and California children’s hospitals.

This is the 17th consecutive year that Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report surveys. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2021, the hospital is the youngest institution among the top hospitals, the rest of which have been in operation for 70 to 165 years.

“Achieving the Best Children’s Hospitals Honor Roll distinction yet again is indicative of the excellence in specialty care that has come to define Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital Stanford in its relatively short tenure,” says Paul King, president and CEO of Packard Children’s Hospital. “We are extraordinarily proud of this achievement as a direct result of our providers’ unparalleled innovation and commitment to delivering the highest-quality care for children and expectant mothers.”

The annual Best Children’s Hospitals rankings recognize the top 50 pediatric facilities across the United States in 10 pediatric specialties: cancer, cardiology and heart surgery, diabetes and endocrinology, gastroenterology and GI surgery, neonatology, nephrology, neurology and neurosurgery, orthopedics, pulmonology and lung surgery, and urology.
OZZY, 7, EPILEPSY PATIENT

Humans of Packard Children’s

Facebook.com/HumansOfPackardChildrens

“I want to be a zoologist or paleontologist. But sometimes I want to be a police officer or firefighter.”

OZZY, 7, EPILEPSY PATIENT

When Ozzy was born, a large stroke destroyed 85 percent of the left hemisphere of his brain. He was quickly transferred to our neonatal intensive care unit for the best care possible. Ozzy was eventually discharged, but a few years later he started to suffer seizures. Medications were ineffective. Ozzy’s doctors suggested another approach—a surgery to disconnect the two sides of Ozzy’s brain to stop the seizures. It’s called a hemi-spherotomy, and most parents can’t believe it’s even possible.

Thanks to donors like you, who fund innovative research and outstanding care, today Ozzy is seizure-free! Now he can have a healthier future and become the zoologist paleontologist police officer firefighter that he is meant to be.
Give care, comfort, and cures to a child today.

DONATE NOW at supportLPCH.org/Nataly