



**Shriners International**

**Alee  
2023-2024**

# ALEE SHRINERS

**Shriners Hospitals for Children: an organization that is symbolized with one man picking up a child in braces.**

**LOVE to the Rescue!**

**The donations from this paper crusade go directly to Shriners Children's / Shriners Hospital for Children.**



**Sailing Into The Future!**



**Shriner Hospitals for Children Celebrates over 100 years, Alee has been supporting Shriners Hospitals for Children—the greatest philanthropy. Did you know that in 1922, Imperial Sir Ernest Allen Cutts from Alee Shriners laid the cornerstone at the first hospital in Shreveport? Alee Shriners sailing into the future and making kids smile in '23.**

**ALEE SHRINERS**  
**Official Publication**  
 Sponsored by Alee Shriners  
 Skidaway Road & Eisenberg Drive

P.O. Box 14147  
 Savannah, GA 31416  
 Office (912) 355-2422  
 Fax (912) 355-0136  
 Office Hours 9:30 am—4:00 pm  
 Monday – Friday  
 \*\*\*\*\*

**2023 DIVAN**

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 Chief Rabban..... Carey Hodges  
 Assistant Rabban... Danny Fries, Jr.  
 High Priest &  
 Prophet..... David Armstrong, II  
 Oriental Guide..... Ray Christian, Jr.  
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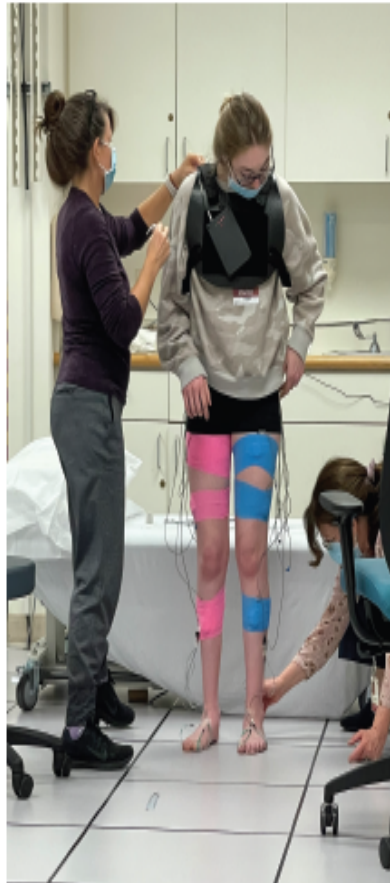
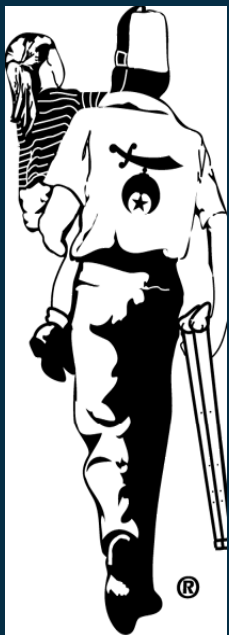
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**MOTION PICTURES**

Technology at the motion analysis centers improves surgical decisions and outcomes

Payton is a 15-year-old high school sophomore who cheers competitively, plays soccer and serves on her school's student council. Payton was born with cerebral palsy, but she refuses to let her condition hold her back.

When Payton was a year old, her mom, Erika, noticed Payton's walking didn't seem quite right. At Shriners Children's Northern California, her daughter was diagnosed with spastic cerebral palsy.

When Payton was 7, she had her first study in the motion analysis center.

"Three-dimensional motion analysis helps us see movement that would otherwise be impossible in a quick appointment in the clinic," said Vedant Kulkarni, M.D., attending pediatric orthopedic surgeon and director of the pediatric orthopedic fellowship program at the hospital. "The results

of these studies allow us to have a level of precision in our understanding and decision-making that each child deserves. Payton's first study showed us that a tendon lengthening surgery for her right ankle and knee would substantially improve her walking."

The surgery went well, and Payton worked hard during physical therapy. Her treatment was so successful that she now participates in multiple sports, including competitive cheerleading. She travels across the country for competitions, and her team has won a national championship.

*"I can run, tumble, flip and do everything my teammates can do,"*

**Care is Great from West to East Coast at Shriners Children's Hospitals**

I'm a mother of 3 kids. My youngest are twins and one was born with a cleft palette. I did everything the doctors told me to do. But the one and only doctor that did surgeries on little ones with cleft palettes was very mean. When my daughter did not take the bottle, he wanted her to use a sip cup. According to him, It was my fault. I even asked the other doctors what to do. They all told me to contact Shriners Children's Hospital. So I did. The first time they looked at my daughter they saw a little girl not a number and assured me I was doing everything right for her. Shriners Children's Hospital in Portland, Oregon did a lot of her care. When we moved to Georgia my biggest fear was would her care continue with Shriners Hospital. Once again Shriners stepped up and assured me that her care will not be interrupted. We go Houston, Texas now for her care but the same loving care is still there and she feels safe and comfortable with them when we go. Thank you Shriners for all that you do for so many.

**Samantha, Steve and Chloe**



## A Message from the Potentate...

As Potentate of the nearly 1,200-plus members at Alee Shriners, it is my privilege to serve our community and I would like to thank you for your generous donation to Shriners Hospitals for Children.

Shriners Children's/Shriners Hospital for Children celebrated a hundred year milestone in 2022. Donations from individuals like you have supported our locations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico and thus, have helped more than 1.5 million children have a better quality of life. Through the quality service provided by our doctors, nurses, research teams and administrators and through the support of the public, "Shriner Kids" benefit from the most amazing care anywhere in the areas of burns, orthopaedic conditions, cleft lip and palate and spinal cord injuries. In 2022, Alee Shriners collected over \$345,000 for our Shriners Hospitals through generous donations from our community, people like YOU! Thank you so much.

We assure you that your donation directly supports research and the care of children. If you know of a child who would benefit from our services, please have their parent or guardian contact a Shriner in your area or call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States and 1-800-361-7256 in Canada. As a nurse at Shriners Hospital once said, "We members of the staff work for the kids. Without your support and that of the community, such work would not be possible." As you read these inspiring stories, remember you helped make the quality of life for "our kids" better. Once again, we thank you for your support and generosity.

Sincerely,

*Robbie Moore*  
Potentate  
Alee Shriners, 2023



## Alee Road Runners working their Magic! BEEP BEEP

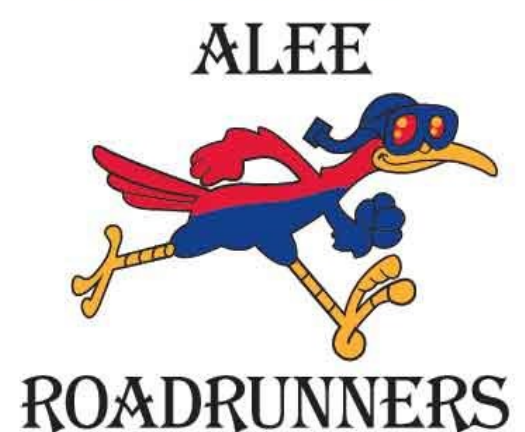
Each Shriners temple has a special unit of transporters called the Road Runners. Road Runners have driven millions of miles bringing children to Shriners Hospitals for Children. For each trip, they pick up a local child and their family, drive them to the hospital for treatment, and then return with them back home. The transportation is free of cost to the child's family, but the Road Runners say they are paid with smiles from the child. When asked why they volunteer so much of their time, Road Runners simply reply that when they look at what the families are going through with the children, they are happy to drive any distance to help them.

Alee has THE MOST dedicated Shriners. Thank you to the Road Runners! These drivers have been to Shriners Hospitals for Children in Greenville, Dayton, Shreveport, Chicago, and Philadelphia. We are living the Shriners Creed: "...As Shriners, we look beyond ourselves to serve the needs of others especially children who cannot help themselves. We believe Shriners Hospitals for Children to be the world's greatest philanthropy, and we covenant with each other to support its "temple of mercy" with spirit, time, talent and means."

**GREAT JOB and Thank you!**

**President:** John Willis

**Trip Coordinator:** Steve Premo



## Greetings all.

My name is Ken Porter and I am the Alee Shriners representative to Shriners Children's—Florida. The staff has been providing hope and healing to children for almost 100 years. Our compassionate, prestigious doctors and care teams are committed to excellence in pediatric care.

Our nurses go far beyond their professional promise, building relationships and providing warmhearted, high-quality care. They're devoted to our patients' and their families' overall well-being.

Shriners Children's is committed to conducting research that will improve medical treatments and quality of life for children. Our efforts also increase the worldwide body of medical and scientific knowledge. All treatment is given regardless of the families' ability to pay.

If I can be of assistance, please contact me through the Shrine temple office. The number is (912)355-2422 or email me at [grannyslance@yahoo.com](mailto:grannyslance@yahoo.com) or by cell phone at (912)492-8445.

Thanks for supporting the Shriners.



**Shriners**  
Children's™  
**FLORIDA**

## Kicking the Brace!! She “booted” it!



### Shriners Children's Chicago

When Bella needed more surgery due to ongoing progression of her spine curve and diagnosis of osteogenesis imperfecta, our [Shriners Children's Chicago](#) medical team was ready. After 2 years, Bella is standing and smiling with her THREE surgeons at a follow up. Bella and her family call Dr. Ghazi, Dr. Smith and Dr. Szczodry their [#superheroes](#). [#scoliosismonth](#) [shrinerschildrens.org/en/pediatric-care/scoliosis](http://shrinerschildrens.org/en/pediatric-care/scoliosis)



Taken off of Facebook



## TO ALL SUPPORTERS OF SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN

Clyde V. Bowie, Past Potentates of Alee Shriners 2018 respectively, are proud to represent Alee Shriners on the Board of Directors for Shriners Hospitals for Children in Greenville, South Carolina. We want to take this opportunity to say **“THANK YOU”** to the supporters of our mission to treat children in our Shriners Hospitals throughout the United States, Mexico and Canada. We accept children from birth to age 18 for treatment if their needs are in the scope of our specialized service lines of pediatric orthopedic conditions, burn



injuries, spinal cord injuries and cleft lip and palate. We are in our 99th year of operating Shriners Hospitals in Greenville. We continue to develop new techniques through research to make it possible for children to “defy the odds” and have a typical childhood and on to adulthood which otherwise may not have been possible. We have the finest doctors, nurses and support staff dedicated to our mission of treating children in our Shriners Hospitals. Our most recent campaign theme says it all - **“Love to the Rescue”**. Love is shown to each and every patient in our hospitals without regard to their ability to pay for services that are needed.

If you know of a child that might need our services, please have his/her parent or guardian call the Alee Shrine temple office at **912-355-2422 ext 4**.

If you know of an opportunity for us to present a program or speak to a group about our hospitals, please contact any Shriner or contact Clyde Bowie at 706-945-7377 or Buddy Grayson at 912-547-0866. Thanks again for your support of the world’s greatest philanthropy, Shriners Children’s—Greenville.

*Clyde V. Bowie*

Board of Directors  
Shriners Children’s—Greenville

### Morris Slotin Fund

This fund is named in honor of one of our Past Potentates, Morris Slotin. All donations are used exclusively to transport children to and from our Shriners Hospitals.

This fund is supported by contributions from our Shriners, friends, and others in memory or in honor of a friend, relative, or loved one.

To Make a  
Donation to Alee  
Shriners...

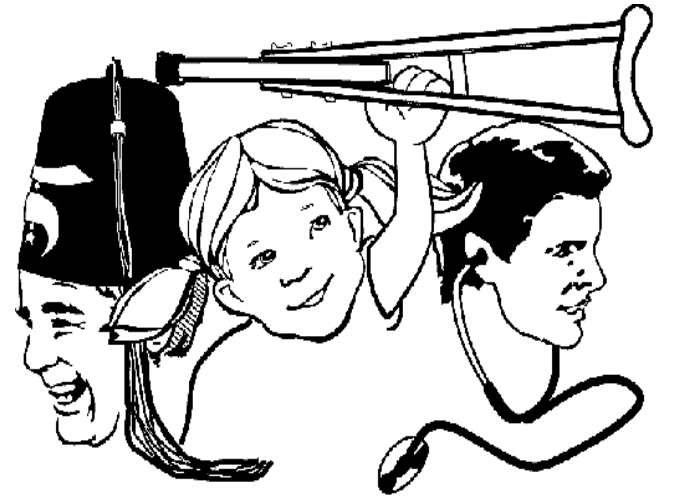
**Alee Shriners  
Morris Slotin  
Fund  
P.O. Box 14147  
Savannah, GA  
31416**

# Helping a Child is Just a Phone Call Away

Determining whether a child is eligible for care at Shriners Hospitals for Children is as simple as calling **800-237-5055** (toll free in the U.S.), or **800-361-7256** (in Canada) from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time Monday through Friday.

During the initial phone call, you will discuss the nature of the child's condition, age and location of residency with a patient referral coordinator.

Based upon the information provided, you will be referred to a specific Shriners Hospitals for Children location that can best care for the child. Additional information is available on **shrinerschildrens.org**. Shriners Hospitals for Children specializes in treating orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate.



SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN ARE DULY REGISTERED WITH THE STATE OF FLORIDA AS REQUIRED BY ITS SOLICITATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS ACT. THEIR REGISTRATION NUMBER IS CH433. A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL-FREE 800-435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE, OR VISITING THE DEPARTMENT'S WEBSITE AT WWW.FLORIDAConsumerHELP.COM. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE.



**SHRINERS HOSPITALS  
FOR CHILDREN**  
*Excellence in Pediatric  
Specialty Care*

Since the first Shriners Hospital opened in 1922, the health care system has improved the lives of more than 1.5 million children by providing excellent pediatric specialty care. Today, Shriners Hospitals for Children® is a unique health care system with a reputation for finding answers and giving families hope. At our locations in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, children receive quality care for orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate, regardless of the families' ability to pay or insurance status.

## LEADING THE WAY IN ORTHOPEDICS

The first Shriners Hospital was opened primarily to help children who had contracted polio. Now, the majority of our Shriners Hospitals for Children locations are staffed and equipped to handle virtually all pediatric orthopedic problems, including sub-acute trauma.

We provide treatment for clubfoot; Legg-Calvé-Perthes disease and other hip disorders; hand disorders; limb deficiencies and discrepancies; scoliosis (curvature of the spine); osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease); juvenile idiopathic arthritis; and orthopedic difficulties related to cerebral palsy, spina bifida and other neuromuscular conditions.

Shriners Hospitals for Children offers a range of multidisciplinary services, including physical, occupational and recreational therapies, as well as orthotics and prosthetics. We also provide a wide variety of programs that focus on the overall needs and well-being of each patient.

## PIONEERING BURN CARE AND RESEARCH

Shriners Hospitals for Children has been a leader in burn care, research and education since entering the burn care field in the mid-1960s. Thanks to the innovative medical care offered at our locations that provide burn care, every year countless children have a greater chance of surviving all types of burn injuries. Some of the advances made through our research efforts include improved survival rates, creation of pressure garments to minimize scarring, and development of engineered skin and better woundhealing techniques. Shriners Hospitals provide critical, surgical and rehabilitative care for all degrees of burn injuries.

Each state-of-the-art facility offering burn care provides treatments for acute and sub-acute burns; healed burns; scarring that has caused contractures or limited mobility; smoke inhalation; facial scarring or deformities; and other skin conditions.

## DELIVERING EXCELLENCE IN SPINAL CORD INJURY REHABILITATION

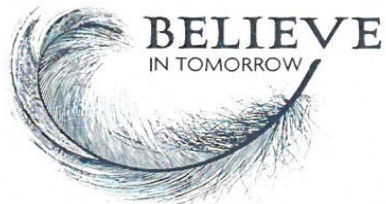
Shriners Hospitals for Children was the first health care system in the country to develop spinal cord injury rehabilitation programs specifically for children. We offer innovative therapies, emotional support, and training in independent living skills. In addition, we emphasize exercise and activity-based rehabilitation. These activities increase strength and stamina and enhance social interaction, confidence and independence.

## PROVIDING EXPERTISE IN CLEFT LIP AND PALATE CARE

Cleft lip and palate occurs when the tissue that forms the upper lip and roof of the mouth fail to join together before birth.

At Shriners Hospitals for Children, patients with a cleft lip and/or palate are treated by a multidisciplinary team that works to improve the child's appearance and ability to eat, breathe and communicate. Each patient's unique treatment plan may include surgery, orthodontics, and hearing, speech and psychological therapies. Our goal is to help each child achieve optimal function, improve facial appearance to the fullest extent possible and build self-esteem.

To learn how to refer a child, please visit [shrinershospitalforchildren.org](http://shrinershospitalforchildren.org) or call the patient referral line at 800-237-5055 in the U.S., or 800-361-7256 in Canada.



**WOMEN IMPACTING CARE**  
SUPPORTING SHRINERS CHILDREN'S™  
**FIRST LADY JOLYNN DICKINS**  
CHAIR FOR 2023-2024



Women Impacting Care, chaired by Shriners International's First Lady, is a thoughtful group of women donors, supporters and advocates who have bonded together to help highlight services and programs of Shriners Children's. This year, with the theme "Believe in Tomorrow," the program is led by First Lady JoLynn Dickins and focuses on the healthcare system's efforts to help teenage patients with life-long conditions transition to adulthood.

Shriners Children's wants to make this transition as smooth and successful as possible, so that our patients will have tools they can use as well as access to the specialized medical care they need in order to continue participating in the activities they love and pursuing their goals and dreams for the future.

**MEETING A MILESTONE HEAD-ON**

Turning 18 is a milestone for every teen. It means officially becoming an adult, and with it come the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood. Teens and families may feel both excited and nervous as this milestone approaches. For teens who live with complex medical conditions, turning 18 also comes with the need to transition from the pediatric to the adult healthcare world.

"Believe in Tomorrow" raises awareness and seeks donations to support and strengthen the healthcare system's programs to help see patients and families through an amazing network of resources to address current care needs and to educate patients and families on possible life experiences and opportunities they may encounter as patients enter adulthood.

Shriners Children's patients entering adulthood and their families face unique situations such as transitioning to an adult specialty healthcare provider, health insurance changes, lifestyle changes where

young adults may now live independently, and more. To navigate this maze of information takes a care team with the knowledge, skill and bedside manner to assist patients and families through transition planning, which may include appropriate medical care transition, opportunities to learn about adult educational possibilities and supplemental resources to help learn how to navigate everyday activities and potential living arrangements. We are committed to providing these services for our patients, as we understand their experiences and have dedicated a century of care to helping patients live life to the fullest.

"Stepping into adulthood is such a magical time for every young person," said Lady JoLynn. "We want to make sure that our patients have all the resources they need to successfully transition not only their medical care but many of the life changes that come with growing up."

**BELIEVE IN TOMORROW**

First Lady JoLynn invites you to join her in making an impact in the lives of our patients. Donors who would like to support Women Impacting Care may purchase symbolic "Believe in Tomorrow" products or make donations online.

*Thank you for your compassion, generosity and support of Shriners Children's.*



[lovetotherescue.org/  
women-impacting-care](https://lovetotherescue.org/women-impacting-care)



**Shriners  
Children's™**

**Shriners International**  
2900 N. Rocky Point Drive • Tampa, FL 33607  
FirstLady@shrinenet.org

## Alee Shriners Having **FUN** for the Children!!



Most photos courtesy of Lady Cookie Moore and Amanda Sutton!

## About the Shriners Fraternity

Shriners International, the organization that founded and continues to support Shriners Hospitals for Children, is a fraternity based on fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth. This year the fraternity is celebrating its 150th anniversary, having been founded in New York City in 1872. Today, there are nearly 200 temples located throughout the world, and Shriners can be found on six continents. Shriners love to support Shriners Children's and do so in many ways, from organizing fundraisers to benefit their official philanthropy to participating in awareness efforts for the health care system. Shriners also voluntarily serve on the hospitals' and outpatient centers' boards of governors, act as tour guides and assist patients and families however they can.

For information about joining Shriners International, please visit [beashrinernow.com](http://beashrinernow.com), or contact the membership development office at Shriners International Headquarters at [membership@shrinenet.org](mailto:membership@shrinenet.org) or 813-281-0300 or Alee Shriners (912) 355-2422.



*New Nobles November 2021*

[beashrinernow.com](http://beashrinernow.com)





**Patient Ambassador:**

*Gianna*



Gianna, 15, was born with a rare condition called proximal femoral focal deficiency (PFFD), which caused her to be missing part of her left femur. Her parents knew they had to find the right specialized care for their daughter and were grateful to learn that the orthopedic team at Shriners Children’s Southern California had the expertise to treat PFFD.

Gianna’s left leg was shorter than her right one, and she faced hip malformations and other congenital left extremity limb deficiencies, said Robert Cho, M.D., pediatric orthopedic surgeon and chief of staff at Shriners Children’s Southern California. “Gianna did not have a functional knee joint, and she had a non-functioning foot that was pointed inward. It would have been essentially impossible for her to walk without amputating that and giving her a prosthesis,” Dr. Cho said.

Gianna had her first visit at Shriners Children’s when she was 3 months old, and at 9 months, she received her first prosthesis.

As Gianna grew older, she became aware of her physical differences and at times struggled with her self-image. With the unwavering love and support of her family and her care team at Shriners Children’s, she developed the confidence to embrace life. The prosthetics and rehabilitation teams worked with Gianna to teach her how to adapt and build the skills to meet her physical challenges.

“My Shriners Children’s family taught me to never let my leg hold me back from being the best version of myself,” she said.

Now Gianna is an active high school student who is both an artist and an athlete. She is an avid sports fan and keeps busy by competing in tennis and golf. She especially loves football, and her favorite team is the Kansas City Chiefs. Her dream is to be the commissioner of the NFL someday. With her drive and spirit, Dr. Cho has every confidence that Gianna can achieve what she sets her mind to.

Gianna’s father was so impressed with the care his daughter received that he was inspired to become a Shriner, and currently serves as chairman of the Board of Governors at Shriners Children’s Southern California. “I’m so proud of my dad. I’m glad that he has found a brotherhood and a community. Just as I have found support, he has, as well,” said Gianna.

“Shriners Children’s was there for me when I needed them,” said Gianna. “I wouldn’t be where I am today without them. Being an International Patient Ambassador gives me the opportunity to show my gratitude for Shriners Children’s. I want to inspire and encourage kids just like me, and let them know that the limits are endless. All they have to do is try!”

**Patient Ambassador:**

*Juan Diego*



Juan Diego, 18, was burned in an electrical accident when he was 13, leaving his hands seriously disfigured. He spent more than a month in the hospital in his home country of Honduras. When he returned home, he was completely dependent on others for even the most basic tasks. He could not take care of himself, go to school, or draw or play music, two of his passions.

The Ruth Paz Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Honduras devoted to providing quality medical services to children, learned about Juan Diego’s burn injury and connected him with Shriners Children’s Boston. Four months after his injury, he arrived at the hospital in Boston. Some of his burn wounds were still open, requiring immediate attention from the acute burn team. Juan Diego knew the road ahead was going to be challenging, but he approached every day, every treatment and every obstacle with a positive attitude.

During his two and a half months in Boston in 2018, much of Juan Diego’s treatment involved intensive physical therapy and occupational therapy. He worked with therapists at least five days a week, sometimes multiple times a day. Occupational therapist Courtney Updegrave fabricated customized splints for his hands, enabling Juan Diego to relearn how to care for himself. He was even able to draw and play the drums again.

I have learned from working hard through my recovery that I am always ready for a challenge.

Along with his traditional therapy sessions, Juan Diego was a member of Team Brave, the hospital’s community reintegration program, and competed in a Spartan Race as part of Team No Limits. He was also one of five patients who attended Game 1 of the World Series. He said it is a night he will never forget.

Juan Diego transferred to the reconstructive phase of his care where Joseph Upton, M.D., a plastic surgeon hand specialist, was able to restore sensation and mobility by taking tissue from another part of Juan Diego’s body and building a web space between his thumb and index finger. Juan Diego continues to come to Shriners Children’s Boston for reconstructive and laser surgeries to improve the function and mobility of his hands.

With every improvement, Juan Diego is able to do more of what he loves. From art and music to so many sports – soccer, football, tennis and ping-pong, Juan Diego keeps very busy. He would even love to go to the Paralympics to compete in ping-pong someday. “I should probably start practicing!” he laughed. Now a college student in Honduras studying international relations, Juan Diego is honored to represent Shriners Children’s as an International Patient Ambassador.

Shriners Children’s selects International Patient Ambassadors each year to represent the healthcare system at local and international events. The ambassadors share their inspiring stories of perseverance and how Shriners Children’s has made a dramatic difference in their lives. Our 2023-2024 International Patient Ambassadors are Gianna and Juan Diego.



## Colt and Ty—Our awesome twosome



"I love the doctors and the nurses at the hospital, and the Shriners. When I grow up, I want to be a doctor at Shriners."

-Ty

### Double the Smiles, Double the Love

It was a bittersweet moment when Barbie and Rod learned their twin boys would be born with a cleft. The day after Ty and Colton were born, Barbie posted on Facebook that both boys were born with cleft lip and one also had a cleft palate.

A friend's brother, who is a Shriner, saw Barbie's post and immediately said, "Shriners Hospitals for Children can help."

Ty and Colton had their first surgery at Shriners Hospitals for Children — Cincinnati when they were 3 months old. "The staff is amazing," Barbie says. "As soon as you come through the door,

you feel that warmth and love. They made what was a very difficult time so much easier."

It's typical for kids with cleft lip and palate to have a sequence of operations throughout their early life, explains Christopher Gordon, MD, the twins' plastic surgeon. "They really get integral care, everything they need here as a

one-stop shop," he says. "We'll bend over backwards to make it a good experience for them."

Today, Ty and Colton are 10 years old. Their parents continue to be grateful for the transformative care the twins have received at Shriners Hospitals for Children.

"Words and even actions will never be able to show the world the change they have made by providing our sweet boys with a better quality of life," Barbie says.

#### Give Kids a Reason to Smile

When you make a gift to Shriners Hospitals for Children in your estate plan, you ensure that kids like Ty and Colton get the treatment and care they need, regardless of their families' ability to pay. Contact the Planned and Major Giving Office at 866-954-1575 or [plannedgiving@shrinersnet.org](mailto:plannedgiving@shrinersnet.org) to learn more.



**UPDATE:** They love baseball. Colton is a pitcher and Ty is a catcher. They made the Allstars team.



[Shriners Children's Ohio](http://Shriners Children's Ohio)

It feels like it was just yesterday when twins Ty and Colton were babies! Now they're 13 years old and almost taller than their surgeon, Dr. Chris Gordon. Ty and Colton say our staff makes sure they understand every procedure and phase in their cleft repair journey. Their parents use terms like "trust" and "expertise" to explain why they continue to travel from



### Online Exclusive Shriners Children's™ Fezzy® Bear

Help transform children's lives and support a cuddly cause with our Shriners Children's Fezzy Bear! This adorable brown teddy bear is the official mascot of Shriners Children's. With its iconic Shriner red fez and bow tie, Fezzy Bear provides lots of comfort and hugs to Shriners patients and other children. This smiley teddy has also been used during medical play sessions to teach young children about upcoming medical procedures and outcomes. Bring a Fezzy Bear home with you today and share the life-changing work of Shriners Children's. **Build-A-Bear Foundation® is a proud supporter of Shriners Children's**

Now you can donate Fezzy or any plush, outfit and/or accessory to the Build-A-Bear Foundation Buddy Room at Shriners Children's locations in North America. If you'd like to donate to a patient, via the Build-A-Bear Foundation Buddy Rooms, please click the link below. Follow these instructions on how to ship to the Build-A-Bear Foundation Buddy Room of your choice!

This item cannot be purchased unstuffed, nor can stuffing adjustments be made. A sound or scent cannot be placed inside this pre-stuffed item.

## Miller Heading To GSU



(L to R, Front): Kylin Miller (sister), Sheldon Miller (father), Bryce Miller, Casey Miller (mother), Linda Peterson (grandmother), Blaine Miller (brother); (Middle): Wanda Miller (grandmother), Joyce Donaldson (aunt); (Back): Coach Ken Pack, Darrell Sharpe (Alee Shriners), Coach Drew Collins, Head Coach Thomas Smith, Kevin James (Alee Shriners), Ramon Powell (Alee Shriners), and Mickey Scott (Alee Shriners). Photo by Mike Branch

February 15, 2023

Mike Branch

Sports Editor, The Advance News, Vidalia, GA

On Monday of this week at Wheeler County High School, Bryce Miller signed his letter of intent to play football at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro. Miller has always wanted to go to GSU, and when the offer came in he jumped at it.

There is a bigger story behind Miller and this opportunity to play at this level at a Division 1 college. Miller had a medical condition as a child and originally, the doctors weren't sure if he was even going to be able to walk. He went through several surgeries through the Shriners Children's Hospital and has continued to work hard and created this opportunity for himself.

Miller stated, "It was a long process, but it just felt so right when I got this call. It is big for my family. A lot of them are from Statesboro so this has always been the offer that I have wanted. I have to thank my mom and dad for all of their support, my grandmas for everything they have done, my brother for being a great role model, and my sister is my biggest fan.

"It really has been a great journey. These guys from Shriners that are here today, what they have done for me is just insane. For one, I must thank God for walking me in this path, and for all the people that are a part of this. This is just a great moment, and I am so happy to have this chance."

Miller's father Sheldon added, "During this whole recruiting process things have been great. We got to talk to a lot of good schools and meet a lot of great coaches, but Georgia Southern is where he wanted to be the whole time. When that opportunity came for him it was a no-brainer for us. My entire family is from Statesboro, and just knowing that we can drive an hour to see him play on Saturdays is just great.

"He has always been a student of the game, from watching his older brother to his knowledge of the game, it is just crazy. To watch him develop into the football player that he has become has just been an amazing ride for him, for us a family, and for me as a father and a coach. I never coached him, I am a defensive guy. I have been hands off with both of them coaching, which has really let me enjoy the process more as a father with both of them. This is just a great day for us."

Coach Thomas Smith said, "Bryce has been around the program since he was a kid. He really came into his own as a junior when he made First Team All-Region. He started to get some interest from colleges then, but this year it expanded. But his dream school was always Georgia Southern. With this year we were a power running team and went for over 3,000 yards and a lot of it was behind him. It was a secret where we were heading, and he just did his job. He has had a big career here at Wheeler, and I am just excited to see what his future holds."

*"Article by Mike Branch, reprinted with permission from The Advance newspaper."*

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