



ALEE SHRINERS

From One Parent to Another: A Mother's Experience With Cleft Lip and Palate

Shriners Hospitals for Children:
Our Patients Inspire Us to Provide the Most Amazing Care Anywhere LOVE to the Rescue!

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

Barbie went through a lot to conceive her twin boys. After two years and three miscarriages while attempting to conceive naturally, she decided to try in vitro fertilization. While undergoing that daunting process, the South Carolina resident stuck to every rule, eschewing alcohol (not even a sip) and caffeine (including chocolate!) to ensure their health. She ate a strict diet, took a special folic acid pill and did everything by the book.

So, when Barbie went in for her 20-week ultrasound and the sonographer detected [cleft lip](#) and [cleft palate](#) to varying degrees of severity in both boys, she was shocked and confused. The staffer offered no further explanation or assurance about their condition. Instead, she handed Barbie literature about possibly terminating her pregnancy because of the boys' condition. Her heart sank.

"Why would I want to abort my babies because of this?" she recalls thinking. "It really freaked me out. What exactly is this? What do they have? Is it more than just something on their face? It was so scary because that information was not given to me like it should have been. I worked hard to have those babies. I was not going to terminate my pregnancy, and, for that to even be an option, I was very surprised. It was a very scary time."

After Ty and Colton were born in 2010, the family's local pediatrician referred them to a hospital in Atlanta for treatment (they were living in Georgia at the time), but Barbie wasn't sure it was the right choice. Luckily, things took a turn while the boys were in the NICU. Or, as she wrote in a social media post: "A beacon of hope appeared."



Barbie's friend's husband, Chris Oglesbee, heard about the boys' condition – and he just happened to be a [Shriner](#), a noble of [Alee Shriners](#) in Savannah. He convinced Barbie and her husband, Rod, that the twins needed specialty pediatric treatment and that Shriners Children's could provide it. "He guided us through the paperwork and extended his unwavering support," Barbie wrote. "Since then, the Shriners have been our steadfast allies, providing crucial help every step of the way."

The boys are now 15 and have undergone several surgeries (with more to come) at [Shriners Children's Ohio](#), in Dayton. Although it's a nearly 11-hour drive from their home, the family agrees that the journey is well worth it. Today, Ty and Colton are doing great. Both athletes with a passion for baseball, they happily attended a Cincinnati Reds game, courtesy of Shriners Children's, and met their idol, Elly De La Cruz. They also proudly served as Patient Ambassador standard-bearers at the Shriners Children's Open in Las Vegas in 2024.

While Barbie had never even heard of the condition at the beginning of the twins' cleft lip and palate journey 15 years ago, she's become a resource and support to other parents with children with cleft lip and palate, particularly through online groups.

Here, Barbie reflects on what she's learned along the way – thanks in part to the guidance of Shriners Children's physicians and staff – and what she wants to share with other parents new to the condition.

More of Barbie's thoughts on page 10. ~ Shriners Children's Ohio



ORTHOPEDIC CARE

Scoliosis treatment helps teen breathe easy



By the time Michael was 15 years old, he had a scoliosis so severe that breathing was very difficult and he became malnourished from the effort.

But Shriners Children's Lexington and pediatric orthopedist Vincent Prusick, M.D., were there for him.

Michael was being adopted. His severe scoliosis had been left untreated for roughly three years and he had a

spine with a curvature of 115 degrees when he was first examined at the hospital, according to his new mother, Laura.

"They told me at my first appointment that if I didn't treat my scoliosis right away, I might not make it to 16," Michael said. But he did make it to 16 years and now beyond. His providers at Shriners Children's knew exactly what to do.

Very quickly, Michael was put in the hospital and in halo traction, to gradually stretch his spine and lessen the chance of nerve damage. He was also given a feeding tube to help him gain weight and ensure adequate nutrition.

After the traction, Dr. Prusick performed a spinal fusion procedure to stabilize his spine.

Michael was up and walking a day after his surgery. He is now 18 years old and a junior in high school who thinks he would like to become a correctional officer in the future. The curvature in his spine has been reduced to just 34 degrees — allowing him to breathe easily.

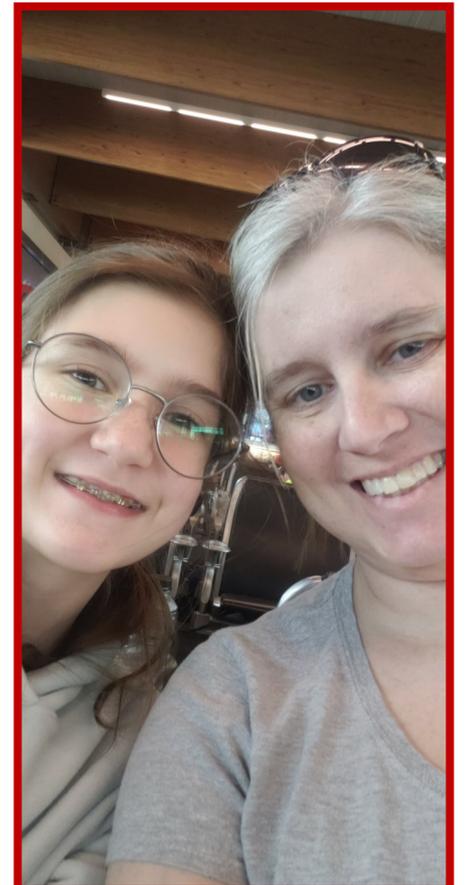
"Michael was so brave through everything," Laura said. "We are so proud of him, and we are so thankful for Shriners Children's."

She adds: "It is hard to put into words. Shriners Children's has given us a lot of peace. We felt it as soon as we walked in the doors. We knew we were cared for."

Care is Great from West to East Coast at Shriners

I'm a mother of three 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 now go to Houston, Texas for her care where the same loving care is still available there and she feels safe and comfortable with them. Thank you Shriners for all that you do for so many.

Samantha, Steve and Chloe



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A Message from the Potentate...

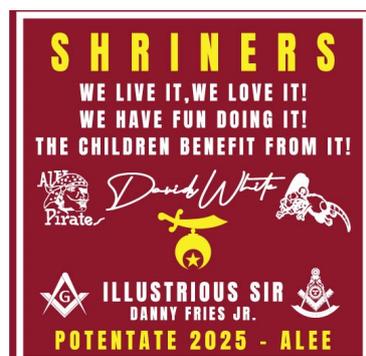
As Potentate of over 1,100-plus members at Alee Shriners, it is my privilege to serve our community and I would like to thank you for your generous donation to Shriners Hospitals for Children.

Shriners Children's/Shriners Hospitals 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 2024, through generous donations from our community and people like YOU!, Alee Shriners collected over \$270,000 for our Shriners Hospitals. 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,

Danny Fries, Jr
Potentate
Alee Shriners, 2025



Alee Road Runners working their Magic! BEEP BEEP

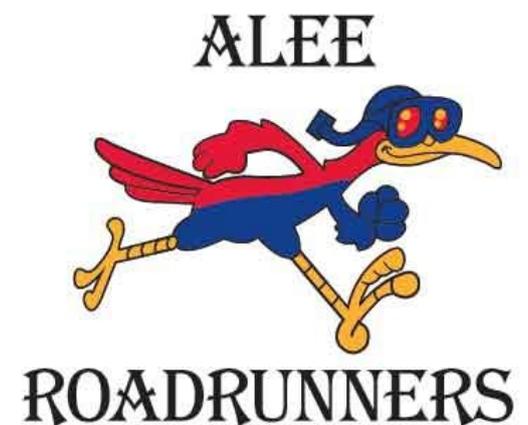
Each Shriners temple has a special unit of transporters called the Road Runners. Road Runners have driven millions of miles bringing children to Shriners Hospitals for Children. For each trip, they pick up a local child and their family, drive them to the hospital for treatment, and then return with 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 their 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: Noble Howard Major

Trip Coordinator: Noble Tim Mercer



UNITS:

- . ANGLERS
- . CLOWNS
- . DIRECTOR'S STAFF
- . DRIFTERS
- . DUNE CATS
- . HILLBILLYS
- . IRON KNIGHTS
- . KEYSTONE KOPS
- . LEGION OF HONOR
- . MOBILE UNIT
- . CLASSICS
- . ORIENTAL BAND
- . PATROL
- . PIRATES
- . ROAD RUNNERS

SHRINE CLUBS:

- . AUGUSTA SHRINE
- . BRUNSWICK SHRINE
- . BRYAN COUNTY SHRINE
- . CLAXTON SHRINE
- . EFFINGHAM SHRINE
- . HINESVILLE/ FT. STEWART SHRINE
- . JESUP SHRINE
- . KNIGHTS OF MECCA
- . METTER SHRINE
- . QUINT SHRINE
- . SCREVEN COUNTY SHRINE
- . STATESBORO SHRINE
- . SWAINSBORO SHRINE
- . TATTNALL SHRINE
- . THOMSON SHRINE
- . TYBEE LITE SHRINE
- . WAYNESBORO SHRINE
- . WEST CHATHAM COWBOYS SHRINE

Alee Iron Knights ride for Bella!



Shriners Children's Chicago

Each Spring since 2013, Alee Shriners Potentates, Divan, Nobles and Ladies pray for safe travels, fair weather and a decent wind behind all of the riders as they commence to drive 1000 miles in 24 hours, better known as the Iron Knights Alee Butt Ride.

Fun Facts: The route is always different. A team drives the route a week or two before to map out rest spots, food and gas. This year, they left from the VFW on Ogeechee and arrived in St Augustine, FL the next day. Last years ride proceeds benefitted the Shriners Children's Hospital in Chicago as a THANK YOU for all the outstanding work they have done for Bella - one of our Shrine Patients. Thanking their team of Doctors, Nurses and hospital staff. Bella is now cleared for all activities after surgery 2 years ago and constant monitoring the curvature of her back. Bella is definitely a "Super Hero"!

This ride has been held annually beginning in 2013 and has raised over \$300,000 benefitting Shriners Children's. In addition to donating to the hospitals, , the proceeds were used to purchase vans to transport patients to and from their hospital visits.



Taken off of Facebook with permission

In April of 2025, the Iron Knights made the 1000 mile Iron Butt Ride in 24 hours and donated \$30,391 to Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville!

Thank you to Ms. Connie for her generous donation of cute, handmade stuffed animals - for years, she has made monthly donations to Shriner's Hospitals for Children!



TO ALL SUPPORTERS OF SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN

Clyde V. Bowie, Past Potentate of Alee Shriners 2018 and Noble Roger Hutchinson 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.

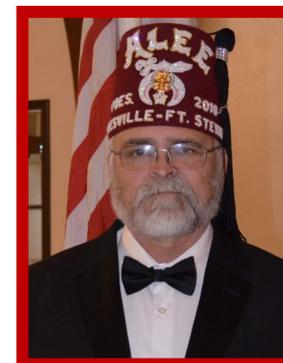
We are in our 98th year of operating Shriners Hospitals in Greenville. We continue to develop new techniques through research to make it possible for children to “defy the odds” and have a typical childhood and on to adulthood which otherwise may not have been possible. We have the finest doctors, nurses 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 Roger Hutchinson at 912-312-1135. Thanks again for your support of the world’s greatest philanthropy, Shriners Children’s—Greenville.



Clyde V. Bowie, P.P.
Board of Directors
Shriners Children’s—
Greenville



Roger Hutchinson
Associate Board of Directors
Shriners Children’s—
Greenville

AS SHRINERS, WE LOOK BEYOND OURSELVES TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF OTHERS,

TATTNALL SHRINE CLUB

**Since 2009, OVER ONE MILLION DOLLARS
DONATED to Shriners Hospitals**

“Beginning in January 2023, we coined this is the year of the “*March To A Million*”! It is an honor and privilege to represent the Tattnall Shrine Club and our community. Our goal is to work hard as Nobles representing Alee Shriners while honoring our commitment to the world’s greatest philanthropy. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the children in need of our hospital’s services get the care they need. This goal could only be accomplished through the hard work of our Nobles and Ladies with a great deal of teamwork and the unparalleled support of our community. We receive a great deal of support from our community and we are proud to represent the hard-working men, women, and children.”

- 2023 President Richie Waters



Congratulations to the Tattnall Shrine Club, their leadership, the Nobles and Ladies and their community for supporting the greatest Philanthropy Shriners Children’s.

WITH EACH OTHER TO SUPPORT ITS “TEMPLE OF MERCY” WITH SPIRIT, TIME, TALENT, AND MEANS.

ESPECIALLY CHILDREN WHO CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES. WE BELIEVE SHRINERS HOSPITALS FOR

CHILDREN TO BE THE WORLD’S GREATEST PHILANTHROPY, AND WE COVENANT

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...

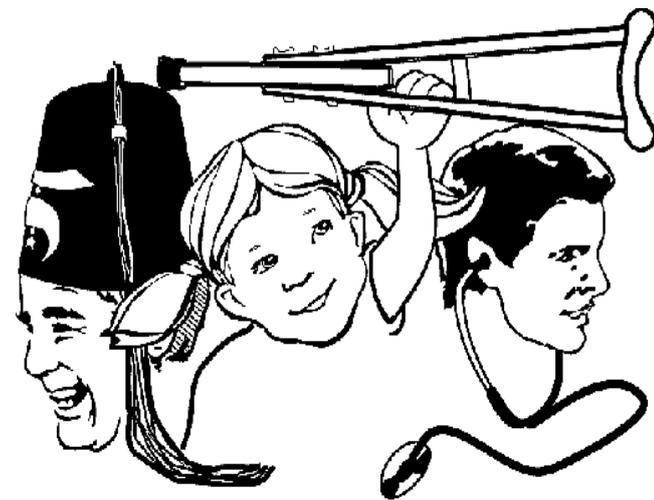
Alee Shriners Morris Slotin Fund
P.O. Box 14147
Savannah, GA 31416

OR
aleeshriners.org

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.

A COMMITMENT TO HOPE AND HEALING



MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION CHILDREN AND COUNTING

Shriners Children's is a renowned healthcare system whose staff is dedicated to improving the quality of life for children around the world. Patients with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care regardless of the families' ability to pay or insurance status.

What began as one hospital in 1922 is now a healthcare system that has locations in the United States, Canada and Mexico, holds international outreach clinics and is a leader in medical education and research. For more than 100 years now, members of the Shriners fraternity have supported Shriners Children's, which has improved the lives of more than 1.5 million children.

THE MOST AMAZING SPECIALTY CARE ANYWHERE

The first Shriners Children's locations were created to fill a need — primarily, to help children who had contracted polio. Over the years, Shriners Children's continued to identify and fulfill needs in pediatric specialty care. Today, our patients receive quality care for orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate. Shriners Children's goal is to continue to bring our compassionate specialized care to more children, more conveniently and closer to where they live.

LEADING THE WAY IN ORTHOPEDICS

Most of our locations provide care for essentially any orthopedic condition, from common conditions and routine sports or play injuries, to the most complex cases and rare diseases, disorders and syndromes. Commonly treated conditions include clubfoot, limb deficiencies and discrepancies, scoliosis and spinal conditions, and osteogenesis imperfecta (OI, also known as Brittle bone disease), as well as the orthopedic difficulties associated with neuromuscular conditions, such as cerebral palsy. We are dedicated to providing a complete program of medical and rehabilitative care to help each child become as healthy and independent as possible, including surgeries; physical, occupational and recreational therapies; and orthotic and prosthetic services.

PIONEERING BURN CARE

Shriners Children's has been a leader in pediatric burn care since the mid-1960s. At the Shriners Children's burn care locations in California, Texas, Ohio and Massachusetts, experienced teams provide critical, surgical and rehabilitative care for all degrees of burn injuries and scars, as well as other skin conditions. Some advances made through our research include increased survival rates, methods to minimize scarring and improved wound-healing techniques.

SPINAL CORD INJURY REHABILITATION

Recognizing the need for spinal cord injury rehabilitation programs specifically for children, Shriners Children's developed programs offering innovative physical and occupational therapies, emotional support, and training in independent living skills. Beyond therapy, exercise and activity-based rehabilitation are emphasized. A distinctive feature of Shriners Children's care is our comprehensive, team-based approach.

CLEFT LIP AND PALATE CARE

Sometimes a baby or child has a difference in their smile or the shape of their face, nose or chin, known as a craniofacial (head and face) difference. Conditions can range from mild to severe. A multidisciplinary team works together to solve the many issues associated with this complex condition, including the ability to breathe, speak, hear and eat. Each patient's customized treatment plan may include advanced treatments and services such as craniofacial surgery, 3D printing for jaw surgeries, facial and dental imaging, psychology, speech therapy, audiology, ear, nose and throat surgeries and dental and orthodontic-related services.

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Shriners Children's strives to discover answers that will one day improve lives by conducting high-quality, innovative research. Our researchers have made significant breakthroughs that are improving the care and quality of life for children worldwide, while adding to the global body of medical knowledge. By maintaining relationships with medical teaching facilities, Shriners Children's fosters an academic environment committed to providing superior education for medical professionals and quality care to all patients. Many of our care providers are dedicated to helping medical professionals in other countries, in order to help more children receive care closer to home.

Resilient Recovery

From burn survivor to burn surgeon



From survivor to surgeon

Jason was so inspired by the care he received that he committed to treating kids experiencing burns similar to his. After medical school, he applied for a fellowship at the Neil Reitman Pediatric Burn Institute at Shriners Children's Northern California and secured a position as a burn surgeon.

"This is a dream come true," Jason Heard, M.D., now a doctor, said. "Over the years, I watched Shriners Children's Northern California staff become presidents of the American Burn Association and publish leading research. Now, I'm on the same team I idolized."

"Everyone at Shriners Children's – our physicians, nurses, physical therapists, child life specialists, pediatric orthotics and prosthetic specialists, as well as our support staff – delivers unparalleled care, just like the care I received as a patient," Dr. Heard said.

Prioritizing prevention

Dr. Heard proudly shares stories of how he and his colleagues are treating patients to advance life-saving care. But, he'll also tell you that a critically important part of care is prevention.

"Kids and adults need to be reminded how dangerous flammable fluids are, and how quickly household accidents can lead to life-threatening burns," he said. "Be cautious, be careful, and don't play with fire."
— Jason Heard M.D.

“

BURN CARE

Shriners Children's makes significant contributions to pediatric burn care

In mid-1960s, the Shriners fraternity and the physicians at Shriners Children's hospitals observed a dire need. There were adult burn centers in the United States, and military burn centers, but no centers that specialized in children. So, the decision was made to open the very first pediatric burn center in the United States, on the campus of the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas.

According to recent figures, one quarter of all burn injuries occur in children.

Shriners Children's has been at the forefront of burn care, and advancing it, ever since. For instance:

- A critical staple of burn care is the pressure garment. These elastic sleeves, gloves and masks are worn during healing to prevent some of the heavy scarring that occurs after a severe burn. Customized, pressure garment therapy was pioneered at Shriners Children's Galveston location shortly after it opened.
- Research at Galveston also established the benefits of exercise after a burn injury.
- Large burns cause the body to go into a hypermetabolic state. This state will cause the body to consume its own muscle if the patient does not get proper nutrition and exercise. The loss can be debilitating, as the hypermetabolic state can last a year or more. Shriners Children's researchers in Galveston showed that deliberate exercise helps preserve muscle in burn patients.
- In 1988, Ronald Tompkins, M.D., of the Shriners Children's Boston hospital, showed definitively that surgically removing burnt tissue in large burns improved survival in children. That is now established practice worldwide.
- In 1981, John Burke, M.D., of Shriners Children's Boston, announced that his team had developed the first practical synthetic skin. It was a tremendous advance, because it holds in fluids and keeps out infections where previous wound grafts did not.

When Shriners Children's came to burns, only half of children admitted to a hospital with burns covering 64% of their body survived. These days, due to the advances made, Shriners Children's burn surgeons routinely save children burned over 90% of their bodies.

New International Patient Ambassadors:



Carlota

Ranked among Mexico's top 15 swimmers and now serving as the first International Patient Ambassador from Shriners Children's Mexico, Carlota, 18, has transformed challenges into triumphs.

But her remarkable journey began with an uncertain start. Born three and a half months prematurely, Carlota's early life was marked by significant obstacles. After being diagnosed with **cerebral palsy** with spastic hemiparesis affecting one side of her body, doctors painted a bleak future. But her mother, Carla, refused to accept their predictions.

A chance encounter led them to **Shriners Children's Mexico**, marking the beginning of transformative care. Despite facing multiple **surgeries** to address a 4 3/4-inch leg length difference and ongoing mobility challenges, Carlota's spirit remained unbroken. Through five surgeries and countless **therapy** sessions, the hospital became a cornerstone of support in her life. Carlota emphasized that it is not just the medical care that made all the difference, but the emotional support as well.

When joint pain threatened her athletic pursuits, she discovered swimming when she was 14 years old, training with the national Paralympic team. This new passion propelled her to become the fifth-best swimmer in her category (S6) in the Americas. Carlota's athletic dreams remain strong as she sets her sights on the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. Carlota is currently ranked No. 9 in the world and No. 3 in the Americas for her classification. In Carlota's sport, American rankings include North, Central and South America rankings.

Carlota is also a college student pursuing a degree in psychology at Kuepa University online, with dreams of specializing in high-performance sports psychology.

Carlota's mother, who championed her daughter's potential from the start, witnessed her transformation from a child facing seemingly insurmountable obstacles to an accomplished athlete and inspiring Patient Ambassador. Their story exemplifies the impact of unwavering support and specialized care.

"Watching Carlota grow from a child facing challenges to a competitive swimmer chasing Olympic dreams has filled me with endless pride," said Carla. "My daughter has shown that within every disability lies extraordinary abilities. Even on tough days, she comes back with that smile that lights up everything around her." Carlota has learned to live harmoniously with her spastic cerebral palsy, her mother said.

As a Shriners Children's **International Patient Ambassador**, Carlota hopes to continue to break barriers and inspire others, proving that with determination and the right support, any dream is possible.

"Shriners Children's isn't just a building to me – it's a home, a family, a source of endless support," she said with conviction. "My mission is clear: to showcase the profound impact Shriners Children's has on families and children, while highlighting how these remarkable children transform the healthcare system itself. Being the first International Patient Ambassador from Mexico fills me with pride, and I aim to set a new standard of excellence in this role."

Carlota is living proof that there truly are no limits when you believe in yourself.

<https://www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/news-and-media/patient-stories/2025/07/international-patient-ambassador-carlota>

<https://www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/news-and-media/patient-stories/2025/07/international-patient-ambassador-brandon>



Brandon

Brandon, 15, is a high school student who lives in South Carolina with his parents, Kathleen and Brian, older brother Brady and younger brother Benson.

When Brandon was 6 years old, he went from playing his final baseball game of the season to fighting for his life. What started as a simple runny nose and headache quickly became devastating when Brandon woke one morning, attempted to step out of bed and collapsed – the right side of his body suddenly paralyzed.

Brandon was diagnosed with **acute flaccid myelitis (AFM)**, a rare, polio-like illness that affects the gray matter of the spinal cord, leading to sudden muscle weakness and paralysis. The condition impacts about 100 people in the U.S. each year and is often linked to viral infections, the most common being enterovirus D-68, which was found in Brandon's case. While thousands may contract this virus and experience only mild cold-like symptoms, in rare instances, like Brandon's, it can result in serious neurological complications.

"I remember holding him that morning," said Kathleen. "I was terrified and prayed that God wouldn't take him." After intensive treatment at a hospital in Greenville, South Carolina, and rehabilitation in Atlanta, Georgia, a family friend who was a **Shriner** suggested they have a consultation at **Shriners Children's Greenville**.

At Shriners Children's Greenville, Brandon began daily physical and occupational therapy, while the hospital's **Pediatric Orthotic and Prosthetic Services (POPS)** team created innovative braces to support his recovery. As part of the collaborative care offered across the system, Brandon also received treatments at **Shriners Children's Philadelphia** under the care of a pediatric hand specialist known for innovative treatments with AFM. Surgeons performed two critical procedures: a nerve transfer for his paralyzed right arm and later, a surgery to stabilize his shoulder. With these surgical innovations, Brandon has achieved more function than thought possible – making him more independent.

His journey from that frightening morning in 2016 to becoming an **International Patient Ambassador** exemplifies the power of resilience. While he continues to manage the effects of AFM, including **scoliosis**, Brandon approaches each day with the same spirit he showed during his early recovery when he told his mother, "I can't be your 'cuddle bug' anymore, Mom. I have to have my fighter's spirit to get through this."

Brandon continues to visit Shriners Children's Philadelphia for checkups. He is a regular at Shriners Children's Greenville for his **orthopedic care** and POPS **bracing**, as well as **physical therapy** and **occupational therapy**.

Brandon's spirit has never wavered. He served as his class president, runs a woodworking business at the local farmer's market and stays active with his brothers, despite ongoing challenges from his condition. "AFM changed everything about my life," Brandon said, "but Shriners Children's showed me that different doesn't mean impossible."

Brandon wants to attend college someday for a career in business management, "although I'm not sure what type yet," he said. "I'd like to stay in Greenville, South Carolina, but I've been to some beautiful places I'd consider moving to."

Honored to be selected as an International Patient Ambassador, Brandon wants to share his story to inspire others. "The care that Shriners Children's has provided has changed not just my life, but my whole family's lives," he said.

Barbie's Corner: Words of Wisdom

It's not your fault, Mom.

"You can't blame yourself. It's nothing you did. You just need to move forward and do everything you can for them now – mentally and emotionally. I try and make them strong, and I don't try to hide it. I never made it a secret that they had CLP [cleft lip and palate]."

Arm yourself with knowledge.

"The biggest thing is you've got to do your research. You have to educate. You can't just bury your head in the sand and think it'll get better. You have to educate yourself because you are your child's biggest advocate. You've got to know what's going on. Never take what someone says and just go with it."

Find your support system, near or far.

"Find your resources, and reach out to others, especially on Facebook. There are so many groups where I've started 15-year friendships with people. We've never met in person, but we would do anything for each other because we were there for each other when all of this happened. It's like having someone there basically holding your hand across the United States."

Cleft lip and palate isn't just an aesthetic issue.

"Those groups really helped me learn all the different aspects of what's going on. It's not just a visual thing, and it's not a quick fix. It's not just: We're going to have surgery, and they're all better. There's speech therapy they have to go through. They will have difficulty eating at times. There's mental concerns. Some of the kids get depressed. They don't understand why they're different. So, it's not just one and done."

Secondary surgery to retrieve new bone for a graft isn't always necessary.

"Dr. Christopher Gordon used cadaver bone rather than taking it from their hips so they're not having to heal from their hip and from their mouth at the same time. The doctor is trying to cause them the least amount of trauma as possible."

Rhinoplasty is often the last surgery needed once the child is a young adult.

"But they won't do that until they're fully formed. Boys need to be 17 or 18."

It is possible to receive amazing care regardless of your family's ability to pay or insurance status.

"When it comes to Shriners Children's, you worry about how good could the doctors be if they're free. That's just your automatic thought. But then I learned that the doctor the boys see, Dr. Christopher Gordon, is chief of plastic and reconstructive surgery in Dayton. So, he's not just some guy donating time or something. He's the best of the best. The Shriners are making sure that there is a high quality of care."



Shriners Children's doctors and staff do everything possible to make surgery more pleasant.

"Each time they come for surgery, they've gotten to pick out their scents – what they smell when being put to sleep. They spoil them rotten with little gifts and things. One of the things I really love is they put them under before they put in the IV so they don't have to get stuck with the IV. And that is really important because my children have been other places for surgery and screaming when they put the IV in, and that's just trauma. They try and keep things as trauma-free for the family and the children. It's the best of the best care. It's so wonderful what they do for kids."

Shriners Children's ensures that you never feel alone.

"They treated us like royalty. When we came in, they were so kind and understanding. They knew we were going through a rough time, so, for the boys' first surgery, they paired us with another family with a little boy who had gotten burned very badly as a child. We got to meet him and walk around with him. Just seeing his strength and knowing all the things he'd been through and how that family totally trusted Shriners Children's to take care of everything meant a lot. Meeting and connecting with other families also made me think, "Hey, we ain't got it so bad." When you look at some of the things the other children were going through, it was like, "We can get through this."



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 Shiner 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.

Shriners Children's Opening First-of-Its-Kind Research Institute in Atlanta

New research facility will provide life-changing advancements in pediatric orthopedic care.

July 02, 2025

Governor Brian P. Kemp announced that Shriners Children's will establish a new pediatric medical research facility in Atlanta, Georgia. In addition to creating 470 new jobs, Shriners Children's will invest more than \$153 million into the facility at [Science Square](#). This facility will be a first-of-its-kind research institute for Shriners Children's, positioning the nonprofit healthcare system as a significant player on the global stage by utilizing its expansive network of pediatric specialists and researchers to provide life-changing care and innovative new treatments.



"We are thrilled to be establishing this new center for world-class pediatric medical research in Georgia," said Shriners Children's Chairman of the Board of Trustees Dr. Leslie D. Stewart. "The opportunities to advance our research through collaborations and partnerships such as the one with Georgia Tech made Atlanta the clear choice."

The proposal for a Shriners Children's Research Institute grew from a collaboration that started in 2019 between the Georgia Institute of Technology Pediatric Innovation Network and the [Shriners Children's research](#) department, headquartered in Tampa, Florida. Since then, the two groups have produced over 25 joint research projects, such as robotic exoskeletons to assist patients with [cerebral palsy](#) and wearable sensors to monitor sleep problems in cleft lip and palate patients.

"The Shriners Children's Research Institute will serve as a multidisciplinary innovation hub to advance the healthcare of children," said Dr. Marc Lalande, Shriners Children's Vice President of Research Programs. "The close partnership with the outstanding biomedical engineers and scientists from Georgia Tech and Emory University will accelerate discovery and spearhead new treatments and therapies."

Shriners Children's provides world-class care to kids with [orthopedic conditions](#), [burns](#), [spinal cord injuries](#), and [cleft lip](#) and [cleft palate](#), regardless of a family's ability to pay or insurance status. The nonprofit healthcare system also offers specialized services like [motion analysis](#) and custom [orthotics and prosthetics](#). For over a century, Shriners Children's has treated more than 2 million children, with patients coming from across the U.S., Canada, and 128 countries just last year alone.

"The establishment of this Research Institute will accelerate research discoveries that benefit not just our patients but children around the world," Dr. Lalande said. "Shriners Children's research that began decades ago is helping patients today, and we are confident that the research we are doing now, from genomics, motion analysis, artificial intelligence and much more, will drive tangible results far into the future."

##

Shriners Hospitals for Children®

As a 501(c)(3) organization, Shriners Hospitals for Children® relies on generous donations from Shriners, corporations and the general public. Individuals can support our work in many different ways. All donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law.

- **Gifts of Cash:** Contributions can be made at any time to Shriners Hospitals for Children. Donors may send a check or money order payable to Shriners Hospitals for Children or make a credit card gift online at donate2shc.org. Donors can also call **855-401-4897** to make a donation.
- **Charitable Gift Annuities** (if permitted in your state): This is a method of giving that provides the donor (and a second beneficiary, if desired) with a fixed income for life. The donor is given certain tax benefits when he/she transfers money or securities in exchange for our charity's agreement to pay a specified annual rate of return. The fixed rate of return is based on the age of the donor and any other beneficiary. The rate is proposed with the intention that this charity will retain approximately 50 percent of the donor's original gift.
- **Pooled Income Fund:** Persons contributing \$5,000 or more may participate in the Shriners Hospitals for Children Pooled Income Fund. Under this agreement, donors or their designees will receive annual payments from their contribution during their lifetime. A portion of the contribution may be deducted as a charitable donation.
- **Real Estate:** Gifts of real estate are welcomed in our mission of helping children. After approval from Shriners International Headquarters, real estate may be deeded outright to Shriners Hospitals for Children, or, if it is a donor's residence or farm, may be given subject to retained life interests. The value of the interest being contributed may be used as a charitable contribution for income tax purposes.
- **Securities:** Contributions of securities may be easily accomplished. If the donor's securities have appreciated in value at the time of the gift, there may be income tax deductions and other benefits available to the donor.
- **Insurance:** If your state permits charities to have an "insurable interest," you may designate Shriners Hospitals for Children as the beneficiary and/ or owner of an insurance policy. If the policy has a cash surrender value, you may be able to deduct approximately this amount from your taxes. You may also be able to deduct your premium payments if Shriners Hospitals for Children is named both the owner and beneficiary.



• **Wills and Bequests:** Designations of bequests should clearly indicate Shriners Hospitals for Children. Bequests under wills may reduce estate taxes.

• **Charitable Remainder Trusts:** This is an increasingly popular way to make a generous gift, receive tax savings and generate annual payments for yourself and your family. Charitable Remainder Trusts are usually funded with cash, appreciated securities, real estate, or other assets with a value of at least \$100,000. Annual payments are based on a percentage of the value of the trust at inception (annuity trust) or valued yearly (unitrust).

For More Information: We welcome the opportunity to discuss the many options for giving with you today. For specific information about making a donation or planned gift, please call **855-401-4897**, visit donate2shc.org, or write to the Office of Development at the address below. Please consult your tax advisor or attorney before making any planned giving decisions.

Make Checks Payable To: Shriners Hospitals for Children, P.O. Box 14147, Savannah, GA 31416. Memo: Hospital Crusade



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Despite the challenges of their conditions, these patients exemplify the CARE characteristics Shriners Children's works to instill in every patient:

Confidence, Ambition, Resilience, Empathy.

See how the care they received at Shriners Children's shaped their inspiring stories.

<https://www.shrinerschildrens.org/en/news-and-media/amazekids>