Children's MINNESOTA
The Kid Experts®

Impact Report

Spring 2024







100 YEARS







1924-2024 Caring for Kids for 100 Years

Identical Twins Thriving After Identical Operations

Caring for the Whole Child from Day One

Every Medical Advance Begins with Clinical Research

From the President



100 YEARS

Dear Friends,

For 100 years, the support of a caring community of donors has made it possible to support kids when they need us most. When the St. Paul hospital opened in 1924, the country was in the midst of a raging smallpox epidemic. Almost a century later, in 2020, we faced the coronavirus pandemic and saw a surge in demand for mental health care that continues today. At every turn, our supporters have stood with us and the kids and families we serve.

Dr. Walter Ramsey and the St. Paul community leaders who opened the first children's hospital in Minnesota were ahead of their time. In the 1920s many people didn't appreciate the difference between a hospital devoted to children and a children's ward in a hospital designed for adults. But this innovative concept was soon embraced by the patient families who experienced the difference — and today it's hard to imagine a vibrant urban community without a dedicated children's hospital.

As we look toward the future, we are excited about what lies ahead, including:

- Enhancing our clinical research program, which you can read about in this report.
- Establishing more endowed chairs to attract the best and brightest clinicians, who are committed to innovation and research that saves and improves lives.
- Embracing technological advances like the state-of-the-art Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation iMRI Surgical Suite, which has truly transformed the care we can provide.

And we will continue to serve as a nonprofit health system where no child is turned away, regardless of the family's ability to pay for care.

At 100 years, Children's Minnesota has a shining legacy and our future looks bright, thanks to you.

With gratitude,

Jennifer L. Soderholm
SVP and Chief Development Officer
President, Children's Minnesota Foundation

By the Numbers

Over the last 100 years, Children's Minnesota has adapted, grown and changed in countless ways. Thanks to our philanthropic partners, one thing has never changed: our commitment to providing the highest quality, research-based, family-centered care for children and their families.

Then



681 patients served per year

16 beds

50 employees

Now



150,000+ patients served per year

462 beds

5,760 employees

Twins Continue to Meet Milestones After Heart Surgery and NICU Stay

Today, you would never guess that the now vibrant and active twin girls Madison and Peyton spent their first months in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Children's Minnesota. They were born in March 2022, three months premature and weighing less than two pounds each. Their care team soon realized both girls were born with the same heart defect, called a PDA for patent ductus arteriosus. In premature babies this artery may not shrink and close on its own like it generally does in healthy full-term babies. This was the case for Madison and Peyton.

"I could tell that both of them were struggling with their breathing. It was scary," said Mara.

At four weeks and weighing only three pounds, the twins had their PDAs closed in the catheterization lab. Mara noticed a difference almost immediately. "After a few days, Madison and Peyton started doing better, breathing better."

The girls needed more time to grow before their parents could bring them home. Madison spent four months in The NICU; Peyton five months. They have been hitting milestones ever since they got home. "Where they're at now, we couldn't be more happy or appreciative of everything the doctors and nurses here did for us," Steven said.

The twins turned two in March and their parents know they will continue to bring daily doses of joy and gratitude to their lives.

Scan to watch a news story about the twins and their parents.



Caring for the Whole Child from Day One



A hospital to fit the child

When the first Children's Minnesota hospital opened its doors in 1924 at the corner of Smith and Walnut in St. Paul, a hospital devoted to children was an innovative concept. But thanks to Dr. Walter Ramsey's vision and drive — and the community leaders who joined him — the founders created "a hospital to fit the child instead of molding the child to fit the hospital." Dr. Ramsey believed that children aren't little versions of adults and knew they needed their own hospital with doctors and nurses who are specially trained to treat them. The founders knew the importance of play, of letting kids be kids, even during a hospital stay.





Caring for the whole child

In the 1970s our Minneapolis hospital created a human ecology department, which was ahead of its time and soon replicated at other children's hospitals around the country. Focusing on the whole child, not only their medical symptoms, meant looking at a hospital experience from a child's point of view and considering how the child would feel.

Wraparound care for kids and families

Because a hospital stay affects the entire family, Children's Minnesota provides services and amenities designed to care for the whole family. This wraparound care includes child life specialists, music therapists and our pet therapy program, to help kids understand their medical procedures through fun, educational activities. Sibling play areas and the in-house TV channel, Star Studio, provide a creative outlet. Financial counselors, interpreters and social workers support families navigating the many questions they have about their child's care.

Every Medical Advance Starts with Clinical Research

with Stuart S. Winter, MD, Chief of Research and Medical Innovation



What drives clinical research at Children's Minnesota?
Clinical researchers contribute advances in pediatric medicine, always with the goal of improving the lives of the kids in their care. Every advance used in medicine today was once tested in patients who volunteer to take part in clinical research studies. The 430 Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved studies Children's Minnesota participates in focus on research and innovations that can lead to breakthrough treatments, diagnoses and new cures.

What makes clinical research at Children's Minnesota unique?
Children's Minnesota is a large-volume hospital, serving over 150,000 pediatric patients a year, and we care for a diverse population of kids. Clinical studies are of interest to the diverse group of people we serve and make our hospital a beacon for experimental therapies that benefit all the kids in our community.

What types of research studies are patients currently enrolled in?
The 430 IRB-approved studies cover 11 broad research areas, from cancer and blood disorders to neuroscience and cardiovascular care, pulmonary disorders and more.

Funding comes from public and private sources, including donors who want to support new and improved treatments for diseases. These research areas are highlighted on our website, which includes overviews of ongoing research projects, biographies and photos of all team members, and a select list of recently published studies. Learn more at childrensmn.org/research/research-areas/

- cancer and blood disorders
- cardiovascular and critical care medicine
- diabetes and endocrinology
- ear, nose and throat
- emergency medicine
- genetics and metabolism and pharmacogenomics
- high-risk pregnancy and advanced fetal care
- neonatal care
- neuroscience
- physical medicine and rehabilitation
- pulmonary disorders

Scan to watch this short video and learn more about the Harper Family Foundation Endowed Chair in Novel Therapies and Cancer Research

Giving to Honor Their Son's Wishes



Cahil was a bright, handsome boy, determined and sensitive, and mature beyond his years, according to his parents Marlene and Gene Schneider. "When things were going well, he brought enthusiasm to everything he did," said Marlene, earning him the nickname "Super Trooper."

"And he did not complain about his situation when things were hard," she added. When Cahil was three months old, his parents became concerned about his labored breathing and bluish complexion. They were referred to specialists at the Minneapolis hospital, where he was diagnosed with a congenital heart defect and had his first heart surgery. Throughout the nearly 23 years of his life, Cahil had numerous procedures, setbacks and complications. He was hospitalized frequently, sometimes for months at a time.

When he was at home and doing well, he seized every opportunity to participate in the things he loved. He enjoyed hanging out with friends, riding his bike with his brother, throwing a football with his dad. When he was older, he played on the high school golf team and was the manager for the high school football team.

Cahil was born in 1977, when pediatric heart surgery was not as advanced as it is today. He was born with a serious and rare heart defect called transposition of the great arteries, or TGA. After a series of surgeries to treat his condition, Cahil received a heart transplant at age 18. The transplant surgery was performed at an adult institution, because there was not a dedicated heart transplant program at Children's Minnesota at that time.

> **"Most people have no idea what life is like for families going through the things families like ours did." -Gene Schneider**

"Life with his new heart was good for 4-and-a-half years," said Marlene, until complications set in. Cahil died at age 22. After Cahil died, Marlene and Gene felt strongly that they wanted to honor his life by supporting the program where he had experienced such excellent and compassionate care. "The staff was totally amazing," said Marlene. "They were like a second family to him — and to us, too. When we had to go home at night, we felt comfortable leaving him there."

The Cahil Schneider Memorial Fund was established to support a room in the pediatric intensive care unit, where doctors could have sensitive private conversations with family members. There was no such room when Cahil was a patient, and Marlene and Gene wanted to make the experience better for families like theirs.

"Most people have no idea what life is like for families going through the things families like ours did," said Gene. He worked as a long-haul truck driver and Marlene was a kindergarten teacher while they raised Cahil and his



younger siblings Justin and Lindsey. Gene and Marlene made the two-hour drive to and from their home in Melrose, Minnesota, to the Minneapolis hospital hundreds of times during Cahil's childhood. Yet despite the hardships and stress, they remain grateful for the excellent care Cahil received and the caring staff that became like a second family. They make annual donations to the fund they established in Cahil's name, and they have participated in events and rallied their friends and families to contribute, as well.

"We support this place because we know that Cahil would want us to," said Marlene. "If he was still here, he would be advocating for the young kids dealing with heart surgery today."

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The Kid Experts®

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5901 Lincoln Drive
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Meet Riggs, our first medical dog. Like a regular full-time employee, Riggs works a 40-hour week, then goes home at the end of the day with his primary handler, Annika. Riggs is trained to help patients cope with medical conditions and work toward their treatment goals during what can be a challenging time at the hospital. The kids love him! You can follow Riggs on Instagram at riggs_md