

# HEROES

THE MAGAZINE OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL NEW ORLEANS | FALL 2020

A new day  
**for mental  
and  
behavioral  
health**







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# Foreword

## HEROES

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## JOHN R. NICKENS IV, PRESIDENT & CEO



Dear friends and supporters,

In March 2020, the world as we knew it was forever changed. While it continues to be a challenging and unprecedented time for our Louisiana communities, I am more hopeful and encouraged than ever before. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen extraordinary acts of kindness, our community coming together to support one another in tremendous ways, and frontline healthcare workers who have continued to place the needs of patients above all else.

That is certainly true of our experience here at Children's Hospital New Orleans. Together, we have continued to provide expert care for children across the state and region; we have continued to transform our campus and our presence across Louisiana; and we have said yes to the challenge. Each day we roll up our sleeves, put on our masks, and continue to fulfill our mission.

In response to COVID-19, our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure a safe environment of care for patients, families, and team members. We have also reached out to the community to share our expertise by supporting schools across Louisiana and helping other community organizations in safely reopening.

What I am most proud of when looking back at the last several months is how much we have accomplished together for the children of Louisiana. We did not pause when challenges came our way. We moved faster. One of the most significant achievements was the opening of our new, 51-bed Behavioral Health Center in April. Our new facility, which is among the largest and most comprehensive pediatric programs in the nation, is transformational for children across our region.

Creating a better future for our kids means developing innovative ways to change the dynamics of pediatric healthcare. With one in five children today affected by behavioral and mental health disorders, Children's Hospital is taking action – we are running towards the problem and are leading the dialogue surrounding mental and behavioral health needs for children.

In the pages that follow, you'll learn more about how we are working to proactively address the mental and behavioral health of our children, an essential part of caring for the whole child. We could not do that without the support of our community and the incredible generosity of our donors, including the Goldring Family Foundation and the Woldenberg Foundation. This is what being Extraordinary Together is all about.

With gratitude,

John R. Nickens IV  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Children's Hospital New Orleans



Children's Hospital nurses worked across LCMC Health to support our adult hospitals at the height of COVID-19.

# Children's Hospital launches High 5 Project



When reflecting on all that we've been through in 2020, now more than ever, the mental health of children and adolescents is a top priority. Childhood mental disorders affect boys and girls of all ages, all ethnic and racial backgrounds, children from all walks of life, and all regions of the United States. According to the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 13-20 percent of children in the U.S. (up to 1 in 5 children) experience a mental health disorder at some point during their child development.

That's why Children's Hospital has launched The High 5 Project – a community-wide movement to meet the mental health needs of Louisiana's children. The High 5 Project is about starting conversations and building a community where 5 in 5 kids receive the resources and support they need to thrive. It's about boosting confidence, spreading kindness, expanding access, providing support, sharing resources, improving care, removing stigmas, and building a community focused on mental wellbeing for all kids.

The High 5 Project encourages all people to start talking about mental health and to share why they "High 5." The grassroots initiative integrates valuable resources into community programs, schools, and other places to meet kids and families where they are with this important message.

The numbers say it all. Today, 7.4% of children ages 3-17 have a diagnosed behavioral problem; 7.1% of children ages 3-17 have diagnosed anxiety; and 3.2% of children ages 3-17 have diagnosed depression. Children and adolescents are suffering from higher amounts of stress and societal pressures than ever before. Join our movement to advance the mental wellbeing of all kids.

#### How can you get involved?

Be challenged. Help us remove the stigmas associated with mental and behavioral health, and let's get people talking about it more openly so that anyone who is suffering knows there is help available. Will you be a part of the conversation? Share why you High 5 by using the hashtag #High5Project on social media. You can be part of a movement that creates a brighter tomorrow for the kids across our region.



# Supporting our schools and community in safe reopening

Children's Hospital is proud to serve as a resource for schools across Louisiana through our Return to School Support program, providing guidance on best practices and procedures to keep students and teachers safe upon their return to in-person learning.

In partnership with the Louisiana Department of Education, Children's Hospital's team of COVID-19 guidance experts is supporting schools and childcare centers across the state in their reopening plans and processes, in addition to working with NOLA public, private, charter, and parochial schools, and early childhood centers across the state.

"Our expertise gained since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with our existing school wellness initiatives, provides Children's Hospital a natural opportunity to help make the reopening process for schools a safer, smoother



experience for students, parents, and educators," says Leron Finger, MD, Chief Quality Officer at Children's Hospital New Orleans. "In collaboration with the Department of Education, Louisiana Department of Health, and public health experts, we've worked diligently to help schools prioritize kids' safety while continuing their educational development."

Children's Hospital's program provides school partners access to a dedicated hotline, access to testing, a robust webinar series, one-on-one medical consultation, and a website with parent and school resources, FAQs, and more. In addition, Children's Hospital donated more than 100,000 masks to New Orleans area schools to help students and families safely prepare for this unprecedented school year.

## Not all superheroes wear capes

# Community support during COVID-19

Superhero patients walk the halls at Children's Hospital every day. The clinics, inpatient floors, and emergency rooms are filled with kids who are brave, strong, and resilient. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in New Orleans, it didn't take long to see that patients weren't the only superheroes around. Heroes were everywhere.

Meal donations and personal protective equipment began arriving for the frontline staff at Children's Hospital. PJ's Coffee, McClure's BBQ, Gracious Bakery, Fat Boy's Pizza, Creole Creamery, Cooter Brown's, Panda Express, Raising Cane's, and Saints player Michael Thomas were just some of the donors who contributed food and equipment to the Children's Hospital team.

Additionally, Feed the Front Line NOLA, a project from the Krewe of Red Beans, made over 60 meal deliveries to the hospital in March and April.

"The outpouring of support from the community was unbelievable," says Korie Sims, Director of the Children's Emergency Department. "There's something about a warm meal or an afternoon sweet treat that can lift the

## Superhero community members

Within days of feeling the impacts of COVID-19, restaurants, businesses, and community members reached out, eager to support healthcare workers who, day after day, put their own exhaustion and anxiety aside to care for those who needed them most.





## Support extends throughout the community

In addition to providing support to schools across Louisiana, Children's Hospital has also served as a trusted resource to community organizations to help them safely reopen, including the Audubon Nature Institute, Carrollton Boosters, and NORD. During this challenging time for our community, Children's Hospital was proud to share expertise and best practices with community partners, as we all learn to navigate our new normal together.

As neighbors and long-standing partners with aligned missions to serve the New Orleans community, Children's Hospital and Audubon Zoo are proud to be working together

to bring New Orleans families a safe and enjoyable zoo experience. The reopening of the zoo was an exciting step forward in our city's reopening, and a wonderful way for families to spend time together enjoying nature in a safe and engaging environment.

Children's also partnered with Carrollton Boosters, NORD, and The Miracle Leagues on the Northshore and Southshore to place hand sanitizer stations throughout their facilities, with signage reminding patrons how to stay safe while enjoying sports and entertainment.



soul. It was meaningful to us to have so many people in the community reach out, wanting to help us."

### Superhero team members

Children, thankfully, are not as severely affected by the virus as the adult population. While Children's Hospital has cared for some COVID-19 positive patients, the majority of people hospitalized during the height of the pandemic were treated at adult facilities including LCMC Health's University Medical Center New Orleans, Touro, New Orleans East Hospital, and West Jefferson Medical Center.

Answering the call for help, over 150 Children's Hospital team members

volunteered to work at our LCMC Health adult hospitals to lend support and expertise in aiding fellow frontline workers. Nurses from Inpatient and Ambulatory Care Units, team members from Pharmacy, Sports Medicine, and Human Resources, as well as Respiratory and Rehabilitation Therapists suited up to fight COVID-19 head on.

Support personnel weren't the only resource Children's sent to the adult hospitals. The Children's Transfer Center tracked daily data on suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients across the LCMC Health system, and the Children's Hospital Virtual Care team helped launch telehealth programs for several adult service lines.

### Together, we are Extraordinary...

Our world as we knew it has been forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, one thing it didn't change was the community's desire to lend a helping hand. Every day new Superheroes rose to the occasion, whether they were caring for patients or feeding and protecting the frontline workers. They were extraordinary.



## The Parenting Center stays connected with parents

The Parenting Center playroom closed abruptly, along with schools and other programming for children, on March 13. After reaching out to families, the staff took time to learn what the needs of parents and caregivers were, and how The Parenting Center team could help families throughout the pandemic. Their goal was to stay in touch, so the team called families to check in regularly, and increased social media content with postings at least three times weekly to stay connected.

"We continued media and outreach messages, with a specific focus on the effects and management of stress and behavior," said X. Patrice Wright, M.Ed., Administrative Manager for The Parenting Center. "Additionally, through our ongoing partnerships with WWL-TV and Nola Family, The Parenting Center continued to share tips and strategies, inviting parents to call our Parent Educators to get information and receive support centered around their family's needs."

Although the spring semester of classes was cut short, The Parenting Center was able to move to a virtual platform to continue weekly classes such as Snuggles & Struggles, a new parent support group, and the Breast & Bottle infant feeding class in partnership with New Orleans Breastfeeding Center. The team also added a new weekly opportunity for parent support called Parents' Hour in addition to 11 additional classes with a range of timely topics.

## Children's Hospital welcomes new Service Line Chief for Behavioral Health

Children's Hospital welcomed nationally recognized pediatric psychiatrist Mary Lynn Dell, MD



this summer as the new Service Line Chief for Behavioral Health. Dr. Dell is board certified in general, child and adolescent, consultation liaison, and forensic psychiatry. Her academic interests include psychiatric needs in chronic

illness, ethical issues in psychiatry and pediatrics, end-of-life care, culture and psychiatry, and the interfaces of medicine, psychiatry, and religion/spirituality. She is Co-Chair of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Ethics Committee, a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Bioethics, and has served on several hospital ethics committees and institutional review boards. She also is the founding chair of the AACAP Religion and Spirituality Committee and President of the American Psychiatric Association Caucus on Religion, Spirituality, and Psychiatry.

"Together with our two medical school partners, LSU Health New Orleans and Tulane University School of Medicine, Children's Hospital is leading the way in mental and behavioral health services, adding talented leaders like Dr. Dell from across the country who want to be a part of this important expansion of services," says George Bisset, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Children's Hospital. "Our program is not only about investments in bricks and mortar, it's about providing a continuum of care that supports mental wellbeing for our patients and families at all levels."





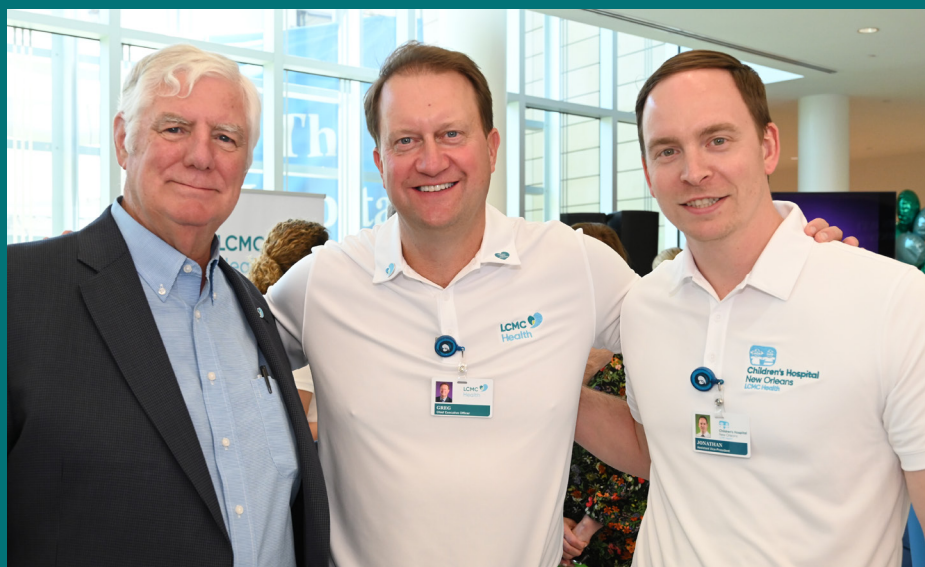
## Longtime Board of Trustees member named Chairman

Stephen Hales, MD, is no stranger to the Children's Hospital New Orleans campus. While a young doctor, he was a commissioned officer and Chief of Pediatrics at the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital on what is now the State Street campus of Children's Hospital. There, he ran an outpatient clinic and inpatient pediatric services. In 1981, Hales joined the Children's Hospital Board of Trustees and soon after founded Hales Pediatrics, where he cared for tens of thousands of New Orleans children before retiring in 2018.

This is Hales' second stint as Chairman in his 39-year history on the Children's Hospital Board. He held the position for four years beginning in 1996.

"Two defining initiatives were started during my first time as Board Chair," recalls Hales. "The New Orleans Regional Alliance of Not-for-Profit Hospitals was formed to keep local community-based hospitals from being taken over by large for-profit systems, eventually leading to the formation of Louisiana Children's Medical Center (LCMC Health). We also started the Community Benefits Program that enabled us to connect all of our resources to community needs."

In the 1990s, Hales initiated the conversation with the Children's executive team to use the hospital's reserves to meet the needs of the community with programs that wouldn't necessarily make money but were essential. During this time, the Audrey Hepburn CARE Center joined other programs, like The Parenting Center



**Children's Hospital Board Chair, Stephen Hales, MD, pictured with LCMC Health CEO, Greg Feirn and Children's Hospital COO, Jonathan Brouk, during our brand launch in May 2019.**

and The Tooth Bus, that provided vital services for children and families in the community who otherwise would not have access to them.

Besides Children's Hospital, Hales has served on various boards including the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, St. George's Episcopal School, Metairie Park Country Day School, The Parenting Center at Children's Hospital, and Good Shepherd School. He chaired New Orleans Regional Alliance of Not-for-Profit Hospitals and was a founding member of New Schools for New Orleans and the Pro Bono Publico Foundation. He is also a Director and Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of Fidelity Bank. Hales proudly reigned as Rex in 2017 and serves as historian and archivist for the nearly 150-year-old carnival organization.

This time around, Hales chairs the 25-member board of community leaders at Children's Hospital through the final stages of a \$300 million hospital transformation and capital campaign.

"Having been a part of Children's Hospital for nearly four decades, I've never been more optimistic about its future," Hales said. "As we come close to the end of construction, it is clear that the programs inside the hospital will match the bricks and mortar. Our commitment to excellence, patient safety, and a single high standard of care for all children has been, and always will be, at the core of our mission."





# It's a new day for mental and behavioral health

## For the one in five

children who struggle with a wide variety of mental and behavioral health issues, there is now a brand new facility at Children's Hospital New Orleans dedicated to diagnosing and treating a wide range of psychological and psychiatric disorders. The \$25 million facility broke ground at the end of 2018 and opened in April of this year. The program at Children's Hospital is one of only a handful of psychiatric centers across the U.S. that brings together comprehensive inpatient and outpatient programs under one roof and is geared specifically for children under 18.

Children and adolescents from Louisiana and across the Gulf Coast were previously cared for at the Calhoun Campus at Children's Hospital, which was the former site of De Paul Hospital, the one-time psychiatric facility for adults. Going from the old center to the new Behavioral Health Center located on Children's main campus is like stepping into the light, both figuratively and literally.

"Many inpatient mental hospitals are often drab and dark," explained Mark Ranatza, a nurse himself, and the new center's director. "This is a pediatric population here, so the idea from the initial stages of our planning was to make it warm, inviting, and friendly. It doesn't feel like a psych facility. It has a very different vibe."

The Behavioral Health Center is tucked away in a quiet quadrant Uptown where State Street meets the river and is surrounded by magnificent towering oak trees, giving it a feeling of calm and serenity while still just a block from Children's main campus. The five floors are awash with hues of seafoam, turquoise, and peach contained by enormously large windows that give way to sun-dappled interiors brightening the spirits of everyone inside.

Environment can be a critical healing factor for the patients, whose diagnoses run the entire gamut of psychiatric medical disorders. Patients often find their way to the center via referrals through the Emergency Department of the main campus, when a particular event prompts a parent or other caregiver to react quickly to a medical emergency.





### Sophia

Children's Hospital patient  
Age 14

"The patient population here at the Behavioral Health Center is representative of child psychiatry as a whole," explained Mary Lynn Dell, MD, psychiatrist, and the center's medical director. "We see children with mood and bipolar disorders at younger and younger ages. Some of our inpatients are suffering from psychosis, where they are hearing voices, experiencing delusions and hallucinations, and exhibiting paranoia. We also see children who have experienced abuse and trauma-related emotional repercussions, while some of our patients have biological or genetic tendencies toward psychiatric issues. Fortunately, the community is much more aware now of emerging problems since schoolteachers are given continuing education by professionals who rotate through Children's from LSU

and Tulane. They are training educators to be attuned to the early warning signs and symptoms of behavioral health issues."

A large portion of the treatments occurring at the center are done on an outpatient basis and are handled by the medical psychologists.

"Our Autism Center is on the first floor, where many diagnostic screening tests are done, and treatment in the form of social skills groups and workshops for parents take place," explained Diane Franz, PhD, Director of Psychology for Children's Hospital. "We treat a fair amount of anxiety and depression and school-age problems like ADHD, as well. We do a lot of testing with observation rooms attached. This serves a dual purpose for the parents to be able to observe treatment, and for the psychologists to watch the

parents interact with their own children on the other side of two-way mirrors. It's become even more useful in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with social distancing being so important."

"We wanted a facility that offered our young patients the opportunity to interact with one another," said Chief Medical Officer of Children's Hospital, George Bisset, MD. "To that end, we have specific areas for socializing, music therapy, play and art therapy, and a large yard with a basketball court. We want everyone to feel comfortable here so they're of the mindset to open up to their therapists and receive the most meaningful treatment."

The national uptick in adolescent suicides has been alarming, and according to Dr. Franz, the risk of self-harm is the number one reason for referrals to the Behavioral Health



Center. Suicidal ideations can be brought on by any number of situational crises, but what most don't realize is that among the many cause variables, cancer patients are especially susceptible to depression and anxiety.

"My daughter Sami was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (a type of blood cancer) when she was just six years old," said mom Gabriella Smith. "After a bone marrow transplant from her older sister at Children's Hospital, Sami was in their ICU for 21 days, struggling with loss of liver and kidney function. No one stops to think about the mental side of all of this, and all of the psychological issues that come with being perpetually sick.

Over the years of graft versus host rejection of her sister's bone marrow, Sami was sinking into a dark depression. However, Children's Hospital was proactive and connected us with her psychologist, Dr. Amy Henke, from the very beginning. It's the reason we've all been able to keep our sanity through all of the ups and downs of treatment."

For Sami, who is now 17 and a senior in high school in Independence, Louisiana, her regimen between the ages of six and 10 years of age involved ingesting 44 pills a day. By the age of 13, while still undergoing treatment, not surprisingly she began to experience mental health challenges.

"Cancer was the easy part," remembers Sami. "Bipolar disorder runs in my family, so my mom was aware of the warning signs. I continued to see my Children's therapist as an outpatient to maintain my mental stability. But, by the age of 15, everything came crashing down around me. I began to

dwell on why I was still here when some of the patients I was with in the cancer center all those years earlier had died."

Sami was admitted as an inpatient at the Calhoun campus of Children's Hospital when she was 15. She credits the professionals at Children's with saving her life.

"The doctors there were wonderful, and they did their best to make sure I survived," remembered Sami. "They made me memorize the number for the Helpline in case I began to feel desperate, but most importantly they taught me coping mechanisms."

"Psychopharmacology has come a long way in terms of

medications, said Dr. Dell. We have better medications with fewer side effects and a lower incidence of short and long-term movement disorders. We also now have injectable forms of many medications, allowing some older adolescents and adults to have an injection of a mood stabilizer every two to four weeks, lessening the risk of non-adherence and eliminating episodes that come about when serum levels in the bloodstream dip."

For children in crisis, an inpatient stay can be the event that turns things around and allows the Children's team to confer jointly on treatment possibilities. Sami Smith credits her inpatient stay to the beginning of the change in her thought patterns.

"It was a very intense week in which I examined my life and where it was going," said Sami.

"I came to realize that I could help others by sharing my own experiences in a series of books and by creating a foundation called 'Sami's Ray of Hope' to distribute them."

Smith isn't out of the woods yet with regard to her physical ailments. Two years ago she was diagnosed with lipodystrophy, causing the uneven distribution of fatty tissue for which she has just undergone surgery. But, from a psychological standpoint, she feels she has found her voice and her purpose.

Director Mary Lynn Dell, MD, who recently joined the team at Children's Hospital New Orleans from Nationwide Children's in Columbus, Ohio, believes that the warehousing of adults in mental facilities can be largely eliminated if we can intervene with early care to our young people by matching them to medications at the least possible dose and teaching them to recognize their own behaviors that mean a psychiatric condition may be ramping up.

The pandemic has proven to be a double-edged sword in terms of mental health for those on the brink. For some socially

**"Psychopharmacology has come a long way in terms of medications, said Dr. Dell. We have better medications with fewer side effects and a lower incidence of short and long-term movement disorders. We also now have injectable forms of many medications, allowing some older adolescents and adults to have an injection of a mood stabilizer every two to four weeks, lessening the risk of non-adherence and eliminating episodes that come about when serum levels in the bloodstream dip."**



Sami Smith, left, pictured with sisters Brittany and Hannah



awkward children being bullied at school for not making eye contact, or having an unconventional hairdo, they may actually be thriving on social media where visual cues are absent. Of course, isolation comes with its own inherent set of problems.

"Without the contact with schools or coaches, there have been lots of opportunities for neglect," says Dr. Dell. "Kids may be struggling or in danger, but the adults who are normally in their lives are no longer there to notice. A lot of the emotional supports for depression are church gatherings, family outings, and social events, but in a pandemic, that's all gone."

Meanwhile, for the children who were transferred to the new facility back in April, becoming the first patients in the Behavioral Health Center, the new facility received rave reviews, and an immediate thumbs-up from all of the patients. Director Mark Ranatza remembers the day that the patients were moved from the Calhoun campus to the gleaming State Street facility.

"The feedback has been tremendous," noted Ranatza. "We had 15 patients who made the move on the day we opened. We came across Tchoupitoulas St. in shuttles and there were different signs along the way. The staff was lined up waiting for them, and when they arrived it was obvious they were uplifted. It was a proud moment for me to be part of."

Mental health disorders have come out of the shadows and into the light in the last decade. It's not unusual to hear a well-known musician or actor discussing his or her bipolar disorder, or the crippling effects of anxiety and panic attacks,

and their own personal prescriptions or coping. It's contributed largely to the de-stigmatization of mental illness, making it easier for today's adolescents to open up about their own particular challenges.

"The dream is that this will be the facility that every child with behavioral health disorders will want to come to," said Dr. Bisset. "We think this is an important first step in the hospital's commitment to children with emotional and behavioral problems."

Building a dedicated center for the mental health of children and adolescents is no easy task. The steps required to make a facility such as this safe for patients are daunting. Shatterproof glass everywhere, no sharp edges, no protrusions like door handles that ligatures can be tied around make this a cost-prohibitive endeavor that a small entity couldn't entertain. Even the architecture of the building is conducive to safety with inpatient rooms fanning out from the nurse's station in a "V," so that the door to every room is visible for monitoring at the same time. It's all part of Children's vision to build a healthier, happier future for all kids. And with the help of generous donors like the Woldenberg Foundation and the Goldring Family Foundation, the vision has become a reality.

"Most hospitals don't want to venture into pediatric behavioral health," said Ranatza. "But, as our CEO John Nickens likes to say, we're not going to run away from a problem. We're going to run toward it, so we can solve it."

The total health of this generation and those who follow is depending upon it.



# Celebrating Extraordinary: Children's Hospital celebrates the opening of our new Behavioral Health Center

On January 22, 2020, Children's Hospital reached an important milestone in its campus transformation project – the construction completion for its new 51-bed, 70,000-square-foot Behavioral Health Center. The new center is not only bigger, better, and newer than the dated 39-bed campus Children's Hospital has occupied since 2007, but this space, with its bright colors, natural light, and spacious rooms, is truly an environment that promotes healing.

The new Behavioral Health Center at 210 State Street is among the largest and most comprehensive pediatric programs in the nation, serving patients from across the Gulf South. The comprehensive center is dedicated to serving children and adolescents with a wide range of mental and behavioral health disorders. The \$25 million project is located on Children's Hospital's main campus, a short walk away from the hospital's Emergency Department, where patients are first seen and evaluated for admission to the Behavioral Health Center, if necessary.







The grand opening celebration for the Behavioral Health Center was held prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The grand opening celebration kicked off with tours of the building for staff, community partners, and donors. A program followed with remarks from hospital and community leaders.

"It's a new day for New Orleans," said Chief Medical Officer, George Bisset, MD. "The opening of this new Behavioral Health Center marks a turning point in how we care for kids and teens with mental and behavioral health needs in our city and in our state."

While the beautiful, spacious building is impressive in its own right, it's what's happening on the inside that is the most important. The Center offers acute inpatient behavioral health

treatment in a safe, structured, and nurturing environment for kids and teens from seven to 17 years old. The program focuses on teaching and empowering each patient to develop healthy life skills to improve function, coping, and future quality of life.

The 51-bed inpatient unit serves as a treatment center for children experiencing severe depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. Using an interdisciplinary model of care, social workers, recreational therapists, and music therapists work with psychiatrists to develop customized treatment plans for each child. The center's increased capacity allows for an additional 650 patients to be treated annually, in addition to an expanded outpatient psychiatry program that will more than double its capacity with more than 2,000 visits per year.

Outpatient services, including assessment and treatment of psychiatric and behavioral disorders such as autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and mood disturbance, are also provided at the new center.

The Behavioral Health Center at Children's Hospital was made possible with the support of the Goldring Family Foundation and the Woldenberg Foundation, who contributed \$2 million to Behavioral Health services through their support of Children's Hospital's capital campaign.



Courtney Garrett, Children's Hospital CFO, pictured with Jeffrey and Walton Goldring, and Children's Hospital CEO, John Nickens.



# Virtual Care for Kids

provides continuum of care, throughout COVID-19



The concept of Virtual Care is not new to Children's Hospital New Orleans. In April 2017, pediatric urologist, Dr. Aaron Martin, began utilizing telemedicine so that he could follow up with patients who live far away, many without dependable transportation to reach the hospital. In January 2018, more providers joined Dr. Martin in seeing patients virtually and a formal program began, complete with the development of an application platform to host virtual visits securely. But the catalyst for the most recent growth of the Children's Hospital telemedicine program was the COVID-19 pandemic.

In March 2020, stay-at-home orders and mandates to postpone elective and non-urgent procedures and healthcare visits were placed upon Louisiana residents. Children's Hospital was faced with a challenge: how to provide continuity of care while minimizing risk of exposure to COVID-19 for our patients, families, and team members. The answer was clear and simple: rapid expansion of telemedicine services.



In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, with fear, uncertainty, and anxiety running high, Children's Hospital's Virtual Care for Kids program allows families to continue to seek care from their own trusted providers – remotely. Prior to COVID-19, Children's Hospital New Orleans saw about 250 virtual visits per month, mainly in specialty care and behavioral/mental health. The hospital's telemedicine program is now averaging more than 300 patients per day with many of the visits in primary care and 24/7 urgent care, in addition to all specialties. Almost overnight, the hospital trained and enrolled over 150 new clinicians and support staff, representing more than 20 pediatric sub-specialties and primary care, to see patients through virtual care. In the first week following the COVID-19 outbreak in our community, Children's Hospital saw a 2,000% increase in virtual care visits compared to before the pandemic began. A notable increase in virtual care visits was in Behavioral and Mental Health. Today, two-thirds of psychology, psychiatry, and Autism Center outpatient visits are done virtually.

Virtual care has allowed Children's Hospital's expert pediatricians and specialists to care for the multitude of ongoing health needs of children that aren't related to COVID-19, including routine wellness checks, sick visits, and follow-up visits. For pediatric patients who are experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms, virtual care allows for the ability to safely triage patients from home and, if needed, direct them to proper next steps. Pediatric clinicians can also screen health problems over the phone and determine what level of care is needed.

While the future state of our world remains uncertain, Children's Hospital's dedication to kids and families is constant. The hospital and its providers will continue to grow and change in order to meet families where they are, and deliver premier pediatric care to the children of Louisiana and beyond.



# Inside Children's

## Transforming healthcare for Louisiana's children

The \$300 million transformation of our Uptown campus is not only improving infrastructure and technology, but the enhancements we're introducing will make it easier for patients and families across the region to access our vital services. Additionally, we've expanded our signature service lines to better serve the needs of our patients. Now, more than 1,000 days into construction, Children's has entered the final phase of construction with the future facade of our hospital taking shape.



CICU

Throughout the first half of 2020, Children's Hospital was busy activating new clinical care spaces within the new 235,000-square-foot medical tower, the core of our campus expansion.

This began with the move of patients into our new, 28-bed, 35,000-square-foot Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) in February. The heart of our Heart Center, our CICU expands specialized pediatric cardiology services for the region, and is expertly designed to care for patients with any cardiac medical or surgical condition requiring specialized care, from newborns to adulthood.



## Entering the final phase of construction

In July, work began on the future main concourse, framing the facade that will connect the clinic and hospital buildings, creating an innovative environment that embodies care designed just for kids. The open, two-story structure will welcome patients and families in a beautiful, light-filled space that offers easy access to the Emergency Department, Hospital and Clinic, with first-floor access to dining and coffee, the hospital's gift shop, registration and an all-new chapel.

Work also continues inside the hospital and medical tower, including the creation of an all-new Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders, a dedicated Child Life Center, and the expansion of the hospital's Emergency Department that will reach completion in the summer of 2021. Children's Hospital's expanded campus will allow our team of healthcare providers to deliver expert patient and family-centered care, along with an extraordinary experience.





## Progress continues despite COVID-19 challenges

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Children's Hospital achieved many important campus transformation milestones. In April, Children's celebrated the opening of our new, state-of-the-art Imaging Center, serving patients from across Louisiana in a fully comprehensive space equipped with the latest imaging technology, in a kid-friendly environment that amplifies the patient experience. The Imaging Center includes an Adventure Series, designed in collaboration with General Electric, that features custom travel-related themes, taking kids around the world and on outer space adventures as they undergo imaging tests.

Also in April, Children's Hospital activated its new, state-of-the-art 57,000-square-foot Surgery Center. The expanded Surgery Center serves patients from across Louisiana and the Gulf South in a child-friendly environment that integrates each phase of the surgical experience. The Surgery Center includes a spacious lobby and waiting area for families on the second floor of the new Medical Tower, leading to a 23-bed Same Day Surgery Unit with all-private patient rooms, which will expand to 42 patient rooms at the completion of phase two of the expansion next spring. Two private consultation rooms bridge the unit and operating room to allow for quick consults between physicians and parents.

A spacious 17-bay Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) is located right next to the Same Day Surgery Unit with easy access for families immediately before and after a child's surgery. The PACU will gain an additional seven bays in phase two of the project.

"The design of the new Surgery Center keeps the family, care team, and patient close at all times," says Jamie Wiggins, DNSc, RN, NEA-BC, FACHE, Senior Vice President and Chief



**Post Anesthesia Care Unit**

Nursing Officer. "Families come across the skybridge and enter right into the surgical reception area. They will now experience check-in, the pre-operative process, surgery, and recovery all in the same location."

The Surgery Center features 12 expansive Operating Rooms, including an OR dedicated to the Da Vinci robot, two cardiac catheterization labs, and two special procedure suites for endoscopy and bronchoscopy. The ORs surround a large Sterile Core with direct access to Sterile Processing and Central Sterile supply.

In May, Children's continued progress, opening an all-new, expanded Dialysis Center that includes six private treatment rooms where the parent or caregiver can stay with his or her child during both hemodialysis and apheresis treatments. The space also provides convenient access for families, and is located on the first floor of the clinic.



**Dialysis Center**



## Specialized Pediatric Heart Care now in Alexandria

With the opening of a new pediatric cardiology clinic in Alexandria in June, Children's Hospital New Orleans continues to expand specialized pediatric cardiology services for the region, ensuring that children across Louisiana have access to the expert care they need.

The Heart Center at Children's Hospital New Orleans has experienced significant growth over the last year with the recruitment of pediatric heart specialists from some of the nation's top children's hospitals, including a new chief of pediatric cardiothoracic surgery, a perfusionist, two cardiac intensivists and a heart failure specialist, in addition to an all-new 28-bed Cardiac Intensive Care Unit and state-of-the-art Surgery Center on Children's Hospital's main campus in New Orleans. This care is extended through specialty clinics across the state, which now includes a clinic in Alexandria.



### Frank Pigula, MD, to join Children's Hospital as Chief of Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery and Co-Director of The Heart Center

Dr. Pigula's extensive background includes 12 years as Clinical Director of Pediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery at Boston Children's Hospital, the number 1 ranked Children's Hospital in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*, and most recently he served in leadership at AdventHealth Children's Hospital in Orlando, Florida.

Dr. Pigula will serve as Co-Director of the Heart Center at Children's Hospital, alongside Dr. Thomas Kimball, Chief of Pediatric Cardiology. "Dr. Pigula will bring a level of experience and expertise in congenital heart surgery that is unmatched in our region," says Jonathan Brouk, Chief Operating Officer. "The addition of new world-class talent and expertise to the Heart Center at Children's Hospital, amplifying the existing team of expert cardiac specialists, is paralleled by the Heart Center's physical transformation."

## Statewide growth expands access to vital services across Louisiana

While transforming our main campus in New Orleans, Children's Hospital is at the same time focused on advancing pediatric healthcare across the state. With new, expanded multi-specialty clinics opening in Covington and Baton Rouge earlier this year, Children's Hospital is improving access to highly specialized pediatric healthcare and bringing care close to home for families across Louisiana. "Our number one focus is expanding access while delivering one high standard of care for children across the state," says Lou Fragoso, Chief Administrative Officer for Children's Hospital.



## Bartholomew Family Trust secures future for children and adolescents in crisis

California natives Kimberly and Mark Bartholomew have seen their share of hospitals. With six children, they were bound to need an emergency room at least a few times. But their story is more serious than most. Their fifth child was born with a congenital heart defect that necessitated a heart transplant at only six weeks old. Tragically, she died of complications shortly after. Another daughter has battled major depressive disorder since she was a young child, requiring inpatient stays in hospitals on the West Coast. More recently, their grandson was born with a severe form of autism and requires constant intervention.

"Given the health needs we have experienced, we knew once we were financially able, we wanted to give back and help other families struggling as we did," said Kimberly Bartholomew. "It's important to us to make sure the services are available for every child who needs it, regardless of their ability to pay."

Children's Hospital New Orleans completed its 51-bed inpatient Behavioral Health Center earlier this year. Thanks to the Bartholomew's \$250,000 gift, the new, expanded Emergency Department (ED) across the campus will have a specialized area just for children and adolescents in behavioral health crisis. The Bartholomew Family Behavioral Health Pod of the ED will provide a comforting space for children with acute needs. Emergency providers worked collaboratively with the Behavioral Health Center experts to design a safe, multi-purpose environment that addresses mental health needs not typically available in emergency settings across the nation.

"We wanted to invest in a program that looks at this population differently and cares for them on their level," said Mark Bartholomew. "With specially designed exam rooms, children and young adults will feel a part of their care, not just like a patient."

The Bartholomews, from Southern California, have been visiting New Orleans for many years and are members of four Mardi Gras krewes. They fell in love with the city that has brought them much joy and felt the need to give back. They are sharing the naming of the unit with Thoth Charities, an organization that is important to them.

"We were honored to be a part of the new Emergency Department at Children's Hospital," said C.J. Tessitore, CFO of Thoth Charities. "Our krewe members have been visiting Children's Hospital for many years, and I can't see a more fitting continuation to our partnership."

The new Bartholomew Family Behavioral Health Pod of the ED is scheduled to open in July of 2021.



**The new Emergency Department, opening summer 2021, will include eight specialized pods for acute behavioral health patients and a dedicated entrance.**





## Local Philanthropist Roger Ogden supports Art Therapy



The Behavioral Health Center’s Ogden Art Therapy Suite opened earlier this year with a \$100,000 gift from Roger Ogden, founder of the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, in support of Children’s Hospital’s capital campaign.

With a dedicated room and art therapist, each child and adolescent will have one to two expressive therapy groups per day, including music and art, which is at the core of the inpatient program. Ogden’s generous

donation has allowed for increased therapy sessions, new technology, and equipment to enhance the space.

“It is my pleasure to bring more art and music into the lives of Children’s Hospital’s behavioral health patients,” said Ogden.

“My hope is that an enhanced artistic experience will promote happiness and healing.”

The Ogden Art Therapy Suite, painted gentle shades of yellow, has two walls of windows that filter vibrant sunlight or the therapeutic patter of rainfall. For patients, the room is a place for increased awareness, acceptance, and celebration of self.

“We are proud to be able to provide therapeutic, safe, and positive behavioral healthcare experiences,” said René Guilbeau, Director of Child Life and Creative Therapies at Children’s Hospital. “These programs engage and empower expressive and creative opportunities where children and adolescents can use art and music to learn beneficial lifelong coping skills.”

Children in the program use high-quality materials in a comfortable environment and receive support from a certified art therapist. Ogden’s contribution will help many children throughout Louisiana foster a love for artistic expression.



## School Psychiatry Collaborative finds funding in Harry T. Howard III Foundation

Mental illness impacts 20% of our nation’s youth. Half of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, and 75% by age 24. 20% of these receive treatment, and only a small fraction are treated by child and adolescent psychiatrists.



Children’s Hospital New Orleans has committed to stand in the gap for vulnerable children. With a \$125,000 investment from the Harry T. Howard III Foundation, the School Psychiatry Collaborative was born. In its first year, this collaborative has provided one New Orleans charter school with on-site mental health services delivered by a staff of licensed clinical social workers and child and adolescent trained psychiatrists.

School-based psychiatric care presents a unique opportunity to intervene, eliminating significant barriers to access – including transportation. Other benefits realized include less class time missed, less work missed for caregivers, and more opportunity for collaboration between school staff and mental health professionals.

In year two of the pilot, Children’s Hospital will partner with an additional New Orleans charter school to provide telepsychiatry services directly to students from its brand-new, Behavioral Health Center. Similar to on-site school services, the utilization of telehealth removes several significant barriers to accessing care, and is ideal for COVID-19 safety.

“Early intervention is so important in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions,” said Peter Feringa, Harry T. Howard III Foundation trustee. “We are proud to support this school-based initiative, making it easier to reach more children and adolescents.”

Healthcare professionals, parents, and school system leaders across the country recognize that access to mental and behavioral health services is a critical unmet need in nearly every community. New Orleans is no exception. Children’s Hospital is committed to supporting our families and children amid this crisis, and one feature of that support is developing new ways to deliver our vital services.

# Generosity prevails through COVID-19 pandemic



The last eight months have been an unprecedented time for our city, state, nation, and even our world. At Children's Hospital New Orleans, we saw our community come together and give back like never before. From local and national organizations, hospital staff experienced generosity through meal donations that came through the doors nearly every day during March and April.

In addition to the generosity of local restaurants and businesses, individuals in our community stepped up to the plate to support nonprofits during the Greater New Orleans Foundation's annual day of giving. GiveNOLA Day, held on June 2, 2020, generated over \$7 million in donations to benefit more than 800 nonprofits across the city. Over \$143,000 was raised for Children's Hospital, the most successful GiveNOLA Day to date for the hospital.

One teen in Cut Off, Louisiana had an idea to help her local community and give back at the same time. 14-year-old Melania Angelette started making face masks with the help of her mother, Natasha, and began selling them to friends and family. "We enjoyed picking out fun fabrics for kids, women, and men," said Natasha. "It was hard work to meet the demand, but so worth it for the kids." Today, over 1,000 masks and \$5,000 later, the Angelette family is eager to make the drive to New Orleans to deliver their check to support Children's Hospital.



**Melania Angelette makes masks to benefit Children's Hospital**



It isn't just individuals giving back locally during this especially hard time for healthcare workers; national corporations are also answering the call to help. Two of Children's Miracle Network's corporate partners are supporting Children's Hospital and other hospitals across the city. Panda Restaurant Group, the corporation behind Panda Express, generously donated more than \$110,000 worth of personal protective equipment to LCMC Health and its hospitals. In addition, another corporate partner, Walmart/Sam's Club, awarded 17 grants to Children's Hospital totaling \$42,500. This generosity helps Children's continue to provide the highest-quality care to children across the state and region.



## Sugarplum Ball 2020: A Night in Wonderland



Candace and Will Lemoine,  
The Lemoine Company

Guests made their way through the hedge maze and down the rabbit hole to attend the 39th annual Sugarplum Ball presented by The Lemoine Company and themed “A Night in Wonderland.” The event, held March 7, benefited the hospital’s new and expanded Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU) and was the most successful to date, raising over \$530,000.

Co-chaired by Katie Crosby and Julie George, both members of the Children’s Hospital Board of Trustees, the black-tie fundraiser took inspiration from the classic animated film, *Alice in Wonderland*. Illuminated trees, bright colors, oversized flowers, top hats, teapots, and playing cards were used to transform The Filmore into Wonderland.

Alice, the Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, and the White Rabbit were there to welcome attendees to the Mad Hatter’s VIP Tea Party, which featured music by the James Martin Band and food from Ralph’s on the Park and Brennan’s.

After the party, guests were escorted into the main room for the Sugarplum Ball. Karma provided music on the main stage, packing the dance floor with their high-energy performance.



The silent auction was set up around the room and bidding was done online, giving those not in attendance a chance to participate. Auction packages included vacations, jewelry, art, and private dining experiences.

A variety of hors d'oeuvres and sweets were on display for guests to sample. Over 30 restaurants and businesses donated, including Boulevard American Bistro, Drago's Seafood Restaurant, Galatoire's, Haydel's Bakery and Vincent's Italian Cuisine. Drinks were provided by Coca-Cola, Crescent Crown Distributing, The Goldring Family Foundation/Sazerac Company and Republic National Distributing Company.

Other major sponsors of Sugarplum Ball included The McDonnell Group, The Ray and Jessica Brandt Family Foundation, Baker Donelson, Bank of America Securities, Bernhard Energy, Lynne Burkart, Fidelity Bank, Gootee Construction, IBERIABANK, Marye and John Nickens, and PJ's Coffee of New Orleans.

"Our donors helped make this year's Ball the highest grossing ever," says Courtney Garrett, Senior Vice President and

Chief Financial Officer at Children's Hospital. "We are sincerely grateful. Their support helps make the care we provide to children with complex heart conditions possible."

Proceeds from Sugarplum Ball helped fund the 28-bed Cardiac Intensive Care Unit that opened in January as part of the hospital's campus expansion. The 35,000-square-foot unit supports the growth of specialized pediatric heart care for the state of Louisiana and the Gulf South.

The new CICU provides added comfort, sleeping space, and private bathrooms for families combined with state-of-the-art equipment and technology that advances the unit's family-centered approach to care.

**Children's Hospital is grateful that we were able to hold the 39th annual Sugarplum Ball as planned, just before COVID-19 first began to impact Louisiana. We have made the decision to postpone the 40th annual Sugarplum Ball, which we look forward to celebrating with our friends and supporters when it is safe to gather again.**



Sarah and Greg Feirn, CEO, LCMC Health, with Marye and John Nickens, President & CEO, Children's Hospital



Co-chairs Katie Crosby with husband Howell, and Julie George with husband Ted



# Mental Health

Children's Hospital New Orleans

 **6,508**  
OUTPATIENT VISITS IN 2020\*

 **1,200**  
inpatient stays in 2020\*

**3,774** OF THESE ARE **VIRTUAL** BEHAVIORAL HEALTH VISITS 

 **6.48 days**  
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY

**51**   
NUMBER OF **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH BEDS**

**70,000**   
SQUARE FOOT **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER**

**15** PSYCHOLOGISTS 

**12** CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRISTS 



**11 years** is the average delay between symptom onset and treatment

**1 in 5**  
EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

**51%** OF YOUTH (AGES 6-17) WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION RECEIVE TREATMENT IN A GIVEN YEAR 

**70%** of youth in the **juvenile justice system** have at least **one mental health condition**

**290** FACILITIES ACROSS THE GULF SOUTH REFER PATIENTS TO THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER 

\*Data as of September 2020



**Children's Hospital**  
New Orleans  
LCMC Health

A view of the State St.  
historic wall with the new  
Behavioral Health building  
in the distance.

New building,  
**same**  
**extraordinary**  
**care.**



  
Children's Hospital  
New Orleans  
LCMC Health