



PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT REPORT PRESENTED WITH GRATITUDE

Child Life

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

Child Life specialists play a vital role at Children's Hospital Los Angeles: For thousands of patients and families, they help bring light to the darkest hour, joy to sorrowful days and comfort in anxious times. Thanks to generous donors like you who support the Child Life program at CHLA, we are able to attend to the physical—and emotional—well-being of our patients and families. On behalf of every child who has had the chance to act like a kid instead of a patient in a Child Life playroom, every parent whose worry has been eased and every child who has been soothed by a Child Life specialist before undergoing a difficult procedure, we thank you for your meaningful support.

## Healing the Whole Child

At Children's Hospital Los Angeles, the Child Life program is not merely an extra measure of care—it is an essential part of a child's treatment and recovery. Children crave stability and familiarity, but hospitalization thrusts a child into an unfamiliar environment that can be unsettling or even frightening. Child Life specialists are certified professionals who ease the anxiety and confusion that children and their families face during hospitalization. These specialists explain medical procedures in terms that are easy to understand, distract patients with age-appropriate play and work to normalize the hospital experience.

Our commitment to Child Life is just one example of the family-centered care that makes CHLA one of

the finest pediatric medical centers in the country. In 2014, Children's Hospital Los Angeles was ranked fifth in the nation on U.S. News & World Report's prestigious Honor Roll of children's hospitals.

Although Child Life is recognized by the American Academy of Pediatrics as an indicator of excellence in pediatric care, the program's services are not covered by insurance. At Children's Hospital, the Child Life program is a priority that is supported exclusively with donations from philanthropists like you and hospital operating funds. We thank you for helping us maintain and grow this essential service that supports so many children and families through some of the most trying times in their lives.





# A Real-Life Superhero

Imagine being a bright, playful 11-year-old child. It's late October, and you are excited because you know you are going to have the absolute coolest costume for trick-or-treating on Halloween night. But then you learn your Halloween is going to start with a visit to the hospital, which frightens you more than any ghosts or goblins ever could.

Unfortunately for Ashley (not her real name), these are the circumstances under which she came to Children's Hospital Los Angeles. On Halloween day, Ashley learned that she was in severe heart failure and would need to stay in the hospital indefinitely. She felt sad because she would miss her first time trick-or-treating with her newborn baby brother. She also felt scared and anxious about undergoing all of the medical treatments she urgently needed.

Child Life specialist Cristina Chandri remembers meeting Ashley for the first time: "She was admitted to the Helen and Max Rosenthal Cardiovascular Acute Care Unit on Halloween and met me in my Wonder Woman costume."

Ashley's fear and anxiety made it difficult for her to express her feelings and needs. Chandri let Ashley know that she could always turn to her with questions, or for comfort and reassurance about her treatment plan. During her first few weeks at Children's Hospital, Ashley underwent several invasive medical procedures, and Chandri worked to prepare her for and support her through those experiences. Ashley bravely endured PICC line placement, intubation, multiple surgeries and scopes to control internal bleeding and placement of a Berlin Heart, a device that remains outside of a patient's body and pumps blood for the heart while the patient awaits a heart transplant.

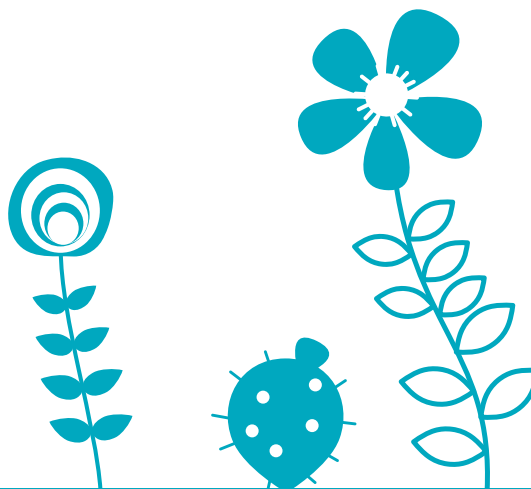
One of the toughest aspects of a Berlin Heart is that it requires daily dressing changes, which for a child can be frightening and painful. "For weeks after her Berlin Heart placement, I worked with Ashley to find ways for her to cope with the pain and anticipation,"



Chandri recalls. "Today, she is able to independently practice the coping strategies I taught her."

Ashley is no longer the shy, anxious girl who was admitted that Halloween. She has made friends with the staff and communicates her needs well. She still sees Chandri three times a week for therapeutic play, which helps her through the monotony and isolation she is experiencing while she waits for a donor heart.

"It's been amazing to watch her progress," says Chandri. "Her father still thanks me to this day for all the support I gave Ashley in those first weeks at the hospital. And she still calls me Wonder Woman."



## Expanding Services

In March 2013, the Infusion Center and Day Hospital (ICDH) at Children's Hospital was upgraded and reopened in a new location with the capacity and staffing to serve more patients and improve their experiences. More than 2,400 patient visits are conducted in the ICDH annually. A diverse group of patients, from toddlers to young adults, come in for many different needs, including chemotherapy, heart disease medication, antibiotic therapy, intravenous fluids, hematopoietic stem cell infusions and more.

For a child, a visit to the ICDH can mean a quick injection or require a full-day transfusion. Whether the procedure is simple or complex, these patients often need the calm, comforting presence of a Child Life specialist to help them cope with everything from anxiety over a needle poke to sadness and distress related to their health condition. Child Life is an invaluable service to help patients—and their families—navigate uncomfortable procedures and emotional trips to the ICDH.

When the ICDH was first reopened, the Child Life services came from a rotating roster of Child Life specialists who were part of the Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation. (Approximately 80 percent of patients visiting the ICDH are under the care of the Division of Hematology.) Initially, due to limited staffing, only one Child Life assistant, Giovanna Icamen, was a consistent presence at the ICDH. However, in May 2014, thanks to a generous gift from the Don and Lorraine Freeberg Foundation, Alina San was assigned to be a full-time Child Life specialist

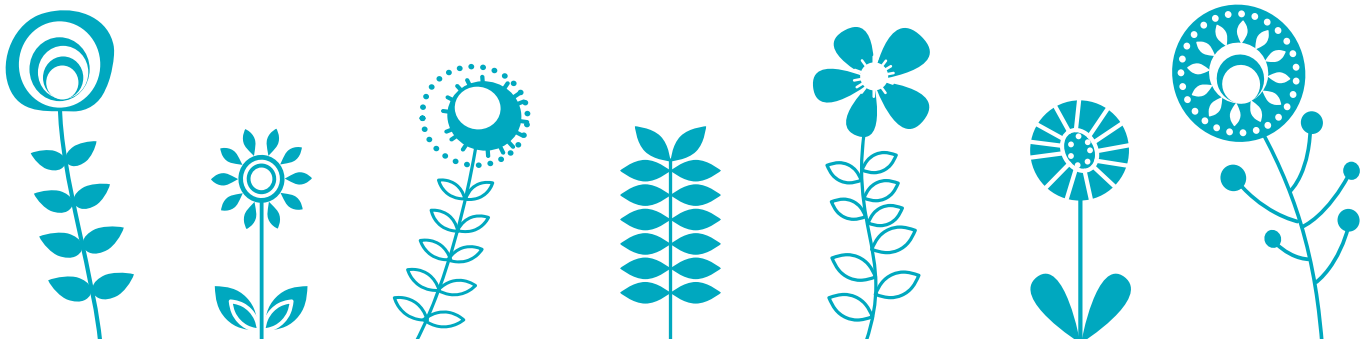


Child Life specialist Alina San plays a game with a patient.

dedicated to the Infusion Center and Day Hospital. San, a Child Life specialist at CHLA since 2006, was already a valuable member of the Child Life team, but thanks to funds from our philanthropic partner, she is now devoted exclusively to helping patients receiving care at the Infusion Center.

San is thrilled over her new role: "I am very excited to be able to bring my energy and dedication to provide Child Life services and compassionate care to the patients and families that walk day-to-day through the Infusion Center and Day Hospital door."

This is just one example of how Child Life supporters like you help improve the care we are able to provide to children and families who need these truly valuable services.



# In Praise of the Playroom

"Having a tumor might seem scary and having surgery, too, but the good part is, you're under anesthesia and this helps you not feel anything. You don't have to be nervous about it, but it's okay if you are. When you wake up after surgery, you don't remember a thing about it! After my surgery, I felt no pain. I slept a lot and had to stay in bed for three or four days. The nurses, doctors and surgeons helped me by teaching me how to take a shower after (the surgery) and told me to never wet the scar on my head! My nurse gave me a good suggestion and reminded me if my scar itched to pat my head softly! The good thing is, afterward, I was able to get up and go out to the playroom, which is a really fun place! I also met very nice Child Life specialists." — *Letter from a patient posted in a Child Life playroom.*

## Attracting Top Talent

The reputation of Children's Hospital—and its leading Child Life program—helps CHLA recruit skilled and highly trained staff from around the country. In September 2013, Lisa Gray joined the team of Child Life specialists working in the Division of Hematology, Oncology and Blood and Marrow Transplantation.

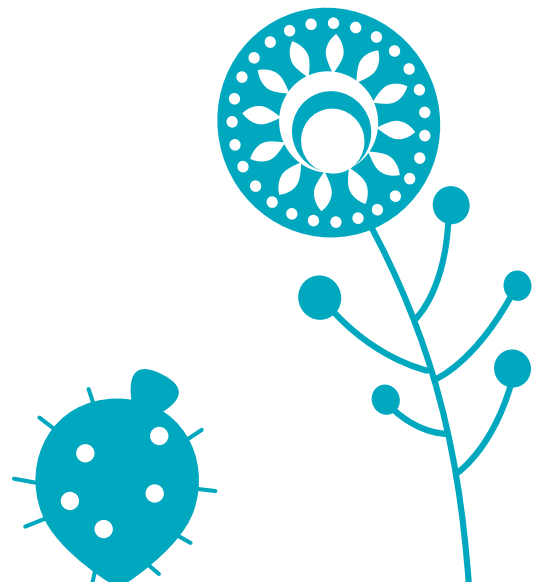
Gray received her master's degree in early childhood education and Child Life from Mills College. She spent nearly 10 years at University of California, San Francisco Benioff Children's Hospital, where she provided Child Life care in a variety of pediatric medical specialties, including liver and kidney transplant, neurology, pulmonology and pediatric

intensive care. After a decade in the Bay Area, Gray is excited to have traded the foggy weather for sunny Los Angeles. We are happy to welcome her to our family here at CHLA.

"What I love about Children's Hospital Los Angeles is working alongside a family of staff who are deeply committed to their work and role in providing support to the children and their families who are treated here," Gray says. "From the first day I started, I have been impressed at the commitment to family-centered care embodied by all the staff here, regardless of position. That translates into a higher quality of skilled, compassionate care for the child and family that sets CHLA apart from other hospitals."



Child Life specialist Lisa Gray recently joined CHLA.





# Helping Jacob Overcome Anxiety

Gray, who also occasionally provides care in the Infusion Center, shares a story of how Child Life specialists use a creative, individualized approach to meet each child's needs and help them overcome anxiety in the hospital.

Moments before 7-year-old Jacob (not his real name) was about to receive a dose of chemotherapy in the Infusion Center and Day Hospital, his body began to tremble. He was anticipating the nausea he previously experienced during the procedure and started to breathe faster as he became increasingly anxious. "I'm scared. I don't want to do this," the boy pleaded with his mother.

Jacob was being treated for rhabdomyosarcoma, a cancer that forms in muscle tissue. To receive chemotherapy, a port had been inserted underneath his skin that required frequent saline flushes to keep it clean. Jacob found the procedure extremely uncomfortable and would often get sick as it was happening.

As an experienced Child Life specialist, Gray knew she had to identify what was triggering Jacob's anxiety—and find a way to alleviate it.

She discovered that he was sensitive to the soap the nurses used to prepare his skin, and that he could "taste" the flush as it was happening. Gray introduced Jacob to simple coping techniques: She coached him on taking deep breaths, diverted his attention to iPad games and placed drops of kid-friendly scented oils on gauze so Jacob would smell bubble gum and root beer instead of the medicinal soap.

Gray stayed by Jacob's side for the next few treatments, each time encouraging and reassuring him that he had the skills to overcome his fear. When he completed a flush without feeling sick, Jacob couldn't hide how proud of himself he was. For the first time in many weeks, he flashed a huge smile and high-fived his entire medical team.

"Our goal as Child Life specialists is to help kids cope well with hospitalization," Gray says, "and to help them find the confidence and courage that is already in them."

Thanks to Gray's consistent support, Jacob overcame his fears and completed his last chemotherapy treatment all on his own.

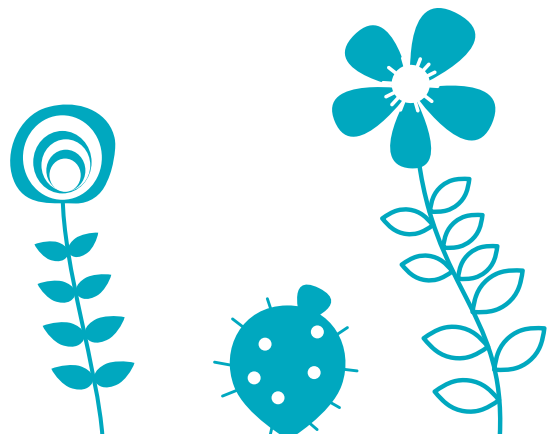


## Celebrating Child Life

When patients and families come to Children's Hospital, they know they'll encounter doctors and nurses—but not everyone is aware of the services provided by our Child Life team. This year, to mark Child Life Month, several specialists organized a celebration to build awareness and understanding of how Child Life specialists and assistants benefit patients, families and even the staff at CHLA.

The festive event, held in the Joyce and Stanley Black and Family Healing and Meditation Garden in the spring of 2014, featured fun activities for patients, siblings and families. Kids enjoyed bubbles, finger painting and a life-sized Jenga (courtesy of Hasbro, Inc.) and engaged in medical play with pretend doctor kits, real bandages and tape. Child Life specialists also spent time with families to educate them about the Child Life program. The event was a success: It brought smiles to the faces of the nearly 50 children and families who attended—and helped raise awareness of the valuable role Child Life specialists play at Children's Hospital.

"We heard so many times throughout the day, 'Wow, we didn't even know this hospital had something like you all,'" says Child Life specialist Jaime Ingram, who co-organized the event. "It was hard to tell who had more fun, the kiddos or the Child Life specialists."





## Bringing Joy to Patients and Families

Child Life specialists often care for children at the most challenging times of their medical experiences—visits to the Emergency Department or during chemotherapy sessions—but there are also times when they collaborate with other medical staff to help children celebrate meaningful events during their hospitalization.

Child Life specialist Carola Mendez, who works in the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, shares one such touching story of helping a teenage patient, who had spent more than six months in his hospital room after a bone marrow transplant, plan a festive surprise for his mother.

After spending Christmas and New Year's away from his home and extended family, Daniel (not his real name) had one wish for the next holiday: He wanted to enjoy Valentine's Day with his mom. "I really need to celebrate my mother to thank her for all the patience and love that she has shown me," the 16-year-old told Mendez.

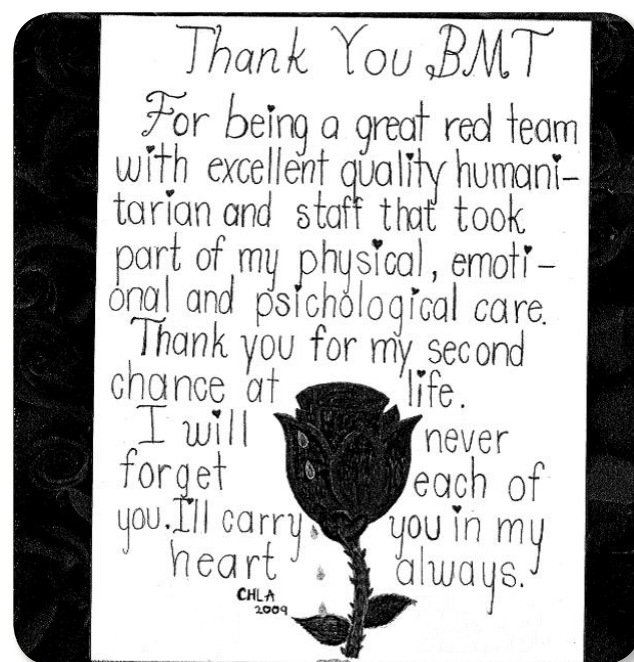
Daniel had developed graft-versus-host disease (GVHD), a complication that can occur after a transplant when donor cells attack the recipient's body. Doctors extended Daniel's hospitalization since they needed to monitor and treat the chronic side effects. His mom had been by his side every step of the way, and Daniel wanted to show her how much he appreciated all she'd done for him.

With support from Mendez, as well as physicians and nurses, Daniel's care team helped plan the surprise party. They listened to every detail of his vision for the celebration, from the music to the menu. As a Child Life specialist, Mendez had supported Daniel through many medical experiences, from providing coping strategies to reduce anxiety before surgery to preparing him for procedures in the Department of Radiology. On February 14, however, her role was to help make his wishes come true.

With music playing in the background and a table adorned with paper flowers, Mendez transformed Daniel's hospital room into an elegant restaurant. When his mom arrived, she was overwhelmed with emotion. Surrounded by red heart decorations, Daniel and his mom dined on her favorite meal of chicken, potatoes and salad, then enjoyed a movie with popcorn. Afterward, Daniel had one final surprise for her: a gift basket of lotions and a sweet handwritten letter.

"His mom was speechless and, needless to say, he was super happy," recalls Mendez. "We were all tearful."

In addition to collaborating with physicians and nurses on a patient's clinical care, Child Life specialists provide another essential service to enhance healing. "We also specialize in bringing joy to patients," says Mendez, who has 10 years of experience as a Child Life specialist. "They may be in pain and they might have side effects, but we need to find what is joyful for them."



Child Life specialist Carola Mendez shares a heartfelt thank-you note from a patient who was treated in the highly sensitive Bone Marrow Transplant Unit.



## Thank You

The emotional healing and support we provide to patients and families struggling with illness and injury is one reason Children's Hospital is a truly unique institution. However, we would simply not be able to meet this level of care without the generous contributions of caring philanthropists like you. Together, we are creating hope and building healthier futures. Thank you for your dedication to the Child Life program at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.

