

A Sister's Thanks

Born with a cleft lip and palate but otherwise healthy, at three months Brianna Rich developed a severe allergic reaction to baby formula, lost half her body weight and spent the



Photo by Cyane Lowden

The Rich family (left to right: sister Jessie, grandfather Durward, brother Briant, grandmother Teresa, uncle Bryan, mom Crystal and Brianna) agrees that Brianna is thriving today due to the love in their family.

next six months in the hospital after being diagnosed with multiple conditions, including severe bilateral cerebral atrophy, intractable epilepsy, severe acid reflux, cerebral palsy and scoliosis. When she stopped breathing and became septic, no one thought she would survive. If she did, the family was told, she would never function normally. Brianna, however, had different plans.

Now 6, Brianna is thriving today thanks to the love of her family. She attends school five days a week, picks out her own clothes, uses a computer with the assistance of a special switch operated by her cheek, and plays happily with her sister, Jessie, 12, and brother, Briant, 5.

Brianna's transformation began after a tracheotomy in June 2008. Since then, she has continued to defy the doctors' dire predictions. "She's doing things they said could never be done," said grandfather, Durward Massenburg. "She moves her arms and legs, grabs onto things, and communicates with us, not through words, but with hand motions and sounds. She has a lot to say, and we understand what she wants and needs."

Continued on next page

THANK YOU

By Jessie Rich, age 12

I can always look to the people at Noah's Children for their help with my family and me. They sent me to Boys and Girls Club camp for the past two summers.

I really enjoyed the many different activities that I was able to participate in, such as the Kings Dominion trip, the skate park, and the Water Country trip to Williamsburg. I made a whole lot of friends through this experience. I even learned how to fish, swim and climb because the counselors taught us how at a local campground.

I have also been matched with a couple of different volunteers through Noah's Children. My first counselor, Ms. Trudy, and I used to meet at my school and create crafts and activities for us both to enjoy. I liked how I could share secrets with her. Now, I work with Ms. Kate. We go to a whole bunch of fun places like the Science Museum, Build-A-Bear Workshop, the Children's Museum, the movies, and different stores. I enjoy experiencing different places, people, sights and sounds.

Noah's Children also has helped my sister a whole bunch with experiences in moving and learning. They have helped her to feel more confident about herself. Kathy, our social worker, is the best person I have ever met because we have a lot in common. She takes time to talk with me and my family and to make sure that we're doing well.

I'm glad that I have her in my life and all of the people at Noah's Children. If I didn't have them, I wouldn't have the memories or experiences that I've been able to have. I'm very lucky to have all of these people in my life.



Photo by Cyane Lowden

Role of the Social Worker

NOTE FROM DR. BOB ARCHULETA: This issue completes our profile series of members of the Noah's Children integrated team. We hope you have enjoyed learning more about these compassionate employees and their critical functions.

Like the other members of the Noah's Children

interdisciplinary team, social worker Kathy Leshner wears multiple hats to address the emotional, social, practical, cultural and financial needs of patients and their families. With the primary focus on the family, Kathy's work involves reducing stress and enhancing the family's quality of life. Through a variety of channels, Kathy's most important functions are to listen and offer counsel, educate and support, and connect families with community resources.



Kathy Leshner

From a social work perspective, Kathy begins by assessing the psychosocial-emotional and spiritual status of the family. She is looking to see what support systems are in place and where gaps may exist. Many

of these Noah's Children families are faced with financial challenges. Overwhelming medical costs and loss of income (due to a parent's inability to work in order to care for a medically fragile child) also take a toll on a family's ability to keep up. "Many of these families live moment to moment," Kathy says, "and when they get behind in their bills, it increases their stress level tremendously." Here Kathy connects them to non profits and other community resources that can help alleviate some of the stressors so that they can focus their time and energy on the ill child and the family.

One of the aspects of Kathy's work about which she is particularly passionate is ensuring that a patient's siblings have a voice within the family. Children with ill siblings often experience mixed emotions such as isolation, confusion, sadness, anger, fear, or guilt. Kathy uses therapeutic play and creative arts to help create a safe environment where the siblings can explore and express these emotions and gain a better understanding about a situation over which they have little to



"Children with ill siblings often experience mixed emotions such as isolation, confusion, sadness, anger, fear, or guilt."

no control. She also counsels parents about how to talk with siblings about the ill child's diagnosis and prognosis. In addition, Kathy supports the families through their grieving process, which often begins at the diagnosis of the illness and continues on a different level after the child has died.

Just as no two families or situations are the same, Kathy's services are custom tailored to each family's individual needs. "I really try to put myself in their shoes and try to understand where they're coming from and how I can best help them find their way during truly challenging circumstances."

People ask Kathy all the time how she can handle this kind of work. "I do it because I see hope in these families; it's not all doom and gloom. There's sadness, fear and anxiety, of course, but I also see hope amidst the pain. When I see healing taking place, when I see families come through the other side, then I know I have made a difference."

(Read how Kathy has helped one sibling on page 1.)

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Continued from front page



Photo by Cyrene London

Brianna Rich, age 6

Added mother, Crystal Rich, "Brianna's seizures have been reduced from 50-100 per day to only 15 or 20. And she hasn't been back to the hospital in almost three years; previously, we were taking her there every other week."

"She's a miracle," said grandmother, Teresa Massenburg. "Nothing can bring her down."

The family is grateful to Noah's Children, particularly for its interactions with older daughter Jessie. On page 1, Jessie shares – in her own words – how Noah's has helped her cope with her family's difficult circumstances.

Friends of Noah's Children



David Buxton, MD

David Buxton, MD, was first introduced to the field of pediatric palliative care when he began volunteering with Noah's Children in 2008. Currently a resident in adult psychiatry at Brown University in Providence, R.I., Dr. Buxton edited the July 2010 issue of *Virtual Mentor*, the American Medical Association's student-driven online ethics journal. This particular edition focused on pediatric palliative care and included contributions from Noah's Children staff member Kathy Leshner and the Noah's Children families of Christi and David Hancock, and Amy Spangler. (Links to the articles can be found at <http://virtualmentor.ama-assn.org/2010/07/fred1-1007.html> and <http://virtualmentor.ama-assn.org/2010/07/mnari-1007.html>)

In addition to raising awareness of the topic of pediatric palliative care, Dr. Buxton dedicated the entire issue to "Noah's Children patients, families and staff, who are among some of the pioneers in pediatric palliative care, trailblazing the art of healing the dying. I am honored that you allowed me to join you on this uncharted and difficult journey to find meaning in this arduous path."

We thank you, Dr. Buxton, for being a true friend to Noah's Children.



The Connect Care Enterprise Team

at Bon Secours Richmond includes 250 very generous employees. Generous because this past holiday season nearly 100% of them contributed time and money to help make dreams come true for several Noah's

Children families. Employees contributed bicycles, video games, toys, games, books, clothes, shoes, hats, scarves, coats, and \$400 in cash. Their generosity – which also included wrapping and tissue paper, scissors, and tape so that parents could wrap the gifts for their children – supported six Noah's families in 2010.

Cheryl Skaggs, PMO Analyst for Bon Secours and the project's coordinator, said, "Our employees are so motivated and energized by this project. Not only does it make us feel good, but it's also a great way to bring our teams together for a common cause. We feel honored to serve Noah's Children in this way, and we look forward to helping again."

Noah's Children is honored as well.

Afton Chemical has supported several non-profit organizations, including Noah's Children, for 15 years through its "Cans for Kids" program. Throughout the year, Afton employees collect aluminum from soda cans, engine parts and various scraps to recycle in exchange for cash. In 2010, this recycling effort generated more than \$6,000, which was matched by Teddy Gottwald, President and CEO of Afton's holding company, NewMarket Corporation.

Just before Thanksgiving, approximately 25 Afton "elves" (employees), armed with individual wish lists, hit area stores to purchase holiday gifts for 49 of Noah's children. Afton also provided cases of diapers, wipes, hand sanitizer, soap, thermometers and Kroger gift cards.



NewMarket Corp. President Teddy Gottwald and 25 Afton "elves" go shopping to make the holidays brighter for Noah's Children.

"Since we've been involved with Noah's Children for many years," said Maria Kobrinetz, Senior

Technician III at Afton and the "Cans for Kids" coordinator, "We feel we're a part of their lives, and purchasing gifts for the children somehow makes us feel like part of the family. It's such a great feeling when the nurses tell us how excited the children were when their presents were delivered. We are glad to be involved in this one small activity to brighten the lives of Noah's Children at Christmas time."

And Noah's Children is grateful to our wonderful friends at Afton Chemical!

Thank You Donors and Volunteers

Noah's Children has accomplished so much over the years because of friends like you. Whether it's making a donation or volunteering time, your support helps us provide quality care and services to families. On behalf of the staff and families we serve, thank you!

More Friends of Noah's

Special thanks to these friends for their instrumental roles in helping make Christmas special for our families this year.

- St. Edwards School
- Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus (Ron & Kathy Despain)
- Captech
- Church of the Redeemer (Mechanicsville, VA)

- Bon Secours St. Mary's Pediatrics Unit and St. Mary's NICU
- Cub Scout Troop 2885 at OB Gates Elementary
- The Carrico Family
- Joseph Keller
- Joni Wade
- And our wonderful staff and volunteers, who served as "elves" and organized, packaged and delivered the gifts!

Announcements



Artwork for Sale

Prints of the 2010 and 2011 Noah's Children artwork are now available for sale. The cost is \$10 each, and they can be purchased online at www.noahschildren.com, from our office (Medical Office Building North, Suite 409, at St. Mary's Hospital) or by calling (804) 287-7686.



Summer Camp

True to our mission of serving the whole family, Noah's Children sent more than 40 siblings to summer camps in 2010. Having a sick child in the family often creates a sense of loneliness and isolation for the healthy siblings. By attending age-appropriate summer camp programs, these children have the opportunity to get away from their stressful daily lives and "be themselves." To learn more about how you can support the Noah's Children Summer Camp program, please contact our office at (804) 287-7686.

IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Celeste
Governale
1.29.11 - 1.29.11

Lois Steele Hogan
10.16.07 - 2.3.11

William Raelynn (Rae)
Newsome
1.30.93 - 2.14.11

*We celebrate the lives
of these children
and honor all those
who love them.*

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