



Jayden Crooks has spent almost his whole life in the hospital. Fellows such as Amy McGrory make his stay a little easier.

Comforting Kids

Child Life Program Offers Companionship When Families Can't

Jayden Crooks was born four months early, with lungs too tiny to work on their own.

He has a host of medical complications, ranging from Down syndrome to a need for a breathing and feeding tube. For almost all of his life, 2-year-old Jayden has lived at Cincinnati Children's, where a medical team can care for him around the clock.

"It's been pretty rough," says 21-year-old Jessica Crooks, his mom, a single parent who doesn't drive and tries to make it to the hospital a few times a week. "I'm young and never thought I would have to go through all of this."

Crooks says it comforts her to know someone can be there for Jayden when she's not. Jayden gets companionship through a program called Josh Cares, a charity that operates out of the hospital's Division of Child Life. The program pays salaries for five Child Life fellows, who spend time with patients like Jayden.

Josh Cares was born from tragedy. In 2004, 10-year-old Josh Helfrich was struck by a car. Josh's parents, who were in the hospital with Josh before he died, were moved by the sight of other long-term patients who were alone when their

parents couldn't be there. They set up the program to give kids a familiar face to fill their lonely hours, play with them or just hold their hand.

Amy McGrory, a certified Child Life specialist and Josh Cares fellow, helps fill that void for Jayden.

"The central theme of Child Life really is play," she says. "We try to help normalize the situation while they are in the hospital."

Fellows keep a scrapbook for families to record milestones such as birthdays and first steps. For McGrory, it's like being an extended part of the family.

"To help a child or a parent through a difficult situation is really rewarding to me," she says. "I see us as a link between the complicated medical things that are going on with a child and the families who want to understand what's happening. We help things feel more familiar. We're just a real comfort for the family." 



WATCH ONLINE To learn about Amy McGrory's story and hear her explain what she does as a Child Life specialist, watch her slideshow at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/amy-yh

Easing Fears

It can be scary to be a kid in a hospital. The Child Life program at Cincinnati Children's — the largest and one of the oldest of its kind in the country — is all about making hospital stays a little more comfortable.

You might see our specialists blowing bubbles to distract children during medical procedures, playing music at a patient's bedside, or spending time explaining medical terminology to a parent.

Our Child Life services include activity centers, family movie nights and school tutoring programs. Our specialists are certified members of the health care team, with degrees in child life, education, child development and related fields. They are here to get to know your child, ease fears, and explain, in kid-friendly terms, what's going to happen next.



LEARN MORE online about the Child Life program at Cincinnati Children's, see www.cincinnatichildrens.org/child-life-yh



Ask the Pediatrician

If you have a question for Dr. Kirkendall, email him at youngandhealthy@cchmc.org

Q. My Child is Overweight. What Can I Do?

A. Obesity is all over the news these days. Americans are heavier than ever, and this trend is extending to our children in alarming fashion. Hardly a day goes by without some new, startling statistics being reported in the medical literature or other media. The silver lining to this cloud is that pediatricians and other doctors are getting more training and funding to combat obesity and obesity-related diseases.

Weight issues are difficult to deal with, and the stigma that comes with being overweight can be debilitating to the efforts to gain control of the problem. Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to teasing and social isolation during their formative years. This can set destructive patterns for the rest of their lives. In addition to mental health consequences, obesity can be life-threatening, leading to heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

Unfortunately, there isn't an easy answer or cure for being overweight. While there is lots of research taking place for new treatments, the best advice remains to address diet and exercise behaviors. Below are some suggestions and tips on how to help your overweight child:

- Set an example. Obesity often runs in the family. If you are overweight, try to lose weight along with your child. Doing it together is often more successful (and easier) than trying to do it alone.
- Talk to your child about weight issues in a gentle, supportive way. Encourage and reward healthy behaviors.
- Discuss treatment options with your child's pediatrician. This often requires a more thorough discussion than can take place during a well-child visit.

- Exercise. Most children don't get anywhere near the level of physical activity they should. Kids should have 60 minutes of some physical activity per day.
- Cut back on sedentary or couch potato-like activities. Excessive TV and video games only worsen the problem.
- Start a weight-monitoring program with your child. Daily weighing and weight calendars will help monitor progress and will provide your health care providers with better information.
- Start nutritional monitoring. Many weight-loss programs will train you how to keep track of calories and make healthier food choices.
- Find more resources on this topic at the American Academy of Pediatrics' web link: www.aap.org/obesity or at www.healthychildren.org. Losing weight is not easy or immediate, but it can be done with close attention to behavioral, dietary and exercise modifications.

Eric Kirkendall, MD, FAAP, is a staff physician in general inpatient services in the Division of General and Community Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's. He is president of the Cincinnati Pediatric Society.

Our Rockin' Cards for Kids

Young Artists Spread Cheer to Patients

Clarke Bordelon is a fan of rock music, and his guitar-themed "Kids Rock at Cincinnati Children's" artwork took first place in our "Design a Card" contest.

The story behind his entry is winning all by itself. Clarke suffers from a bone marrow disorder and came last year from his home in New Orleans for treatment by our specialists.

Life before treatment was unbearable, with constant dangerous infections and illnesses, his mom, Sue Bordelon, wrote in a note that accompanied Clarke's drawing.

"When Clarke was in the hospital in November, the music therapist brought in a guitar and helped him express his feelings with music," she wrote. "He helped calm Clarke down at a very scary time."

Today, Clarke is still monitored closely. But he is doing much better.

Just like nearly 250 other kids, he entered our contest to spread some cheer to other kids in the hospital. His winning design will be featured in our online card section, where people can create electronic cards that get printed and delivered to our patients.

Our winners, at right, counter-clockwise order. 1st Place: Clarke Bordelon, 2nd Place: Josh Hoeflich, 3rd Place: Joel Grosser, Honorable Mention: Cate Weyman



WATCH ONLINE To see a slideshow featuring nearly 40 entries, at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/card-contest-yh





Alternative treatments at the Integrative Care Clinic brought 9-year-old Frank Rokich relief.

From Chaos to Calm

Mom's Quest Leads to Holistic Services

Sharon Rokich couldn't take her son anywhere. A trip to the grocery was a guaranteed meltdown.

Even when her son Frank outgrew the toddler stage, he would be overcome by something in the store, and his behavior would spiral downhill. Sharon didn't even entertain the idea of taking him to a restaurant or sporting event. All she wanted was a little calm.

Frank Rokich, now 9, wasn't just a typical boy giving his mother a hard time. His problems were a little bigger. As a 6-month-old baby, he had infantile spasms, a type of seizure. By the time he was 2 and a half, Frank had problems processing his senses.

He was diagnosed with sensory integration disorder, which was like a traffic jam in his brain. It affected his language, vision and hearing. He also had behavioral problems and symptoms similar to autism. He was receiving treatments for his condition, but his mother constantly searched for more ideas.

"I knew I had to do something pretty big because he was not interacting with us," Sharon says. "We tried a brushing technique all over his body. It worked really well."

With the green light from Frank's doctor, Sharon tried other nontraditional treatments for him, including music therapy and craniosacral therapy (a gentle touch that allows a therapist to monitor the flow of fluids to the brain). The efforts seemed to work.

"All of a sudden, you could see he felt better," Sharon says. "He was calm, and he could interact with us."

Frank's initial treatment included occupational, physical and speech therapies. Sharon added alternative therapies, swimming and horseback riding to his treatment repertoire. When she saw what a difference it made, she became relentless about asking therapists at Cincinnati Children's how to better help Frank through therapies that would treat the whole child, not just his individual problems.

Sharon and Frank were the inspiration that moved staff at Cincinnati Children's to take steps toward developing the Integrative Care Clinic, says Susan Gray, a licensed massage therapist/holistic health specialist.

The clinic offers craniosacral therapy, massage therapy, pediatric yoga and other services to help kids like Frank with pain, discomfort, anxiety and behavioral issues. The clinic sees a wide range of patients, from those going through rehab after an injury to kids who use wheelchairs. Some seek treatment for head injuries, seizures and headaches or because of conditions such as cerebral palsy.

"When I first saw Frank, he would be squirming around and he wasn't speaking in complete sentences," Gray says. "Now he's able to relax." 🐾



WATCH ONLINE To learn more about Frank's story and see a slideshow of the kinds of holistic therapies Cincinnati Children's offers, go to www.cincinnatichildrens.org/frank-yh.

WHAT IS INTEGRATIVE CARE?

Parents increasingly ask pediatricians at Cincinnati Children's about using natural interventions to keep their children healthy. More and more, families are seeking an approach to medicine that treats the whole child — body, mind and spirit.

At Cincinnati Children's, we agree that a holistic approach can help. That's how the hospital's new Integrative Care Clinic came about.

Integrative Care refers to a broad range of therapies performed by practitioners specifically trained to work with children to help them manage pain, improve circulation, loosen muscles and reduce stress. Our therapies include:

Massage Therapy: Our licensed massage therapists can treat children as young as infants to help correct body alignment and soothe problems in the nervous system. Touch therapies offered include deep tissue massage, tissue release, gentle massage, infant massage, craniosacral therapy and lymphatic drainage therapy.

Pediatric Yoga: Our pediatric yoga therapist is certified to work with children with special needs, such as kids with Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy or learning disabilities. We offer individual sessions that teach both the child and parents a variety of yoga poses that can increase strength, flexibility and coordination. Children also learn breathing exercises and relaxation techniques to improve concentration and reduce hyperactivity.

Biofeedback: Our certified practitioners can teach children relaxation-response techniques to help them manage headaches or other pain. The idea is to teach children to use signals from their own bodies to help control heart rate, blood pressure, temperature and muscle tension.

These therapies are available to children while they are in the hospital at Cincinnati Children's or on an outpatient basis through the Integrative Care Clinic with a referral from your physician.



Find out how Integrated Care therapists with patients work at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/integrative-care-yh.



Lapping
It Up



Four-Legged Volunteers Bring Smiles to Patients

The passageway through the central corridor at Cincinnati Children's is a hallway where, on any given day, someone is bound to be having a bad day.

Tired-looking parents struggle with the stresses of having sick children. Families navigate with wheelchairs and strollers past doctors, nurses and staffers who head to appointments and hospital rooms.

But something special happens when Abby enters the building. The mood lightens. People stop and smile. Conversations begin. Even the security guard leans down and asks to pet her.

Abby Golden Doodle, a 75-pound cross between a standard poodle and golden retriever, is a therapy dog. From the moment her owner, Greg Park, gets out her special hospital leash, Abby knows it's time to go to work.

Three-year-old Abby doesn't mind having strangers reach out to touch her. The big, white dog with the tightly wound poodle coat laps it up and looks like she's smiling back at everyone who smiles at her.

"You would think my wife and I never pet her," Park says. "She loves the attention."

Making the Cut

It's not easy to get to be a therapy dog at Cincinnati Children's. The qualifications are strict: Only the most laid-back and loving dogs make the cut.

More than 120 owners a year volunteer their dogs to be part of the program. Only about 10 percent of those pets pass the temperament test, says Edith Markoff, PhD, coordinator of the dog visitation program.

Basic obedience isn't enough. It takes a dog that can be comfortable inside the walls of a hospital and around unfamiliar equipment, glass doors, elevators, slick floors and unfamiliar noises.

"They have to be friendly and outgoing but calm enough to be around kids who are medically fragile," Markoff says.

Abby, who already had experience visiting schools and nursing homes, became part of the hospital program a year ago. It's something her owner had in mind when he chose her breed.

Park, an attorney by trade, bought the dog as a retirement gift to himself. He took Abby to puppy school and to three behavior and obedience classes to prepare her for making hospital rounds.

Left: As a therapy dog, Abby must be bathed before every visit to protect hospital patients. Once she puts on her hospital leash, she knows it's time to go to work.

"Her success as a volunteer visiting dog is really due to her personality more than the training," Park says. "Her personality is very sweet and loving and gentle, very much a people dog, and very much a children's people dog."

Four-Legged Medicine

During one recent visit, the crowd that gathered to meet Abby included Zachary Schultian, a 13-year-old who suffered a head injury while trying to steal third base during a baseball game. Zachary ended up with a concussion and in a wheelchair because his feet kept buckling under him. But his spirits perked up as soon as he saw Abby.

Zachary hugged the dog like his long-lost best friend and even got out of his wheelchair to get closer.

Watching that kind of interaction makes Park smile.

"It's gratifying to see the joy that she brings people," he says. "It's a delight to have such a loveable dog."



WATCH ONLINE Listen to Greg Park tell Abby's story see her slideshow at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/dog-yh



Volunteer, Greg Park, trained Abby to be a therapy dog.



Abby brought patient Zachary Schultian a much-needed smile during a hospital stay after Zach's baseball accident.



Lisa Hunter, PhD, identifies middle-ear problems in infants.

More Accurate Hearing Tests

Every year, thousands of parents receive unwelcome news from routine newborn screening tests – results indicating that their children are not hearing as well as they should. About 90 percent of these unnerving initial results turn out to be “false positives” that unnecessarily alarm families and drive up health costs. Lisa Hunter, PhD, director of the Division of Audiology at Cincinnati Children’s, will use a \$1.3 million grant to test an ear probe that can double-check a newborn’s initial hearing test. “If we can find out which babies have a middle-ear problem versus a permanent hearing loss, we can reduce the number of infants receiving unnecessary diagnostic testing,” she says.

TO LEARN MORE, visit www.cincinnatichildrens/hearing-test-yh

Gene Region Linked To Severe Food Allergy

Researchers at Cincinnati Children’s have identified an area of the human genome believed to contain a gene responsible for a severe, often painful type of food allergy that leaves its victims unable to eat a wide variety of foods. Eosinophilic esophagitis also may cause weight loss, vomiting, heartburn and swallowing difficulties. The study team, led by Marc Rothenberg, MD, PhD, found that the allergic condition was linked to a specific chromosome that contains a gene associated with other allergic inflammatory diseases. Scientists hope the finding leads to better treatment for kids with severe allergies.

TO LEARN MORE, visit www.cincinnatichildrens.org/allergy-gene-yh

New Center to Focus on Communication Disorders

Our ability to communicate through spoken language requires the proper function of a wide range of capabilities – hearing, speech and the brain’s capability to convert sounds into words with meaning. Likewise, understanding what happens when language and communication skills don’t develop properly requires a broad spectrum of expertise. The newly formed Communication Sciences Research Center at Cincinnati Children’s was founded to bring together exactly that kind of expertise. More than 20 researchers affiliated with the center will focus on translating basic research into more effective treatments for communication disorders.

TO LEARN MORE, visit www.cincinnatichildrens.org/language-yh

Footnotes



A Cincinnati Children’s team recently led a medical mission trip to Ghana.

Colorectal Team Helps Out in Ghana

The road ahead looks much brighter for 25 children who received advanced colorectal surgery — thanks to 27 people who made a 5,600-mile journey from Cincinnati to the western coast of Africa. After nearly two years of planning, a group led by Marc Levitt, MD, director of the Colorectal Center for Children at Cincinnati Children’s, took a weeklong medical mission trip to Ghana in January. Local surgeons performed 26 operations to help children with Hirschsprung’s disease, anorectal malformations, fecal incontinence and other problems. To learn more about their medical mission, check out the slideshow at www.cincinnatichildrens.org/ghana-yh

Clinic Opens for High-Risk Moms

The Fetal Care Center of Cincinnati has opened a Pediatric Disease and Pregnancy (PDAP) Clinic for moms-to-be who have had pediatric health conditions. The clinic serves women who have or have had conditions that can affect pregnancy, such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia, pediatric cancers and blood diseases, colorectal malformation, inflammatory bowel disease, organ transplants, heart disease and endocrine disorders. The clinic team connects women with specialists in high-risk obstetrics. To learn more, visit www.cincinnatichildrens.org/fetal-care-yh

Health and Human Services Chief Visits

The future of health care is here. And it’s in practice at Cincinnati Children’s. That’s what Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, declared after touring the medical center in April and seeing how patient-centered care

and the use of information technology translate into high quality health care. “This term ‘patient-centered’ is used a lot,” said Sebelius, a Cincinnati native who came back to visit the hospital at the invitation of President and CEO Michael Fisher, “but to see what it really means here is impressive.”

Patient Announces Steelers’ Draft Pick

Pittsburgh Steelers’ fan Zach Hatfield, a 15-year-old leukemia patient from Belfry, Ky., lived out a dream in April through the efforts of the Make-A-Wish Foundation. He got to announce the Steelers’ first-round pick at the NFL Draft at Radio City Music Hall in New York. Zach has acute promyelocytic leukemia, a rare form of cancer of the blood and bone marrow. While the family was here seeking treatment, they learned their home in Belfry was destroyed in a fire. After Zach’s last bone marrow treatment, they were able to settle into a new home in Belfry. Zach’s doctors hope the worst is behind him.

Headache Center Expands

Beginning this summer, the Headache Center at Cincinnati Children’s — already the largest pediatric headache center in the world — is expanding to see patients up to 25 years of age. That will allow doctors to follow patients longer and find ways to manage headache problems as teens enter adulthood. Researchers have found teen girls suffer more debilitating headaches than any other segment of the population. Doctors say if they can treat severe childhood headaches early enough, they may be able to reverse the progression of migraines. To learn more, visit www.cincinnatichildrens.org/headache-center-yh



Our involvement in clinical trials is crucial to our understanding of diseases and developing new ways to prevent and treat them. That's where you come in. You can help by joining a research study. Here's what we're recruiting volunteers for now:

Decreasing Teen Anxiety

What: This is a research study to evaluate whether the use of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), a noninvasive handheld magnet put gently over the scalp to stimulate brain activity, could help children with

obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) feel less anxious.

Who: Kids from age 12 to 17 who have been diagnosed with OCD may be eligible to participate.

Pay: Families who complete four visits will be paid \$50 for time and travel.

Contact: Cathy Meyer at 513-636-0229. or cathy.meyer2@cchmc.org.

Learning More about Asthma

What: This is a research study to learn more about the role that genes and environmental exposures have in determining why some children develop asthma and allergies. It also will look for ways to prevent, control or reduce asthma and allergy symptoms.

Who: Children ages 5 to 18 who have been diagnosed with asthma and have been living in the Cincinnati area for at least five years may be eligible to participate.

Pay: Families will be paid between \$40 and \$60 for time and travel and may receive a diet analysis report free of charge.

Contact: Sara Stigler at 513-636-6651 or asthmaresearch@cchmc.org.

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Advisers: Chris Peltier, MD, and Zeina Samaan, MD
Editorial Consultant: Eric Kirkendall, MD
Managing Editor: Tanya Bricking Leach

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For the Fridge

Summer Safety Tips

When you're packing a bag for the pool or for vacation, keep this doctor-recommended advice in mind from community pediatrician Jennifer Ernst, MD:

1. Apply sunscreen whenever outdoors, even if cloudy. Use at least SPF 30 and reapply frequently.
2. Never leave children unattended near water. Teach them water safety rules.
3. Wear sunglasses. They may help prevent cataracts and other eye disorders.
4. On hot days, drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
5. When participating in outdoor activities, wear appropriate protective/safety gear (such as bike and skateboard helmets, wrist and knee pads, life jackets while boating).

Jennifer Ernst, MD, is a community pediatrician associated with Cincinnati Children's. She practices at the Patient First Crestview Hills office in Northern Kentucky.



Be a Rock Star

Enter Our Songwriting Contest



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Has Cincinnati Children's touched your life? We want to hear about it. **In a song.**

We want kids to write lyrics to a song about Cincinnati Children's and record an "American Idol"-style performance. You can rock out, create a music video and even choreograph a dance to go along with it. With a parent or guardian's permission, upload your video to your YouTube page and send us a link at **youngandhealthy@cchmc.org**.

Songs should run no longer than one minute. We'll post the finalists on our web site, and we'll let viewers vote for their favorite. Winners will receive gift certificates to iTunes, and their song will live on in our web page library.

The deadline is July 26. For the complete rules and entry form, go to www.cincinnatichildrens.org/songwriting-contest-yh

Sign up for our e-newsletter at
www.cincinnatichildrens.org/subscribe-yh

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SUMMER 2010



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