

CHILDREN'S NATIONAL

CARE AND CURES FOR KIDS

Magazine

SUMMER 2026

Mikaela Rings the Bell and Ushers in an Era of Hope

The Future of Nursing



Bringing MRI to More Patients

“

Hearing that your child has cancer was crushing. She was just so young, just a baby. All we could think about was, 'Would she ever walk again? Would she even live?'"

— Jon, Mikaela's Dad



Children's National.



Letter From the President & Chief Executive Officer



“Each victory reminds us of our purpose, and we are honored to share one with you.”

— Michelle Riley-Brown

This year marks a remarkable milestone — our 155th birthday — a testament to the legacy we have built. As we celebrate, I am thrilled to introduce you to the refreshed look of our signature publication. Welcome to Children's National Magazine: Care and Cures for Kids.

Now, we invite you to turn the page with us. We will continue to take you behind the scenes with our remarkable patients and pediatric leaders who pursue healthier futures for every family. We will also show how philanthropy is the engine that turns vision into reality. This new name reflects who we are and carries the Children's National legacy forward in all we do.

This renewal coincides with the launch of our ambitious 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, which strengthens our foundation and shapes our promising future. Anchored in five pillars — access to care, the patient experience, research and education, our people and our community — this plan is our roadmap to continued excellence.

In this issue, we sit down with Elizabeth “Beth” Wells, MD, MHS (pg. 24), who recently stepped into the role of chief clinical officer, to hear her perspective on what the Strategic Plan means for families, along with the joy she finds in watching patients grow into healthy young adults.

Each victory reminds us of our purpose, and we are honored to share one with you.

Our cover story (pg. 6) features Mikaela, a Minnie Mouse fan whose courageous fight with aggressive leukemia led her to groundbreaking T-cell therapy at our Center for Cancer and Immunology Research. When she rang the victory bell, we celebrated her family's courage, her care team's dedication and the years of research that made it possible.

Throughout these pages, you can explore how scientific advances pave the way to extraordinary care. In Lead the Way (pg. 14), we spotlight how we use artificial intelligence to expand the use of MRI across our hospital and around the globe, transforming this lifesaving imaging into a more accessible tool. Our look at nursing innovation (pg. 17) shows the passion and ingenuity our nurses bring to the bedside, as they develop ways to make care smarter and gentler.

I am proud of what we are building together and grateful for your support. I hope you enjoy this magazine as we step confidently into a bright new era.

With gratitude,

Michelle Riley-Brown, MHA, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Children's National



Snuggled up with Minnie, Mikaela finds comfort during treatment

“Participating in the RESOLVE trial made us feel like we had the power to do something to make her better. It also meant Mikaela and Nathanael could help others struggling with this disease to have hope and suffer less.”

— Jon, Mikaela's Dad

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CARE AND CURES FOR KIDS

SUMMER 2026

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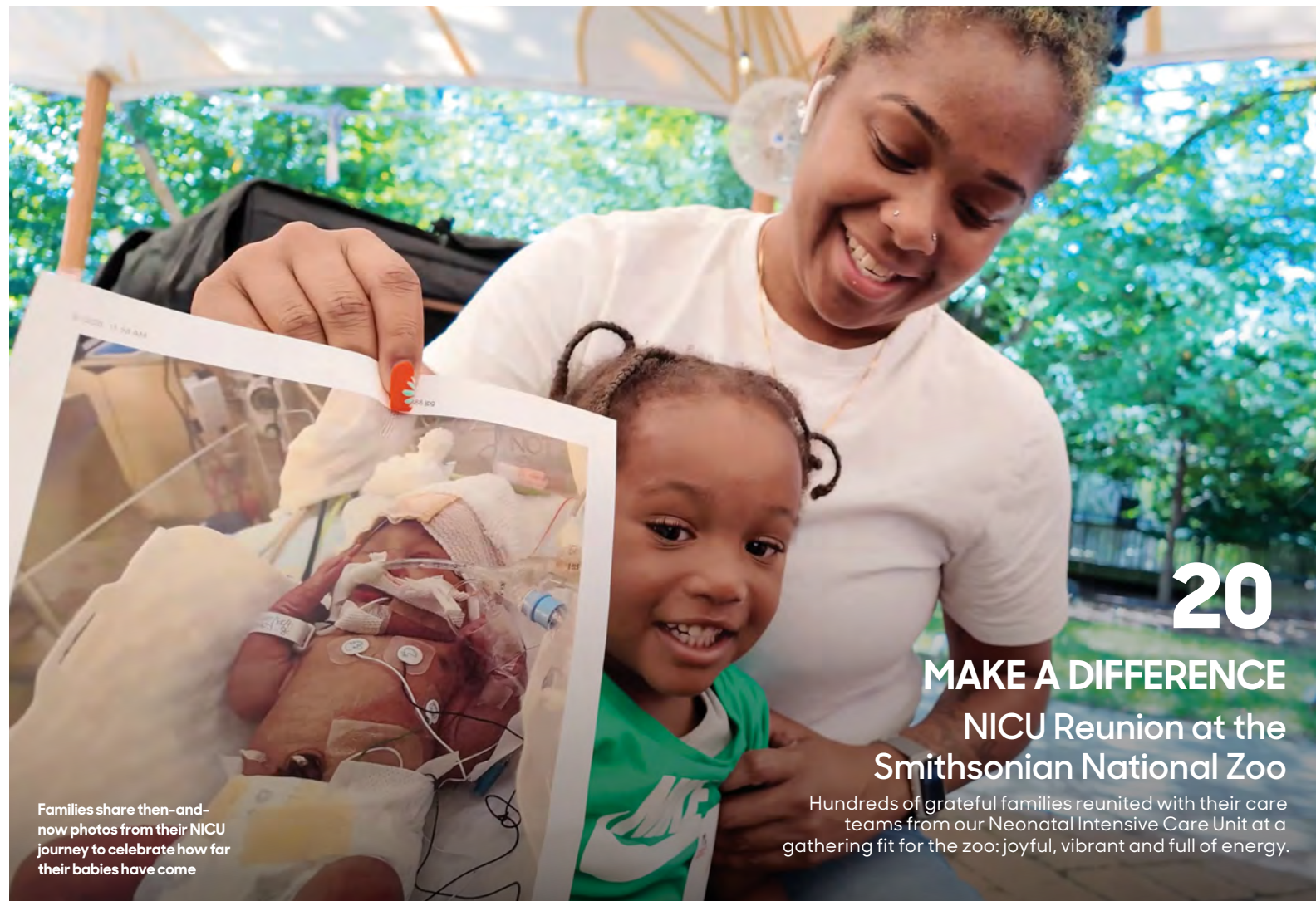
MIKAELA RINGS THE BELL

Inside the Groundbreaking Cancer Research Giving Families Like Hers Hope

Mikaela is cancer-free, following her family's brave participation in a clinical trial at Children's National. Her ringing of the victory bell to celebrate her remission sounded an optimistic note for the future of pediatric cancer treatment.



Mikaela with her parents and brother during her hospital treatment



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MAKE A DIFFERENCE

NICU Reunion at the Smithsonian National Zoo

Hundreds of grateful families reunited with their care teams from our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at a gathering fit for the zoo: joyful, vibrant and full of energy.

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Neighbors discovered the power of community when their newborns faced the same life-threatening heart condition. They offer families hope through the Race for Every Child.

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Children's Ball

Our signature event raised more than \$3.65 million to provide exceptional care to more kids, as we reimagine the future of pediatric health.

A Vintage Affair

The community gathered for an evening of fine dining and philanthropy to support the Fund for Every Child.

White Hat Gala

The technology industry rallies around a secure future for pediatric healthcare.

Costco Golf Tournament

Players raised more than \$3.2 million for Children's National at the 20th annual Costco Wholesale Northeast Charity Classic.

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A new mobile medical unit delivers world-class care to the community.

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MIKAELA RINGS THE BELL AND USHERS IN AN ERA OF HOPE

INSIDE THE GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH GIVING FAMILIES LIKE HERS A SECOND CHANCE

Mikaela's parents cheered when she took her first steps at 11 months. Then, around her 2nd birthday, the toddler insisted on being carried so often that they grew worried. Bruises surfaced on her legs. What they hoped was a normal regression turned out to be far more serious: the first sign of a rare blood disorder that evolved into an aggressive form of leukemia.

For weeks, Mikaela lived at Children's National, dressing up in hospital gowns, navigating a tangle of IV lines and keeping her beloved Minnie Mouse toys close by.

Today, Mikaela is an energetic preschooler following treatment with a pioneering T-cell therapy. With her siblings by her side — including her older brother, her bone marrow donor — she returned to the hospital just before her 4th birthday to ring the victory bell signaling she is cancer-free.

It was a celebration to remember.

Mikaela and her dad, Jon, share a special bell-ringing moment to celebrate her remission

Behind Mikaela's recovery is a story of extraordinary science, courage and hope. First, she received chemotherapy, the standard of care for children with leukemia. To boost the odds of achieving long-term remission, her parents turned to a cutting-edge clinical trial at the Center for Cancer and Immunology Research (CCIR) at Children's National.

The trial is called RESOLVE, short for a name that reflects its complex, targeted approach: Research of Expanded Multi-antigen Specifically Oriented Lymphocytes for the Treatment of VERY High-Risk Hematopoietic Malignancies. By engineering donor immune cells to find and destroy hidden cancer cells, this promising strategy aims to prevent relapse in children with more severe forms of leukemia.

Taking part in a clinical trial requires bravery — from patients and their parents. When the opportunity arose, Mikaela's family leaned in. Her father, Jon, has a background in science as a chemistry major who had interned in an immunology lab. He and his wife, Carmen, weighed the science and understood the risks. Ultimately, two of their three children — Mikaela and her older brother, Nathanael — joined the trial as patient and donor.

"Participating in the RESOLVE trial made us feel like we had the power to do something to make her better," Jon says. "It also meant Mikaela and Nathanael could help others struggling with this disease to have hope and suffer less."

Testing, Tweaking and Trying Again

Creating new treatments for patients like Mikaela requires years, sometimes decades, of painstaking research. Physician-scientists spend countless hours applying for funding to support their ideas. Once they receive it, they work to ensure reliability and safety. Small teams of investigators repeatedly run experiments to test and validate their results.

To advance research, healthy individuals provide blood, sometimes up to 36 vials in a sitting. One of these donors is Catherine Bollard, MD, MBChB, the Dr. Robert J. and Florence T. Bosworth Distinguished Professor of Cancer and Transplantation Biology Research at Children's National. As chief research officer and CCIR director, Dr. Bollard believes in the work so deeply that she regularly rolls up her sleeves to



Mikaela and her family. Inset: Dr. Catherine Bollard contributes to cancer research through a blood donation



Mikaela shares a moment with her parents during her treatment at the hospital



Dr. Bollard reviews lab findings



Mikaela celebrates ringing the victory bell with her family, alongside Drs. Jennifer Wang (left) and Keri Toner (right)

donate her own immune system for research.

In high school, Dr. Bollard lost a close friend, Diana, to cancer. Doctors cured Diana's Hodgkin lymphoma, but the chemotherapy and radiation eventually led to the same type of leukemia that Mikaela had, and Diana passed away.

Dr. Bollard later gave up a promising opera career to pursue a cure. She speaks often about how some cancers have had the same treatment regimen for 30 years: chemotherapy, radiation and surgery. Each can leave lasting impacts on a young body that may surface years after remission, affecting growth, organ function and fertility.

"Every year, about 15,000 young people in the United States hear, 'You have cancer,'" Dr. Bollard says. "They all deserve options that will preserve their quality of life."

Bold Ambitions for Tiny Cells

Dr. Bollard's team is developing treatments that attack disease at its source — the cellular level — with the goal of safe, lasting cures. Blood

cancers and solid tumors, including brain tumors, are a key focus.

CCIR investigators also lead the way internationally in developing new cellular therapies for children born with severely compromised immune systems and transplant patients who require immune-suppressing drugs.

At the heart of their mission are new treatments that harness the body's immune responses and deliver medicine tailored to each patient's unique needs. This may mean targeting a brain tumor or boosting an immunocompromised patient's ability to fight off infections such as norovirus.

In the RESOLVE trial, Dr. Bollard's team collects immune cells and key blood components from a healthy bone marrow donor and isolates the donor's tumor-killing T cells in the laboratory. Then, they strengthen the T cells' ability to target cancer cells.

"We train the T cells to be even more potent," Dr. Bollard says. "After a transplant, we give those boosted T cells back to patients like Mikaela. It's like giving her immune system a massive cancer-fighting upgrade. Through time and investigation, we hope to find that one dose should

provide Mikaela and others like her with lifelong immunity against cancer."

Answers Through Innovation

As the RESOLVE trial was enrolling new patients, Mikaela's family kept getting increasingly difficult news. Lab results showed a serious blood disorder called myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS). Even more devastating, the MDS soon progressed into acute myeloid leukemia, a far more aggressive and life-threatening disease.

"Hearing that your child has cancer was crushing," Jon says. "She was just so young, just a baby. All we could think about was, 'Would she ever walk again? Would she even live?'"

Mikaela's oncologist, Keri Toner, MD, and oncology fellow Jennifer Wang, MD, oversaw her care during two successful rounds of chemotherapy. But Dr. Toner knew that Mikaela's cunning version of leukemia carried a high risk of recurrence, which would demand harsh therapies that could impose a far greater toll.

Dr. Toner believed enrolling Mikaela in the RESOLVE trial — designed for patients with particularly significant risk — would offer additional reassurance by reducing the likelihood of relapse. The approach reflects the team’s commitment to translating research into patient care. Although the ongoing trial remains small, initial published results showed an 89% survival rate for patients after one year — with minimal side effects.

“At Children’s National, we are moving thoughtfully between discovery and delivery of treatments,” Dr. Toner says. “It’s wonderful to be able to offer novel treatment options to our patients.”

To qualify, Mikaela needed a donor for a bone marrow transplant. Genetic testing confirmed that her older siblings, Nathanael and Abby, were both matches. At age 10, Nathanael volunteered for the surgical procedure. He donated not only his bone marrow for Mikaela’s transplant but also his blood, which allowed researchers to manufacture the leukemia-killing T-cell therapy for the RESOLVE trial.

“I know the research world. It helped our decision-making and our understanding of what was going on,” says Jon, who tapped into his scientific background from the University of Maryland, Baltimore. “I was familiar with the benefits and the rewards that can happen. For us, the rewards of this research far outweighed the risks.”

The Sound of Hope

In June 2024, Mikaela officially started the RESOLVE trial. She had received her bone marrow transplant after being treated with chemotherapy to prepare her body to accept her brother’s healthy bone marrow stem cells. Scientists then fine-tuned a specialized T-cell therapy using Nathanael’s blood cells at a highly specialized lab at Children’s National — the only one of its kind in the Mid-Atlantic region able to manufacture these novel cell-based drugs.

Mikaela’s care team administered the T-cell

treatment in a single infusion, and it has kept her cancer at bay for more than a year.

When she rang the victory bell to celebrate being cancer-free last August, the team surrounded Mikaela to honor her bravery and her family’s strength. With a glowing magic wand in her hand, Mikaela walked through the oncology unit — wide-eyed, steady and needing no one to carry her. Providers waved pom-poms, and cheers filled the corridor.

Today, Mikaela has check-ups with her oncology team, though less often now. She gets to sing, dance and be a healthy kid again.

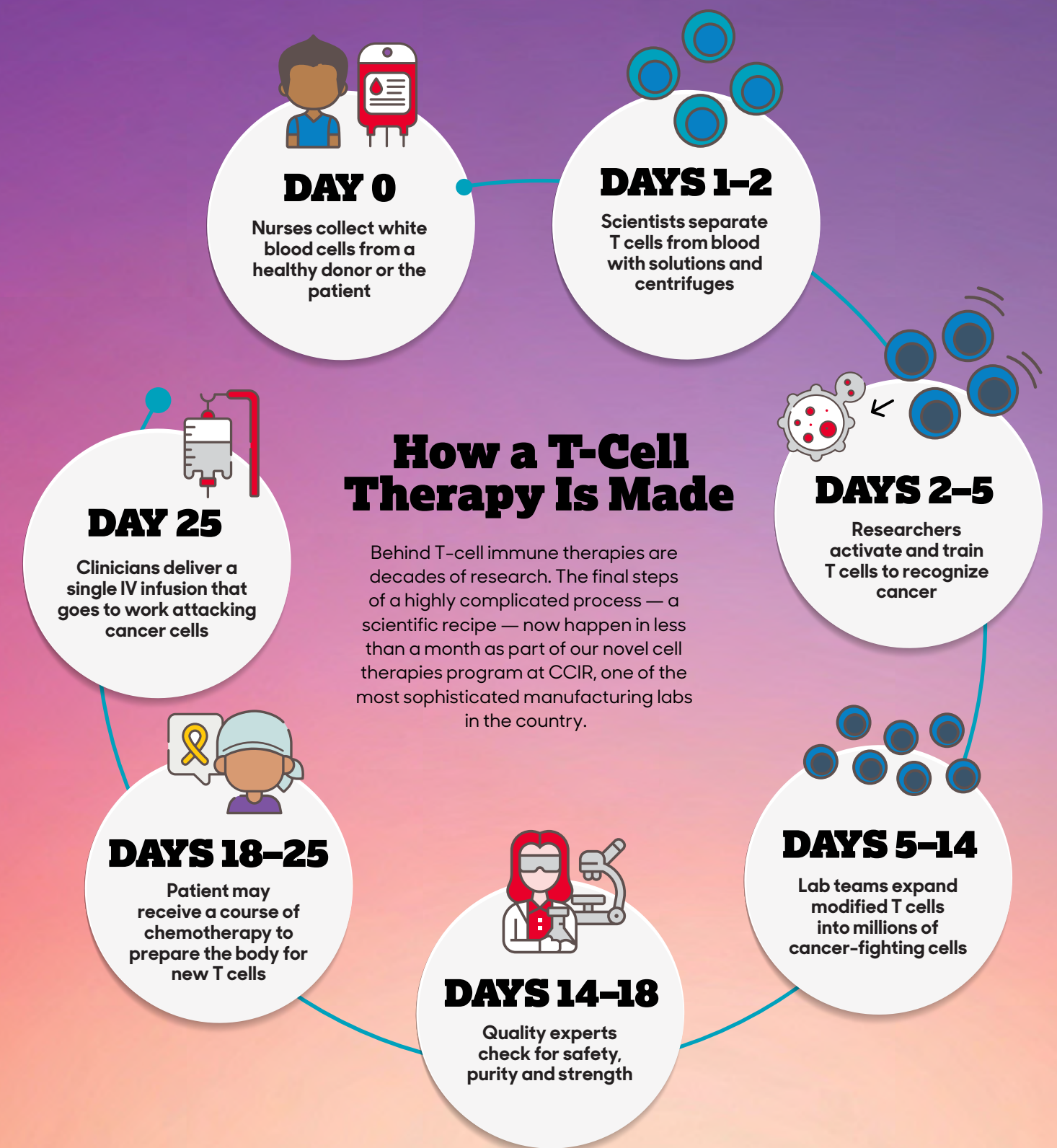
For researchers like Dr. Bollard, a child ringing the bell is the sweetest sound of all. “It carries notes of hope, healing and scientific triumph,” she says. “It reminds us why we pursue this research — to turn breakthroughs in the lab into moments like this. To my operatic ear, it’s more powerful than Puccini.”

“Hearing that your child has cancer was crushing. She was just so young, just a baby. All we could think about was, ‘Would she ever walk again? Would she even live?’”

— Jon, Mikaela’s Dad



Dr. C. Russell Cruz (left) supervises the retrieval of T-cell products frozen in liquid nitrogen



Powering Precision: Donors Who Drive Next-Generation Therapies

Donors invest in talented scientists, state-of-the-art equipment and research programs happening every day at Children's National. This advances the RESOLVE trial and other pioneering work. Here's a look inside how donor generosity sparks breakthroughs.



Dr. Kajal Chaudhry conducts research studies in the Elsie & Marvin Dekelboum Family Foundation Imaging Suite



Dr. Anthony Sandler, surgeon-in-chief



Dr. Dalia Haydar (right) oversees the manufacture of T-cell products that target cancer

The Klings Lead by Giving Back

For Jon and Allison Kling, supporting groundbreaking research and clinical care isn't just philanthropy — it's personal.

Nearly two decades ago, doctors diagnosed Jon's unborn son, Spencer, with neuroblastoma — an aggressive form of childhood cancer. Thanks to expert care at Children's National, Spencer is now thriving in college and has a passion for sports, politics and his own podcast.

That outcome drives the Klings to invest in neuroblastoma research, led by Anthony Sandler, MD, senior vice president, surgeon-in-chief, and the Diane and Norman Bernstein Professor of Pediatric Surgery at Children's National.

Dr. Sandler often says he welcomes advances that would get him out of operating rooms. His research focuses on teaching a patient's immune system to destroy cancer cells — a mission that resonates deeply with families who have lived this reality.

"I felt such a sense of relief to have Children's National in my corner," Jon says. "It's hard to

describe how agonizing the diagnosis was."

In addition to supporting Dr. Sandler, the Klings co-chaired the Children's Ball in 2025 and 2026 to provide hope for families facing any condition. "We want to inspire others to support this extraordinary place that brings next-generation care to families like ours," Allison says.

The Dr. Cyrus Katzen Foundation Backs Collaboration

Cell and gene therapies are reshaping what's possible for children with cancer and immune disorders. With visionary support from the Dr. Cywrrus Katzen Foundation, our novel Cellular Therapy Program at CCIR is working on safer, more targeted treatments that harness the immune system.

The Katzen Foundation's infusion of support meant Children's National could recruit Dalia Haydar, PharmD, PhD, in 2022. She quickly established one of the world's leading labs for developing and testing immunotherapies for pediatric brain tumors. She also investigates ways to boost these therapies by opening the blood-brain barrier or changing the tumor's environment in the body.

"Breakthroughs take time, patience and resources," Dr. Haydar says. "But there is also urgency. Our patients are waiting. I feel that every day, and I am grateful for the resources that push us ahead."

The Cellular Therapy Program is working on more than cancer. The Katzen Foundation also supports Michael Keller, MD, a pediatric immunologist and the inaugural Professor of Precision Medicine. He leads the gene-editing core and a team that develops novel cell therapies for immune-compromised

patients with life-threatening infections.

"We are just beginning to understand how to make careful adjustments to the immune system to enable us to target new diseases," Dr. Keller says. "With each success, we're giving families hope."

“Breakthroughs take time, patience and resources, but there is also urgency. Our patients are waiting. I feel that every day, and I am grateful for the resources that push us ahead.”

— Dr. Haydar

Meet Our Team Bringing Advanced Imaging to Patients

Children's National is helping usher in a new MRI revolution — one with the power to bring life-changing medical imaging to families around the world.

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has long let doctors peer deep inside the brain and other delicate organs in breathtaking detail without an incision or dose of radiation. Yet, for decades, MRI has been limited to major medical centers with the space, staff and resources to house machines that can weigh tons and cost millions. That could soon change.



Dr. Marius Linguraru and Daniel Donoho demonstrate the Hyperfine Swoop using babydoll Lilly to walk through the process



Drs. Linguraru and Donoho with the Hyperfine Swoop at the Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation

“The Hyperfine Swoop is 20 times lighter and multiple times cheaper than a regular MRI. It does not require sedation. We can scan a patient in as little as two minutes.”

— Dr. Marius George Linguraru

Cheaper, Lighter and Faster

A research team at Children's National is experimenting with new ways to expand access to MRI for kids. They are using artificial intelligence (AI) with an affordable, portable and commercially available MRI machine called the Hyperfine Swoop. This ultra-low-field scanner can roll into nearly any care setting and plug into a wall outlet. This includes operating rooms and intensive care units, which are highly sensitive to the strong magnets in traditional MRIs.

“The Hyperfine Swoop is 20 times lighter and multiple times cheaper than a regular MRI. It does not require sedation. We can scan a patient in as little as two minutes,” says Marius George Linguraru, DPhil, MA, MSc, director of the Division of AI Research and the Connor Family Professor of Research and Innovation. Dr. Linguraru is also a principal investigator at the Sheikh Zayed Institute for Pediatric Surgical Innovation.



A Clearer View With AI

Recognizing the vast potential to benefit more children, Dr. Linguraru's team tests AI algorithms that sharpen the blurry images these portable machines produce. Thousands of data points help clarify pictures of a child's brain. Intricate nuances emerge that approach the quality of a typical MRI.

The Gates Foundation invests in this work through its Ultra-Low Field Neuroimaging in the Young (UNITY) project. This research network links dozens of hospitals and research centers worldwide. UNITY is evaluating the tool for infant brain scanning and global health research into hunger, infectious diseases and other global conditions.

“We have reviewed thousands of cases, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. AI is the biggest technological leapfrog to enhance care for children everywhere,” Dr. Linguraru says. “Many children in low-resource countries will benefit from powerful medical imaging.”

Better Care for Kids

At Children's National, doctors use the Hyperfine Swoop and Dr. Linguraru's AI on an experimental basis. “One millimeter of precision can make all the difference for a child's health,” says Daniel Donoho, MD, a neurosurgeon who has used the device on around 100 patients over three years.

His patients with brain and spine disorders are often too delicate to move and endure a lengthy traditional MRI scan. The portable scanner is a game-changer for them.

Dr. Donoho also works with Dr. Linguraru to test the technology, thanks to a special \$100,000 global health grant from the Children's National Research Institute. In addition to bringing this imaging to new parts of the hospital, they hope to extend testing around the world, including to Tanzania and Ethiopia.

“This technology could extend access to MRI imaging for around 5 billion people,” Dr. Donoho says. “The potential is massive.”

REI SPOTLIGHT

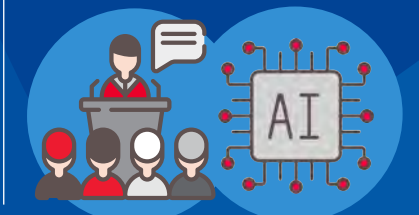
Ideas With Impact

Research, Education & Innovation (REI) Week spotlights the power of science to help children. Hundreds of faculty members gathered April 13–17 to share discoveries and make connections.

The week's theme called on our investigators to reimagine a brighter future for children through bold research and novel collaborations. Panel discussions and education workshops offered hands-on experiences. Lectures explored pediatric device development and global health initiatives for children. A “Shark

Tank”-style pitch event showcased research projects enabled by AI.

Events kicked off at the Children's National Research & Innovation Campus before moving to the hospital atrium. More than 450 poster presentations filled the room with novel insights from our clinical trials, research benches and bioengineering labs.



A Leader's Story: Our New Chief Nursing Officer

Long before she stepped into executive leadership, Cicely "CC" Brooks, DNP-ENL, MSN, RN, NE-BC, FAB, understood the stakes of healthcare. She was young when her grandmother died, and her family's difficult experience left a lasting impression.

"Growing up, we didn't really go to the doctor. That just wasn't part of our culture," Dr. Brooks says. "My grandmother also didn't have the financial means to see physicians or specialists, so she largely self-treated using the old-school remedies our grandparents relied on when access to healthcare was limited."

That early lesson now informs her work as senior vice president and chief nursing officer at Children's National.

In hindsight, Dr. Brooks can see how much might have been prevented, and her realization became a turning point. She set out to help others navigate the healthcare system and show what preventative care could look like.

Dr. Brooks received her bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of North Florida and started her career as an obstetrics nurse in Jacksonville, Florida. She then earned her master's

degree in nursing administration from Jacksonville University and her doctorate in executive nurse leadership from Baylor University.

Dr. Brooks' conviction only deepened years later as a parent when all three of her children required care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) shortly after birth.

Although she spent her early career working closely with pediatric and neonatal teams, nothing fully prepared her to navigate the NICU as a parent. "When it happens, having healthcare providers, especially nurses, who are empathetic, communicative and supportive makes all the difference," Dr. Brooks says.

She sees those values at Children's National. Drawing on more than 25 years of experience, Dr. Brooks wants to continue the mission she's always held dear: helping families feel safe and welcome during their most vulnerable moments.

"No one wakes up planning to bring their child to Children's National," Dr. Brooks says. "It's important that we create an environment of care — not just for patients and families, but for each other."

That commitment also shows up in how Dr. Brooks supports nurses as they drive research at Children's National. "When nurses bring forward ideas here, they aren't dismissed," she says. "That's why nursing remains such a trusted profession, because we adapt, we innovate and we stay at the forefront of change."



"No one wakes up planning to bring their child to Children's National. It's important that we create an environment of care — not just for patients and families, but for each other."

— Dr. Cicely "CC" Brooks



Dr. Cicely "CC" Brooks and Parent Navigator Alicia Duran bring smiles to a NICU patient

Nurses as Architects of Innovation

Advances in pediatric care often happen outside the lab. At Children's National, Dr. Brooks knows nurses can be the first to spot subtle changes, identify challenges and develop practical solutions that improve outcomes.

Because many children cannot speak for themselves, nurses step in as advocates, guided by both heart and science. That close connection to patients and families is where breakthroughs begin.

"Nurses are incredibly creative," Dr. Brooks says. "When we have systems that allow nurses to develop best practices and new ideas, the sky's the limit."

That ambition — blended with strong leadership and compassion — transforms how care is delivered. Here's a look at several programs that make a difference every day.

Better Outcomes for Hearts

Infants in our Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (ICU) face up to 75 stressors a day — from painful procedures to constant light and noise. These experiences can disrupt brain development, weaken immune function and affect emotional well-being. Parents feel the strain too: Up to half report profound emotional distress, which can also influence their baby's growth and development.

Two advanced practice nurses responded by launching a clinical research program to make the hospital environment more supportive for patients and families. Christine Riley, PhD, RN, CPNP-AC, a nurse scientist, and Melissa Jones, PhD, RN, CPNP-AC, director of our Neurocardiac Critical Care Program, collect and analyze data to transform the ICU from a place of survival into one of healing.

Their work, amplified by generous support from the Dunn Family, drives improvements in care that benefit children for their entire lifetimes.





A nurse guides a father through his first skin-to-skin moment with his newborn to foster bonding in the NICU

"Our goal is to nurture brain development and healthy bonding in the ICU while reducing the trauma of hospitalization," Dr. Riley says. "When we empower parents, we improve outcomes for children."

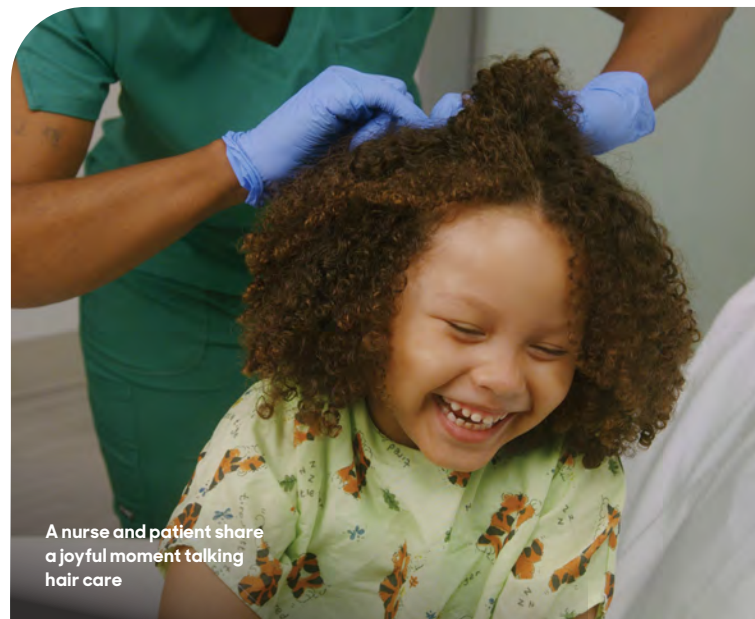
Care for Every Personal Detail

Nurses know that healing is not only clinical. It's deeply personal.

With support from the American Nurses Association, Reneé Roberts-Turner, DHA, RN, NE-BC, FADLN, executive director of nursing excellence, designed Hair For You. This program equips nurses with the skills and tools to support diverse hair textures in daily patient care — from proper scalp assessment to the use of gentle combs and universal shampoos.

"It's important to make children feel as much like themselves as possible, especially in a hospital setting, where they have limited control over their environment," Dr. Roberts-Turner says. "It supports kids' well-being and the healing process."

Dr. Roberts-Turner hopes the work will ultimately influence care worldwide. "Nursing leadership and innovation go hand in hand at Children's National," she says. "It's a joy to have the lane to pursue novel solutions."



A nurse and patient share a joyful moment talking hair care



Kenza receives care and support from a nurse during her hospital treatment

PATIENT SPOTLIGHT

Lifesaving Care for Kenza

Nursing support played a vital role in helping Kenza heal from a complex congenital heart defect. The busy toddler with the big laugh is thriving after undergoing three earlier surgeries and a recent procedure at nearly 3 years old.

Nurse practitioner Kathleen Reid, NP, CPNP-AC, guided Kenza's family through the delicate process of monitoring her health at home. She taught them how to track Kenza's oxygen levels, heart rate and weight in the months leading up to the major repair. Reid also helped coordinate care across multiple subspecialists to ensure the family never felt alone.

"Without Kathleen, we might have been lost," says Kenza's mom, Soukaina. "From the moment we came home, she was there to help us find solutions." Today, Kenza is hitting big milestones and learning to talk, a testament to expert nursing care.

The Power of Wellness

Nurses must take care of themselves to care for others. In 2023, philanthropy from the Nussdorf Family Foundation enabled Children's National to take an innovative approach to wellness. The gift allowed the hospital to hire its first full-time Nurse Wellness Program manager, Jill Horner, DNP, RN, CPN.

"Connection and relationship-building are central to nursing work and wellness. Nurses can establish a sense of community and belonging," says Dr. Horner, a former mentor in the Conway Nursing Pathway Program, which helps aspiring pediatric nurses build successful careers.

In her first year in this role, Dr. Horner identified key areas of need for wellness support and facilitated dozens of evidence-based coaching sessions. Her work contributed to the hospital's 2025 recognition as one of the first children's hospitals to receive the Well-Being Excellence™ Credential from the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Hear Nurses Lead

Drs. Brooks and Riley recently joined our podcast, "The Lead in Peds," hosted by Nathan Kuppermann, MD, MPH, chief academic officer. Throughout his career, Dr. Kuppermann says he has seen how nurses' enduring presence shapes care. "Nurses aren't just the glue holding everything together. They are heroes in medicine, saving lives and making a tangible difference every single day," he says.

For Dr. Brooks, that perspective reflects what happens when nurses are empowered to lead.

"It's powerful that nurses here feel they have a voice and know exactly where to bring an idea," Dr. Brooks says. "Nurses are lifelong learners, whether that means earning more degrees or learning at the bedside. We significantly influence how healthcare evolves."



Press play for the full conversation on nursing innovation with Drs. CC Brooks and Christine Riley on "The Lead in Peds" with Dr. Nathan Kuppermann.



CELEBRATING EXPERT CARE AND HEALTHY FUTURES FOR VULNERABLE BABIES

Every day, our Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) delivers world-class care to our tiniest patients — thousands of whom arrive each year by ambulance or helicopter. Born too soon or facing complex conditions like heart defects, these babies need expert teams, precisely sized equipment and extraordinary compassion.

More than 300 of those children and their families gathered in September with the doctors, nurses and staff who cared for them. Mide (ME-day), age 3, was among the graduates who came to celebrate growth and milestones at the Smithsonian National Zoo — a fitting backdrop for a joyful reunion. Her dad, Toye, shared their journey.



Families share then-and-now photos from their NICU journey to celebrate how far their babies have come



Surrounding Mide With Expert Care

BY TOYE

A Children's National parent

When my wife, Tutu, suddenly became gravely ill at 32 weeks pregnant, we rushed to the hospital in Virginia, unsure of what might come next. Her uterus ruptured, and she was in excruciating pain. An obstetrician delivered Mide by emergency C-section, with a team standing by to assess her condition. In those terrifying moments, doctors told us she may have gone without oxygen long enough to cause brain damage.

The Children's National transport team arrived and immediately intubated Mide. On the way to the ambulance, they gave me a moment with her. It was hard to see her through the incubator window. Mide was so small. I didn't know if she or Tutu, who was still in surgery, would survive.

The NICU's expert team provided constant care. Infant-sized equipment for MRIs and ultrasounds searched for signs of brain damage. Nurses fed Mide through her nose with a soft feeding tube until she could take donated breast milk by bottle. Soon, she started to improve.

Tutu was well enough to visit Mide a week later. Seeing my wife reach for our child for the first time brought overwhelming joy.

Everyone in the NICU cared for us as a family. They set up lactation consulting,



Mide with her mom, Tutu, and dad, Toye, during the NICU reunion at the National Zoo. Inset: Tutu with Mide while in the NICU

played soothing music, and brought us books and food. One nurse showed me how to change Mide's diaper — a challenge since she fit in my palm and weighed only about 4 pounds. A volunteer took cheerful newborn pictures.

Compassionate NICU staff made us comfortable enough to go home at night. We could watch Mide with a live-stream video system called NicView, and the nurses patiently took our late-night calls. After 26 days, we took Mide home, without any lasting ill effects from the trauma of her birth.

Today, Mide is a chatty and energetic preschooler. Looking back on those difficult days in the NICU, help was there everywhere we turned. The NICU reunion was a wonderful way to mark the experience and express our gratitude. That kindness and patience got us through — and will stay with us forever.



Donors like the Friedman and Miller families — and those who gave through A Vintage Affair — make NicView cameras possible. They gave Mide's parents peace of mind during her NICU journey.

Right: NICU families enjoy reunion-day cuddles with Dr. Bear, face painting, crafts and reconnecting with the nurses who cared for them



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE



At the NICU reunion, Parent Navigator Alicia Duran received the Starfish Award, a family-nominated honor recognizing NICU staff for outstanding care. She's pictured here with patient Jefferson.

“We get attached not just to the babies, but to the families too. The reunion is our chance to see those tiny babies grown into kids, running around and thriving. That's the reward.”

— Dr. Billie Short, Division Chief, Neonatology



Scan to read more inspiring NICU stories





Q & A With Dr. Elizabeth "Beth" Wells

Executive Vice President, Chief Clinical Officer and Physician-in-Chief | Children's National

We spoke with our new chief clinical officer, Beth Wells, MD, MHS, about the experiences that shaped her two decades at Children's National and the perspective she brings to overseeing care. She shared why she believes the hospital's 2025–2030 Strategic Plan will improve the lives of children and families — now and for years to come.



Providing Care



Research & Education



Our People



Access & Experience



Community

STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2030

What promises does the new Strategic Plan make to patients?

The plan promises that tomorrow's care will be even better than today's. It's a commitment that we will be with children and families throughout their entire journey — at diagnosis, during treatment and long after. We want them to feel heard and supported through what can be an overwhelming experience. Every child deserves access to excellent, holistic care, and that belief guides how we approach growth and innovation.

What does that look like in practice?

It means involving families from the very start and recognizing that their perspectives lead to better outcomes. We're focusing on care across the entire continuum. That includes stronger communication between pediatricians and specialists, smoother transitions after a hospital stay, and easier access to treatments and information. The goal is to make the experience simpler for families who already have so much to manage.

What are you personally most focused on as we move forward?

How care works for families, from access and appointments to transitions and follow-up. Going beyond the status quo is central to that, especially through our destination programs, where children come for care they can't find elsewhere. In addition, I'm focused on embedding mental health care into more specialty programs. We are leaders in this, and it makes a real difference. I also want to be

sure frontline voices are part of our decisions. That's where our expertise lives.

What role does philanthropy play in bringing this vision to life?

I've seen firsthand how donors strengthen programs and allow us to move faster and dream bigger. These relationships shape new ideas and challenge us to keep improving. I'm excited to work alongside our donors, as well as our clinicians and teams, to turn our Strategic Plan into real impact for children and families. Everyone will have a part.

That commitment to bold, mission-driven impact often starts with a personal calling. What drew you to pediatrics and eventually Children's National?

I grew up in Massachusetts in a busy family with three siblings, including a twin sister. Those family dynamics shaped a lot of who I am. My mom was a nurse, so medicine was always a part of our lives. I studied in a special program at Harvard University focusing on mind, brain and behavior, while also working as a lifeguard and swimming instructor. Seeing child development academically and in real life got me excited about pediatrics.

After college, I spent three years doing brain-imaging research at the National Institutes of Health, which led to medical school. During my training, I spent time at Children's National, where I connected with the people and the work. I found a passion for neurology, and it's been home ever since.

Are there patients or programs that remind you why advancing care matters so much?

There are many. As a pediatric neurologist, I cared for children whose lives were suddenly changed by concussions. They were out of school and sports, and families were scared about the future. At the time, science around concussions was changing. We were moving away from dark-room rest and toward a more active recovery approach. Children's National helped lead that shift. Hearing from children who reclaimed their lives — graduate from high school, go to college, build thriving careers — is so rewarding.

How has caring for children shaped how you'll lead as chief clinical officer?

Many of the children I've treated had multisystem diseases, which means one clinician cannot do it alone. You learn the value of teamwork across disciplines. I've also supported families through diagnostic uncertainty and long clinical journeys. Even when we cure children, some still have long-term effects. That experience reminds me that our role isn't just to provide cures, but to care for the whole child.

What are you seeing from this new, hospital-wide vantage point?

It's been energizing to work closely with Michelle Riley-Brown's leadership team. As president and CEO, she's assembled a group deeply committed to improving care for children. Even in a short time, I can see how strategy,

operations and finances connect. It's high-stakes work but also familiar. Balancing urgent needs with long-term goals is something physicians do every day.

As you look ahead, what moments remind you why your work and the Strategic Plan matter so much?

I've attended weddings of children with conditions we once thought were untreatable and received their first baby pictures. I've seen kids survive and thrive in ways we couldn't have imagined years ago. These moments stay with me and remind me why this work matters. It's not about statistics. It's about each child and their family. Our job is to keep advancing care so those stories continue.

"I've attended weddings of children with conditions we once thought were untreatable."
— Dr. Beth Wells



Sloane and Owen Dash to Brighter Futures



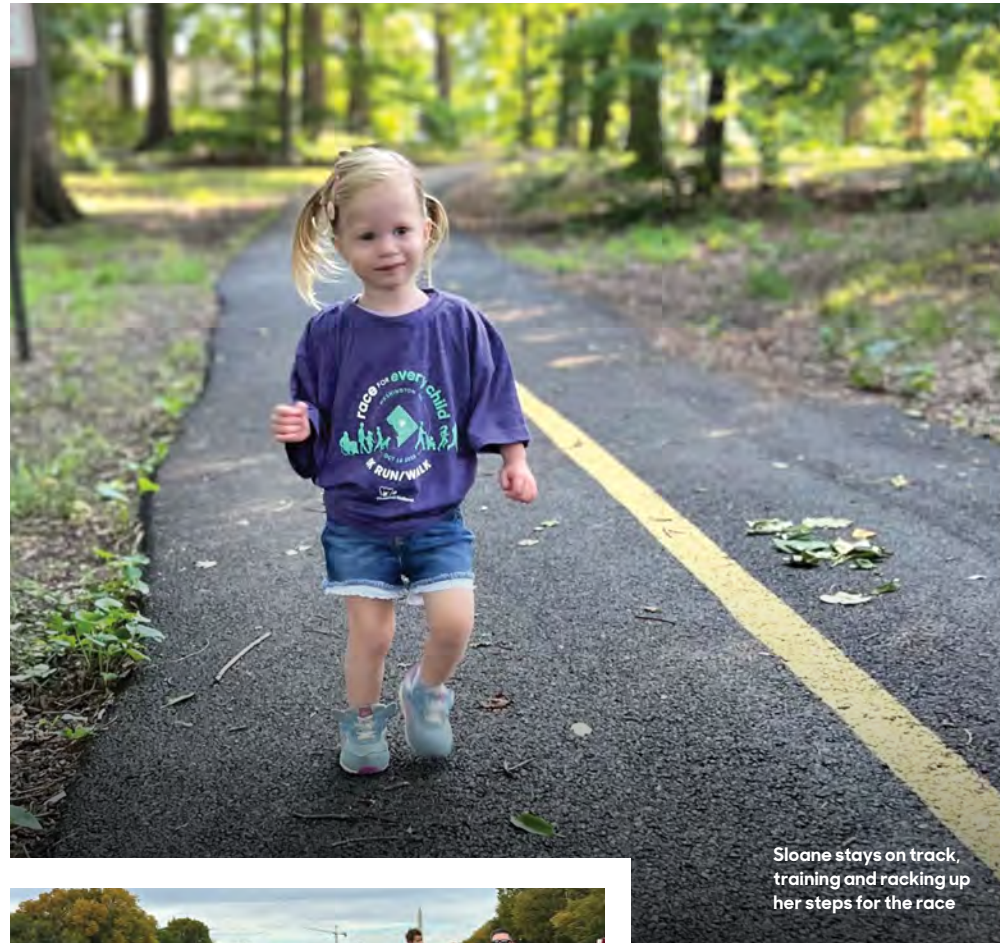
Sloane's and Owen's names both mean "warrior." As neighbors and friends, their families quickly learned just how fitting that was — side by side on journeys of strength, uncertainty and resilience.



From left: Paige, Owen, Sloane and Ian



Little racers meet superheroes while sporting their race team T-shirts



Sloane stays on track, training and racking up her steps for the race



Team No SLOWEN US DOWN



Owen gears up for a fun-filled beach day

“During the scariest time of our lives, the Children’s National team went the extra mile to take care of all of us.”

— Lauren Leake, Owen’s Mom

The Leake and Duffy families lived down the block from each other. But their bond transcended ZIP codes when they crossed paths in an elevator at Children’s National. Both babies were prenatally diagnosed with congenital heart defects and needed open-heart surgeries in their first days of life.

“My neighbor was living her own nightmare, yet when I saw her, I completely broke down,” says Lauren Duffy, Sloane’s mom. “She met me with nothing but comfort and understanding. From that moment on, she’s been an

unwavering source of support.”

Owen led the way with a successful surgery at 2 days old. Sloane soon followed, undergoing her own operation to heal and grow alongside her twin sister, Paige, and older brother, Ian. Today, the kids continue to rely on expert care across departments at Children’s National.

“The Duffy family understands on a level that very few do how crucial each appointment is, the struggles of getting a toddler to sit through an echocardiogram and how much their presence matters,” says Lauren Leake, Owen’s mom.

The families joined the Race for Every Child 5K Run/Walk in 2023 and created their team, No SLOWEN US Down, to honor their

kids’ progress and the power of the community they found. Each year, the team returns bigger and surpasses its fundraising goals. In total, they have raised nearly \$30,000 to support the Cardiac Neurodevelopmental Outcome Program. This ensures more kids like Sloane and Owen thrive and reach their greatest potential.

“During the scariest time of our lives, the Children’s National team went the extra mile to take care of all of us,” Lauren Leake says. “This journey touched so many people in our lives. Through the Race, our family and friends have a meaningful way to thank the hospital too.”

In 2025, Sloane and Owen served as ambassadors for the Race to

encourage community support and celebrate their health. They zoomed around the course with superhero capes and wide smiles.

With hearts beating stronger each day, Sloane and Owen return to Children’s National for check-ups and dash after each milestone together. Their parents treasure the moment the kids sprint across the finish line — a small moment that carries the weight of everything these brave warriors have overcome.

Scan to register for the Race for Every Child



The Trust: Recognizing Lasting Impact



Children's National welcomed a remarkable group of supporters in February at the inaugural Celebration of Gratitude for The Trust. The hospital established this group to recognize those whose extraordinary generosity — over \$1 million in lifetime giving — upholds the legacy of our hospital and lights the path forward in transforming children's health.

Participants at the event, held at the Mellon Auditorium in downtown Washington, D.C., shared a festive evening and abundant enthusiasm for Children's National. At the center of the celebration: the kids in our care. Patient ambassadors Lyla and Max reflected on their experiences and hopes.

"You have given me — and a lot of other kids — the chance to keep doing what we love," says Max, who uses his guitar to overcome cerebral palsy and to say thank you. "I can tell you firsthand that it means the world."

Children's National President and CEO Michelle Riley-Brown, MHA, FACHE, reflected on 155 years of philanthropy that fuels care. "For all those years, Children's National has delivered expert pediatric care at every milestone," she says.

The timeline below highlights moments that continue to shape our future.

“At the heart of everything we do, as a community, is a simple belief: Kids are our everything. This is more than our new hospital motto. It is who we are. And philanthropy makes that possible.”

— Michelle Riley-Brown



Celebrating 155 Years

Children's National celebrates a milestone birthday and shares pivotal events from our past.



1871

The first patients are admitted to a 12-bed hospital housed in a rented rowhouse on 13th and F streets NW

1888

Children's National opens a nursing school that continues until 1934



1918

Children's National cares for patients during the influenza epidemic, including children orphaned during the outbreak



1952

A donated, portable iron lung helps Children's National treat polio patients



1968

The Children's National Board of Directors approves a plan to relocate and build a new hospital



1984

A rooftop helipad is dedicated after Children's National is named a regional pediatric trauma center



2004

The animal visitation program launches



2015

Children's National doctors use magnetic resonance-guided high-intensity focused ultrasound (MR-HIFU) to destroy bone tumors without scalpels or needles



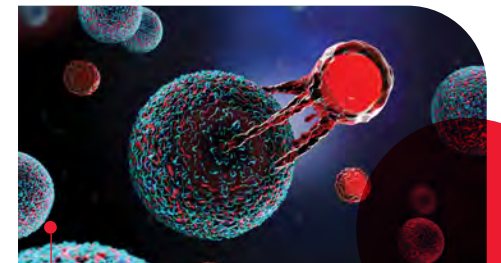
2021

The Children's National Research & Innovation Campus opens, which includes the Rare Disease Institute; primary care; and commercial, academic and government entities focused on pediatric research



2025

Children's National launches a first-of-its-kind CAR T-cell trial for pediatric solid tumors



Michelle Riley-Brown celebrates our 155th birthday with Dr. Bear and Children's National patients

Kids in Focus

Kids Are Our Everything



Welcome to Kids in Focus, our new section where we share stories of the care, expertise and philanthropy that uplift our children and families.

As we mark our 155th birthday, we introduced a motto that captures the heart of our mission: Kids are our everything. In each issue, this new section will bring this promise to life through the people and moments that define our community.

We begin with a closer look at the celebrations that support the Fund for Every Child. This vital initiative provides Children's

National with the flexibility to remove barriers for families, advance research breakthroughs and ensure every child receives the care they need. Events throughout the year — including Children's Ball, A Vintage Affair, White Hat Gala and the Costco Wholesale Northeast Charity Classic — support the fund and make our work possible.

We are grateful to share these and other stories with you — all for kids. Until the next issue, we invite you to watch a patient video for a behind-the-scenes perspective of care and philanthropy in action.



Scan to watch a special video featuring patient Mackenzie and the Fund for Every Child's impact



Children's Ball: A Night for Every Child

Children's Ball 2026 supporters help deliver world-class care when it matters most. That meant everything to Logan, who arrived at Children's National in cardiac arrest on Christmas Day in 2021. Thanks to Children's National clinicians — and the discovery and treatment of a rare metabolic condition — Logan survived.

"In the depths of our nightmare, we truly did not know what to expect," Melissa, Logan's mom, told the audience at the Ball. "Research saved Logan's life, and care gave him a future."

Melissa shared their story of science and expert care with the nearly 1,000 attendees gathered on April 25 at The Anthem in Washington, D.C. The evening raised more than \$3.65 million for the Fund for Every Child.

Children's National President

and CEO Michelle Riley-Brown, MHA, FACHE, spoke about the future of pediatric health as the hospital celebrates our 155th birthday. Over the years, nearly every aspect of medicine has changed but not our enduring commitment to kids. She said this anchors our new motto: Kids are our everything.

"Every child is welcome, no matter their illness or injury," Riley-Brown said. "From the tiniest of newborns to a high school athlete still wearing their jersey, our teams are prepared with specialized equipment, expert training and a deep understanding of what kids need."

Van Metre Companies, a real estate development and construction firm, received the Joseph E. Robert, Jr., Prize in Philanthropy, which honors extraordinary contributions to Children's National. Over nearly 35 years, the company's support has advanced cardiac care, research

and neurological outcomes for heart patients.

"Our first introduction to Children's National was 42 years ago, when my son Steven was born," said Rick Rabil, who recently retired as the company's CEO. He recalled meeting the late Dr. Frank Midgley, who operated on Steven.

Now thriving, Steven works with children with special needs in Fairfax County Public Schools. "Dr. Midgley was our hero and our friend. I think of him every day," Rabil said, adding that Midgley's care inspired the company's 34-year commitment to donating to and fundraising for the hospital.

"Research saved Logan's life, and care gave him a future."

— Melissa, Logan's mom



From left: Ball Co-Chairs Jon Kling, Rob Nichols, Rebecca Nichols and Allison Kling, joined throughout by patient ambassadors Caleb, Trinity, Lydia and Mackenzie



From left: Melissa, Logan and Jason Evans

A Vintage Affair: A Patient's Journey, A Lasting Impact

Twelve-year-old Zoé's experience at Children's National demonstrates the impact of wraparound care and art therapy. Even during cancer treatment, she found moments of joy and comfort through creative expression.

Art therapy — from sculpting clay to painting vibrant silk hoops — offered both relief and a welcome distraction. It became as essential as her medical care. "With cancer, every day was unpredictable," her mother, Brigitte, said. "But with art therapy, we knew it would be a good day."

This inspiring glimpse into care came to life at A Vintage Affair, where the Founders Auxiliary united the community to advance pediatric health. The evening raised nearly \$1 million to support children and families who rely on Children's National for care, with over 350 guests in attendance.

Each year, the Founders Auxiliary leads a live and silent auction, including a "Raise the Paddle" appeal that drives critical funding. This year's proceeds supported the Fund for Every Child to help kids like Zoé.



Zoé shares the power of art therapy, her mom by her side

A Different Kind of 'Tech Support'

The White Hat Gala didn't just celebrate its 10th anniversary. It set records — and patient ambassadors stole the show.

Sumukh overcame leukemia at age 9 and now plans to become a pilot and Cricket World Cup champion. He also fires up crowds: "As we'd say at a cricket match, make some noise everyone!"

The evening drew 800 community leaders and raised an unprecedented \$2.1 million for Children's National. This paves the way for the next decade of philanthropy, when the event returns to Washington Union Station on Nov. 19.

The gala has become an annual highlight for Washington, D.C.'s business community. Leaders in technology, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity have raised more than \$7 million for Children's National since the gala's launch.

Inspired by "white hat" ethical hackers, the event came to the U.S. a decade ago, modeled after a United Kingdom fundraiser for children in crisis.

Eric Wenger, who helped lead the fall event and will serve as chair in 2026, spoke from a place of purpose. He and his wife, Laurie, lost their middle daughter, Kayla, to brain cancer at age 12 after a five-year battle.

"We, and our surviving children, Sam and Madeleine, remain grateful to medical professionals

at Children's National who fought tirelessly to save our daughter," said Wenger, senior director of cyber and emerging tech policy at Cisco Systems. "We honor her memory by fighting to find cures for other families and their children."



From back left: Gala leaders John Martinez, David Trout and Paul Innella join patient ambassadors Sumukh and Lyla



Players finish a round alongside patient Sumukh

Costco Golf Tournament Drives Hope

The annual Costco Wholesale Northeast Charity Classic had players in full swing to support Children's National, raising more than \$3.2 million. Participants helped deliver specialized care for kids of all ages — from fragile newborns to growing teens.

This year's event marked 20 years of advancing pediatric care.

"I take great pride in the growth of this golf tournament since its inception in 2006," said Shelby Chapins, the event's co-chair. "Every dollar we raise truly helps save children's lives. It is an honor to witness and play a role of support."

Costco is a committed supporter of Children's National. The company's May Is for Miracles campaign invites shoppers to round up at the register to support Children's National and other pediatric hospitals. Costco has also sponsored the Race for Every Child since 2014.

It's inspiring to meet families impacted by the exceptional care at Children's National. Making that care possible for kids, their families and our community is incredibly fulfilling."

— Danika Scowcroft, Costco Charity Classic Co-Chair

Driving Care Forward: Our New Mobile Medical Unit

A new set of wheels is hitting the road for children's health. On April 22, Children's National unveiled a new Mobile Medical Unit during a ribbon cutting at Children's National THEARC.

Made possible through the support of the United Health Foundation (UHF), the new unit complements a recently refurbished one and advances our capacity to care for families.

Leaders from District of Columbia Public Schools, the DC Department of Health, UHF and other community partners joined the celebration and toured the unit.

The Mobile Medical Program meets children where they live, study and play — serving all 117 D.C. public schools and communities across the District and parts of Prince George's County, Maryland. The unit supports annual wellness checks, vaccinations, oral and vision screenings, referrals to specialty care and connections to social services.

"We are overjoyed to bring a new mobile medical unit to communities that are so deserving," says Hope Rhodes, MD, MPH, FAAP, medical director of Children's National THEARC and the Mobile Medical Program. "Kids are our everything. We are committed to giving them our best."



Leaders from United Health Foundation and Children's National cut the ribbon to open the new unit

A Patient's Perspective



Lyla, 16, says "normal life" and cystic fibrosis rarely go together. But that doesn't stop her. Diagnosed at age 4, she grew up balancing lung infections and breathing difficulties with a deep love for sports.

Care at Children's National keeps her in the game. No one watching her play flag football suspects she has a chronic, genetic illness. In middle school, she ran so fast her teammates dubbed her "the cheetah."

This summer, she hopes to compete in the NFL's national youth flag football championship.

In addition to school, sports and juggling daily breathing treatments, Lyla makes time to support Children's National. She has served as a patient ambassador, participating in our Race for Every Child and sharing her story at events, including the 2025 White Hat Gala.



How would you describe your experience at Children's National?

The people there are like family to me. One year, I had eight hospitalizations in nine months. I was tired and cranky a lot. My nurses and doctors were always so kind.

What's your favorite place at the hospital?

My unit — 7 East. It became my second home. Every nurse knew me. They helped me get through the hardest times and taught me about resilience.

Tell us about a time someone took special care of you.

I have had enormous support from my wonderful pulmonology team for years. It's all about the encouragement they gave me. The wonderful nurses, doctors and staff at Children's National gave me hope. They give it to every patient and their families every day.

You really like sports. Which do you like best?

I play travel soccer and am on a flag football team that competes around the country. I also used to play travel basketball. All of this has been possible because of my amazing pulmonologist, Dr. Hollis Chaney; the whole pulmonology team; and generous people who support Children's National!

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Senior Vice President, Chief Research Officer

Cicely "CC" Brooks, DNP-ENL, MSN, RN, NE-BC, FAB
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Now more than ever, families need hope and healing.

Together, we race to elevate pediatric care for every child.

race FOR
every child
5K RUN/WALK



Scan to register

Join us Saturday, October 17, 2026, at Freedom Plaza in Washington, D.C., or virtually.

Mikaela is why we race.

Kids Are Our Everything.

