

e-Currents

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Meet Marcus



When you're a parent of a child with a chronic medical condition, such as sickle cell, it can be overwhelming and all consuming. But, with the right medical team as a support system, it can help alleviate some of that fear.

Meet Marcus. He's one of the 100,000 Americans living with sickle cell disease.

"As a parent, it's difficult to watch Marcus live with sickle cell," shares Ashley, Marcus' mom. "Early on, Marcus was hospitalized every other month, sometimes twice in a month, because of pain crises."

Sometimes, those pain crises prevented Marcus from participating in fun activities like birthday parties, playdates, and even Halloween.

"Marcus has never celebrated Halloween. Every Halloween he is in the hospital," shares Ashley. "Marcus usually has a rough time as the seasons change because sickle cell can be impacted by the environment. When the weather changes, when it's getting hot or cold, when it rains – Marcus is impacted."

While sickle cell has proven to be a challenge for Marcus and Ashley at times, it is because of the support of their team at La Rabida that they have hope.

"It's very important to have a strong support system – including everything from great doctors, pharmacies and hospitals," shares Ashley. "I like that Marcus has everything that he needs in one spot. I don't have to travel different places and see a bunch of different people," shares Ashley. "He feels comfortable here. He actually request to be admitted and hang out with the Child Life Specialists – he knows who he wants to see. He has the most fun at La Rabida."

"Marcus has been at La Rabida since the very beginning of this journey and we wouldn't want it any other way."

Happy Thanksgiving from La Rabida!



At La Rabida, we take the holidays seriously and strive to ensure that all of our families have the opportunity to celebrate. On November 28th, patients and families gathered at the Gem on the Lake for La Rabida's 59th Annual Thanksgiving Day Feast.

Our guests included both inpatient and outpatient families, who were treated to a traditional Thanksgiving dinner prepared and organized by La Rabida's own Chef Tonie Houke and Leni Birondo, the La Rabida Food Services team, and chefs from the American Culinary Federation. Volunteers from the Chicago Church of Christ and the After School Matters Culinary Program helped serve the delicious meal and dessert while spending the afternoon celebrating with our patients and their families.

Thanksgiving is a time where we can show our appreciation for the wonderful people who make La Rabida the place that it is today. Thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, and sponsors for making this Thanksgiving Day celebration so special!



NBC Chicago joined the Thanksgiving Day Feast and highlighted the celebration. To see more, [click here](#).

Friends of La Rabida Spread Holiday Cheer

Holiday magic is in the air here at La Rabida! Here's how some friends of La Rabida are making this holiday season special for our patients and families.

Netrix and FGМК hosted an exceptional toy drive for our patients and their families, bringing everything from scarves, hats and sports jerseys to Legos, stuffed animals and craft supplies. Every year, Netrix and FGМК bring \$10,000 worth of toys and gifts specially picked out for our patients.



Our friends at **Kutchins, Robbins and Diamond** hosted their annual toy drive, bringing over 2,000 toys to La Rabida. With toys collected from their organization and a wide variety donated from their partners,

Kutchins, Robbins and Diamond contributed to the selection of toys that will be gifted to our patients and families throughout the holiday season.



This month, **CVS Health** also stopped by La Rabida and joined our patients in celebrating the holidays. The CVS Health team brought stockings full of holiday themed goodies for our kids and their families, including toys, craft supplies, and stuffed

animals.

Thank you to Netrix and FGМК, Kutchins, Robbins and Diamond, CVS Health and all of our generous supporters for helping make this holiday season extra bright for our patients and families.

La Rabida's President and CEO Named Crain's Notable Woman in Health Care

Congratulations are in order to La Rabida's President and CEO, Brenda Wolf, as she has been named a [Notable Woman in Health Care](#) by Crain's Chicago Business for the second consecutive year. Brenda is recognized for her leadership within the health care community and her dedication to providing quality care to children and families.



Welcoming Governor Pritzker to the Gem on the Lake

Governor J.B. Pritzker visited La Rabida this month to celebrate the holidays with our patients and their families. During his visit, the Governor transformed into Santa's helper and accompanied our staff in distributing toys to kids in our annual Elf Room.

Once his elf duties were completed, Governor Pritzker toured the hospital to learn more about La Rabida and our mission to provide quality healthcare to children with complex medical conditions, visiting our rehab gym, child life pavilion, therapy kitchen, and our inpatient unit. While aboard the S.S. La Rabida inpatient unit, the Governor was able to spend some quality time with patients and their families.

Thank you, Governor Pritzker, for joining us this holiday season!



Mr. Christmas Decks the Hall of La Rabida



Every year, longtime friend and supporter of La Rabida, Barbara Cronin who is the Owner and President of Design 10 Interiors, brings a team of elves to deck the halls of La Rabida. This year, she brought along a trusty sidekick, Mr. Christmas.

Matthew Doherty, also known as Mr. Christmas, brought his woodworking talents to La Rabida by designing and building beautiful, festive wood decorations for patients to enjoy.

After making wood decorations with his father, Matthew found a passion for woodworking. When he and his wife, Sherri, got married and moved into their home, his talent for creating wooden decorations began to expand. He started off by just decorating his house, and now decorates 18 houses on his block. "Sherri had shirts made about 15 years ago for all the helpers," shares Matthew. "Mine read Mr. Christmas and the name stuck."

When Barbara Cronin reached out to see if Matthew would be interested in making decorations for La Rabida this year, his only question was "how much of the hospital can I decorate?"

Our outpatient center was transformed into a Toy Land with incredible nutcrackers, wooden toys to play with, and scenes for kids to pop their heads into and snap photos. Up on our inpatient unit, Matthew went with a Gingerbread Land theme on one wing, and Santa's Workshop on the other. "Each child's room got a decoration on their door," shares Matthew. "We had fun filling the walls with colorful scenes."



"We love hearing the kids run up and down our block laughing and taking pictures. So to be asked to decorate the hospital was really special," shares Matthew. "We wanted fun and cheerful decorations to give the kids some fun on trips that are hard."

Your Contribution Makes a Difference

Each year, more than 9,000 kids and families come to La Rabida in need of help. It's because of support from generous people like you that children are getting the care they need to overcome obstacles and reach their full potential. This holiday season, we hope you'll consider making a financial donation to support this important work. Your entire gift will go to covering the cost of care for kids who need it. Thank you for raising possibilities for a lifetime.

[Donate Now](#)

12 Days of Giving

Thank you to everyone who followed along during 12 Days of Giving! It is because of the support from people like you that we are able to transform the lives of children and their families every single day.

In case you missed it – we spent the month of December sharing the stories of La Rabida patients who have been directly impacted by the support from individuals like you. To catch up on the stories that you missed, head over to our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

