

e-Currents

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Providing Care Through Telehealth

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, La Rabida has begun utilizing telehealth technology to bring care to patients in the safety of their homes. We have successfully transitioned over 70% of our outpatient appointments to telehealth video conferences, allowing us to minimize the disruption of care for our kids. This includes everything from primary and specialty care appointments, behavioral health services, and even wheelchair deliveries.

The delivery of a new wheelchair is an appointment that typically takes place within the walls of La Rabida. With the recent implementation of telemedicine, our team of physical and occupational therapists were able to facilitate the delivery of a new wheelchair to a long-time patient, Jesse, remotely.



Allie Katsiris and Lucy Arellano, La Rabida physical and occupational therapists, work with Jesse on a regular basis and are familiar with his medical background. By collaborating with the wheelchair technician who was in Jesse's home, our therapists were able to make the proper adjustments to the device and ensure that it fits Jesse and his needs perfectly.

During the delivery of a new wheelchair, our clinicians work one-on-one with families to ensure they feel comfortable utilizing the device. This was still the case during the telemedicine appointment. Allie and Lucy were able to coach Jesse's family on how to position him properly in the chair, educate them on proper maintenance, and demonstrate how to use the device – all through a video conference.

By utilizing telemedicine for appointments like these, our families have been given an alternative method of receiving care. For children living with medically complex conditions, travel can be a risk during these uncertain times. The use of telemedicine allows kids like Jesse to get the care they need within the safety of their own homes.

Meet Tommy



When she was three months pregnant, Veronica and her family received information that would change their world forever. She learned that the child she was carrying, Tommy, had been diagnosed with hydrocephalus.

Hydrocephalus occurs when there is an excess of fluid in the brain, causing damage to brain tissue. As a result, Tommy's mobility was impacted. "He doesn't walk, sit up, or hold his neck," shared Veronica. Tommy is also legally blind and deaf. "His vision isn't an eye problem – it's neurological. Once his brain can make the connection, he can see images," said Veronica. "He can also hear, but it sounds muffled like he's underwater."

After numerous doctor's appointments, three shunt surgeries, and a hip dysplasia diagnosis, Tommy and his family had been through a lot. "The first few years were very, very tough as parents," shared Veronica. "But it became easier and more natural as time passed by."

In January, things took a dramatic turn for Tommy. "I started to hear wheezing coming from Tommy's chest. I made a doctor's appointment for the following day," shared Veronica. "Then, that same day, Tommy started changing color. He went really pale and was struggling to breathe." That's when Veronica rushed him to a local emergency room, where he was later intubated and put on life support for four weeks. "We didn't get to see his eyes for nearly a month," shared Veronica. "Every time they tried to extubate him, and he failed to breathe. It just kept getting worse and worse. We were pretty sure we were going to lose him."

"They gave us the option to, you know, either not do anything and let nature takes its course or try a tracheostomy," shared Veronica. "We didn't hesitate and knew we'd try the trach." The tracheostomy is a procedure that creates an opening into an individual's windpipe, allowing for the insertion of a breathing tube. "Within 12 hours of the procedure, he opened his eyes and started smiling," shared Veronica. "It was very, very scary. It felt like months, not just four weeks," shared Veronica. "But now he's happy, loving life and so are we."

Tommy received the tracheostomy on Valentine's Day and was transferred to La Rabida three weeks later. "Because the trach was new for us, we needed proper training," shared Veronica. "We were able to get the training we needed at La Rabida."

Tommy receives a variety of treatment while at La Rabida. "He gets everything here – respiratory treatments, physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy. It keeps him stimulated, which I like," shared Veronica. "And the nurses – the nurses at La Rabida are absolutely amazing."

The staff at La Rabida work to make the hospital an enjoyable experience for everyone, including the parents. "We love going to the playroom in Child Life. One time there was a violinist playing music – that was an amazing time. Tommy loves music."

Veronica has noticed so many positive changes in Tommy since arriving to La Rabida. "Tommy seems much more alert since being at La Rabida. He seems much happier," shared Veronica. "Before, I used to have to work really hard to make him smile, and now he just sees my face and he's grinning from ear to ear."

Overcoming the Challenges of Masking



Despite some new challenges, the COVID-19 crisis has inspired our staff to work together and find creative solutions that allow us to continue providing the care that our patients depend on.

La Rabida has implemented a universal mask policy that requires all staff to wear medical-grade masks while interacting with patients. These new precautions are meant to keep both our staff and patients safe but have brought significant challenges for some children. With these new policies in place, patients who have suffered from hearing loss and rely on lip reading were unable to communicate with others. Without the ability to communicate, a patient's progress can come to a screeching halt.

"When we all started having to wear masks it made providing care safely a challenge for these patients," shared Allison Lee, Chief of Speech-Language Pathology. "Our nurses and therapists were having to pull down their masks so the patients could read their lips." With the health and safety of our patients and staff in mind, Allison was determined to find a solution.

"I had two clear acrylic letter trays at my desk and realized they could make a tabletop shield that would help minimize droplets and allow the therapist to pull their masks down when they had something to say," shared Allison. Working directly with our plant operations team, Allison had one large shield made to act as a quick fix.

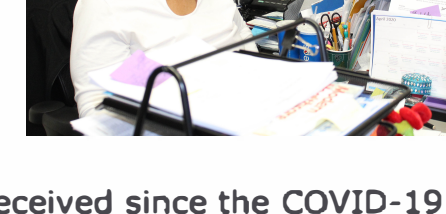
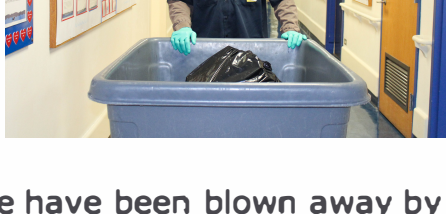
After some research, our clinicians were able to locate a permanent solution – The Communicator. These innovative masks look and fit like typical surgical masks, but feature a clear plastic, fog-resistant window that allows patients to see the clinician's mouth. "With this mask, the patients and clinicians are still protected, but the patient can continue to communicate with others in their environment effectively," shared Jennifer Tripoli, La Rabida Speech-Language Pathologist.

Our staff works to provide care in a safe environment every day. By working to find creative solutions that allow us to overcome obstacles like these, we can ensure that our patients' care goes uninterrupted.

Sew at Home in Honor of La Rabida

As the COVID-19 virus made its way throughout the community, a long-time friend of La Rabida, Genie Kutchins, was looking for a way to help. After her original birthday celebrations were canceled, Genie and her daughter, Emily, decided to host a virtual Sew at Home party to celebrate the momentous milestone while also supporting La Rabida Children's Hospital.

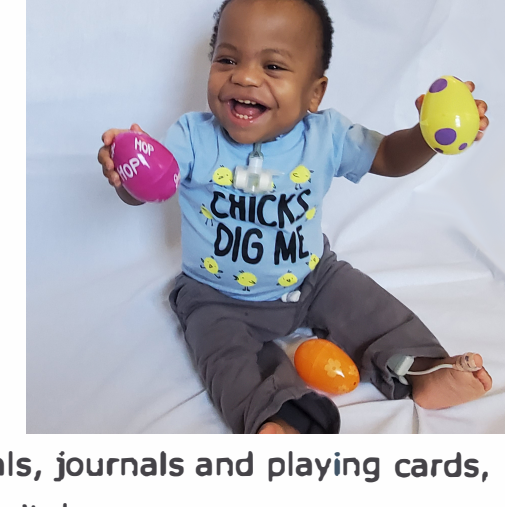
The Sew at Home event encouraged Genie's friends and family to put their sewing skills to the test by making cloth masks that would be worn by the staff at La Rabida. From the outreach spanning social media and email, Genie and Emily were able to get over 50 people involved in the mask-making event. Genie was able to celebrate her birthday knowing she made an impact on the children and families of La Rabida.



We have been blown away by the outpouring of support we have received since the COVID-19 crisis began. Over the last several weeks, we have received hundreds of handmade cloth masks from volunteers far and wide that were sewn for our healthcare heroes. From the staff, children and families of La Rabida, thank you for helping keep our hospital safe!

Hoppy Easter!

At La Rabida, we take advantage of any opportunity to make things fun for our kids – especially during holidays like Easter. While our annual celebrations were a little different this year, we were still able to celebrate and make Easter special for our patients and families thanks to the help of some of our friends.



By joining forces, Disney and Starlight Children's Foundation were able to share Disney-themed care packages with our La Rabida families. Filled with fun activities and keepsakes such as room decals, journals and playing cards, these curated care packages allow children to personalize their hospital rooms.

The Kutchins family also help spread some joy on Easter morning by donating a number of stuffed animals that were handed out by our staff.

Thank you to Disney, Starlight Children's Foundation, and the Kutchins family for thinking of our patients and families – our kids were spoiled with love this Easter!

Make Your Gift Go Further

Make a gift today and for the future. Are you already making annual gifts to the work of La Rabida? Consider adding a planned gift this year. Increase the impact of your giving, provide greater tax savings, preserve wealth for you and your family and help continue our work in the future.

To learn more, contact our development team at 773.753.9606

Honoring La Rabida's Volunteers



This month, we celebrated the hard work and dedication of our volunteers during National Volunteer Week! Taking place April 19th – April 25th, we took the time to honor the nearly 200 individuals who have made an impact on the children and families of La Rabida.

While our volunteers couldn't be with us this year, we still had a lot to celebrate. This year, our volunteers have provided over 10,000 hours of service across various departments. From working with patients in the Acute Care Clinic, providing some extra TLC to our inpatient kids, working one-on-one with children in our after-school tutoring program, and so much more, our volunteers have made waves across La Rabida.

We are so grateful to have such a dedicated group of individuals who choose to give their time to the children and families of La Rabida. It is because of their commitment that we can continue raising possibilities for a lifetime!