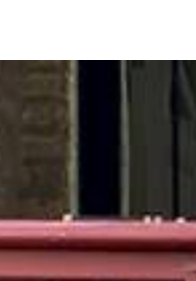
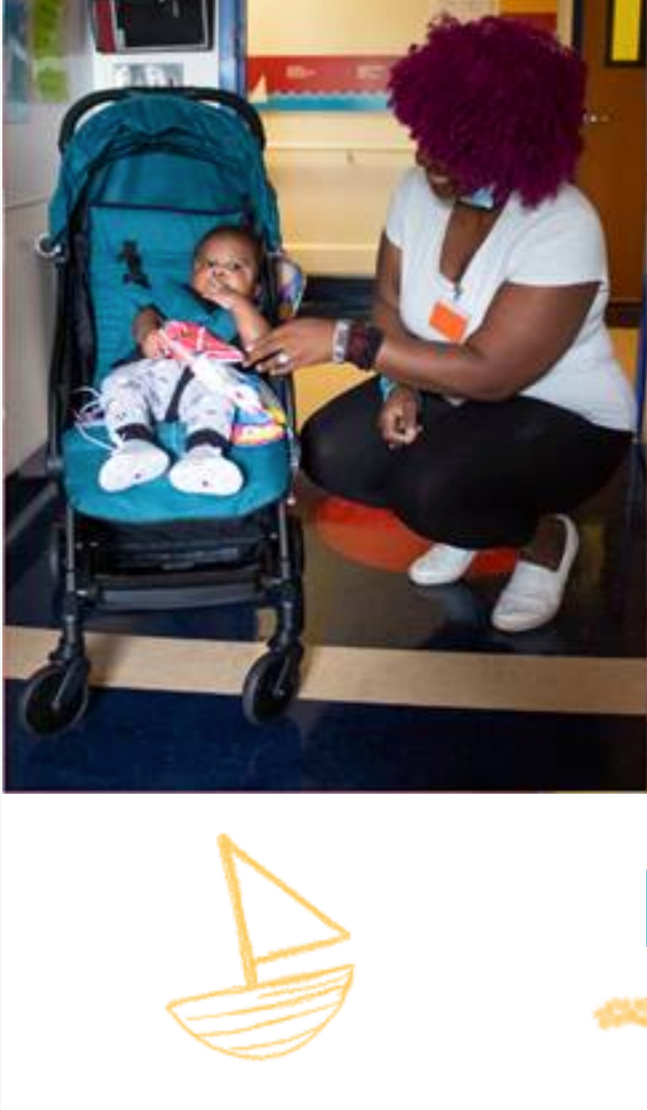


e-Currents

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Meet Zahari



Zahari and his twin brother, Zakari, were born at just thirty-five weeks and spent the first ten months of their lives apart as a result of Zahari's hospitalization. Doctors discovered that Zahari was born with tracheoesophageal fistula (TEF), a condition where the esophagus and trachea are connected. This can make it difficult for the child to swallow and can cause liquid to travel into the lungs.

To address this, Zahari underwent two surgeries during the first month of his life to separate his esophagus and trachea. He was then in the NICU for over nine months. Because of this, Zahari and Zakari had never met each other.

In order for Zahari to finally meet his twin brother, he and his family needed the tools and resources to aid the transition home. "Our goal was for [Zahari] to come straight home after leaving the NICU, but it was highly suggested through our social worker and NICU nurses that we get transitional care," shared Rosalyn, Zahari's mom.

That is when Zahari arrived at La Rabida. The transitional care provided at La Rabida helps children reach various developmental milestones, provides the education and resources families need to care for their child both in and out of the hospital and work through any challenges that arise, all to make the transition from the NICU to the home as seamless as possible. Because Zahari utilizes a g-tube, it was important that Rosalyn felt comfortable using the technology on her own.



During this transitional phase, Rosalyn and Zahari were also working on bonding. "This time period was all about getting to know him and him getting to know me. I knew that he knew that I was his mom, but he didn't know me. There was a wall between us. And I was always afraid that he wasn't going to accept me," said Rosalyn. "I don't think a lot of people realize how much help the parent needs." By doing things like creating positive mealtime experiences and encouraging Rosalyn to teach Zahari new tasks, the mother and son pair were able to strengthen their bond.

"I didn't feel like I was there just to learn about my child and how to care for him, I felt like I learned other things that taught me to be a better person and a better mother. I didn't know I needed that," explained Rosalyn. "La Rabida was so welcoming and open. No matter what, they made sure I knew everything that was going on. They helped to make sure every duck was in a row before we left. And they made sure Zahari had everything that he needed."

The twins are now 11 months old and are starting to get to know each other. "This is the very first time they've been together since leaving the womb. I don't even think they touched when they were born," said Rosalyn. When Zahari went home last month, the brothers instantly connected. "Zakari is walking now and Zahari has started to imitate him," explained Rosalyn. "That twin dynamic, that brother love is there. It's so fun to watch."

How the Behavioral Health of Children Has Shifted Amid COVID-19

As adults grapple with the impact that COVID-19 has had on communities across the globe, kids are feeling the effects as well. "The mental health of children and adolescents have been impacted by the pandemic," shared Teresa Bernard, La Rabida Staff Therapist. "Some have struggled with anxiety and depressive symptoms, while others have been able to manage life stressors and strengthen their mental health."

The quick transition to remaining at home and the decrease in socialization have been difficult for many, including children. Kids are accustomed to spending their days in the classroom and interacting with peers and educators. Overnight, their world was flipped upside down and are now spending the entirety of their days at home. This can lead to an increase in feelings of isolation, anxiety, and depression.

While these changes have been challenging for some, there are a number of children who have had a positive experience with the shift in lifestyle. A decrease in stressors related to school environments, busy schedules, and bullying along with the increase in time spent with family have helped improve the mental health of some kids.

Throughout the course of the pandemic, La Rabida's Behavioral Health team has utilized telehealth resources to continue working with families. Even though they cannot physically come to La Rabida, families have shared that they feel supported by having the ability to continue their discussions in a virtual manner. Some patients have even expressed that their mental health has improved during this time due to the increase in accessibility for counseling through telehealth. "Behavioral health has adapted to the new normal at this time and has been able to provide services to families over the past four months. We've adapted how we engage families and have continued to provide support since the beginning of the pandemic," said Teresa.

These remote sessions include modified activities that are conducted in traditional sessions. This includes things like modified board games, interactive activities, and even yoga. Cassidy Anderson, Staff Therapist at La Rabida, has been offering two yoga classes via telehealth - one geared towards teenage girls and another that involves the patient and their caregiver. "We wanted to find a creative way to get movement incorporated in the kids' weeks as well as help them manage the stress of having to stay inside," explained Cassidy. However, their support doesn't stop there.

La Rabida's Behavioral Health department has also worked to help ease the transition to learning from home. Whether it's assisting families in gaining the internet and technology necessary for remote learning, participating in informational meetings about e-learning implementation for students with 504/IEP needs, obtaining resources for housing and financial assistance, or connecting patients to the appropriate food based resources, our team of dedicated behavioral health professionals have ensured our families have the support they need to make it through these challenging times.

Meet Jacob



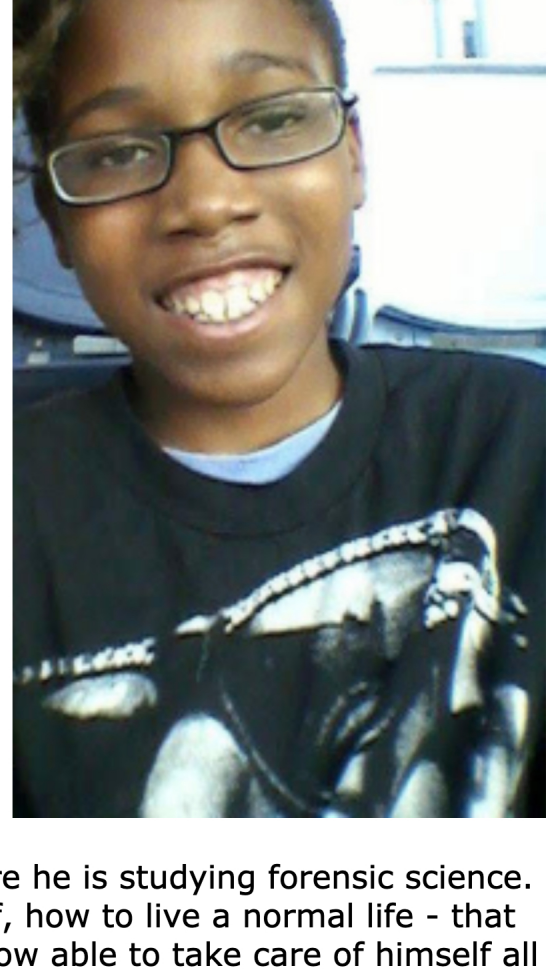
After spending most of his young life under the care of the amazing team at La Rabida, 19-year-old Jacob has a new challenge, adulthood. Diagnosed at age two with Type-1 Diabetes Jacob spent 42 days aboard the S.S. La Rabida inpatient unit following his initial diagnosis. Now he is about to graduate from pediatric care and move on from his La Rabida family.

"By coming to La Rabida, we learned so much about diabetes," shared Jacob's mother, Dominique. "They had so many people there to help us. We really were

educated on what diabetes is."

Upon arrival to La Rabida, Jacob and Dominique were introduced to the physician who would become one of Jacob's leading advocates throughout his childhood, Dr. Jennifer Miller. "Dr. Miller has just been just a saint for us. She cares about [Jacob] just as much as I do," said Dominique. "There are not enough thank yous in the world. He is the person that he is because of Dr. Miller."

Jacob and his family relied on the diabetes education resources at La Rabida to understand what he was experiencing and how they could better support him. "My godmother, my mother, my boyfriends all learned from La Rabida," explained Dominique. Through a variety of educational classes, La Rabida's diabetes care team teaches patients and their families about the basics of diabetes, how to manage their condition, and the various pumps and sensors they can utilize. These classes became a huge resource for Jacob's educators as well.



"His nurses went, his teachers went, his principal. They had no idea what was going on with Jacob and wanted to know how they could help. Being able to go to the diabetes education classes and sending whoever up there for free made such a difference in Jacob's life."

Consistent, reliable care is essential for children living with chronic conditions like diabetes. "Having that consistency in care, it means all of the world. There were many times where I didn't have insulin and had to come to La Rabida to get it. There was a point when insurance cut us off and I would say to myself, 'how are we going to have insulin? I can't afford it.' Just being able to go to La Rabida and get samples has saved his life multiple times because I did not have the money or resources to get him the insulin he needed."

Now, Jacob is a rising sophomore at Loyola University where he is studying forensic science. "Being [at La Rabida], teaching him how to take care of himself, how to live a normal life - that allowed him to go to college," reflected Dominique. "He's now able to take care of himself all on his own. That's because of Dr. Miller. I really just want to thank her. We are coming up on our last appointment, and it's a virtual appointment. Dr. Miller is our safety net. She has been the most supportive person, next to me, in Jacob's life."

The Importance of Routine Care



It is more important now than ever to ensure that children are visiting their physicians for wellness visits and vaccinations.

Wellness visits and annual physicals are essential in ensuring that a child is reaching the appropriate milestones. A child's medical team can spot any indication of developmental delays and underlying conditions that may otherwise be overlooked. These appointments are crucial because they allow a child's physician to identify concerning matters early on and provide the necessary resources and tools to families.

Another significant consequence of missing these critical appointments is not receiving essential vaccinations. Ensuring kids are up to date on their immunizations is vital. As we face the greatest health crisis in over a century, it is important to avoid the possibility of another disease outbreak. "It would be devastating if our children got through the crisis of coronavirus only to be hit with an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease, like measles and whooping cough," says Dr. David Loggin, La Rabida's Chief Medical Officer. To prevent these devastating infections from making a return, it is imperative that children receive the appropriate vaccinations. Annual physicals and wellness visits are the perfect opportunities to learn more about these vital immunizations.

La Rabida patients continue to feel comfortable as they visit the hospital. Our staff continues to take the necessary precautions that ensure our families are in a safe environment, including pre-screening for illness, universal masking, careful hand hygiene, and limiting the number of people in the exam and waiting rooms.

At a time when public health is of utmost concern, it's important to protect the wellbeing of our children. Maintaining these critical appointment schedules is the best way to do so.

Supporting Future Generations

With a legacy gift to La Rabida, you can help us do what we do today, even better, for generations to come.

Here are some simple ways to make your mark on the future:

- Make a gift through your will or trust
- Give life insurance you no longer need
- Donate appreciated stock and savings on taxes
- Consider a gift of real estate
- Make a gift that gives you fixed payments for life
- Make a gift that protects your assets

This is not intended to provide financial advice. Please consult your financial planner on the best option for you.

La Rabida in the News



Through the La Rabida Cares Diaper Drive, our staff successfully donated over 100,000 diapers to our friends at the True to Life Foundation. Block Club Chicago joined us as the first round of diapers were picked up by True to Life, who will be distributing these diapers to families across the community through their weekly Diaper Bank.



La Rabida's 31st Annual Golf Classic

It is not too late to become a sponsor for La Rabida's Golf Classic! Join us by taking part in the 31st Annual Golf Classic slated for Tuesday, September 1st at Harborside International Golf Course as we tee up to support the children and families of La Rabida. There are a variety of sponsorship opportunities available, including Contest Hole, Birdie, and Hole Sponsors.

Become a sponsor or register today by visiting larabida.org/golf-classic.

* The safety and wellbeing of our attendees remains our top priority. We will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 and follow the directives from government and health authorities.