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Meet Ammanda



As a parent of a child living with a complex medical condition, stress is just part of the job. From finding adequate care, working with medical teams on diagnoses, to locating a hospital that can serve as a home away from home, our families endure so many challenges as they manage their child's condition. For Ammanda's parents, La Rabida has made all the difference.

Born at 32 weeks, doctors diagnosed Ammanda with a heart condition, Down syndrome, and seizures. Doctors also found that she had three pounds of excess fluid in her body. "When she was born, that was the scariest experience of my life. Nothing compares to when doctors tell you that your child might not make it," shared Alexander, Ammanda's dad. "But she is a fighter. She's a warrior. She is here for a reason."

Ammanda received a tracheostomy that would allow a ventilator to assist with her breathing. Shortly after that procedure, Ammanda and her family arrived at the Gem on the Lake for around the clock care.

"La Rabida is a home away from home," said Alexander. "No one ever looks forward to going to a hospital. For the most part it's for something negative. With La Rabida, we beg to differ. Every morning we wake up and look forward to arriving at La Rabida. Everyone from the receptionists and custodians to the CNAs, our beloved RNs and residents all make us feel welcome. The staff feels like an extension of our family."

Families can't be at the hospital 24/7, and that's why the team goes above and beyond to keep families connected to their child. "The other day I received a Facetime out of the blue so that I could see Ammanda. To me that was so special. The staff doesn't have to do that. It speaks volumes. That's going above and beyond your job."

La Rabida has given parents like Alexander peace of mind. "When we leave the hospital, we leave knowing that Ammanda is in good hands. We don't leave with that worry. We know that she is being taken care of," shared Alexander. "La Rabida isn't a hospital to us. It's our child's safe haven!"



Tips on Getting Your Child to Wear a Mask



Wearing masks while out in public is important in keeping everyone, including kids, safe from COVID-19. We asked Becki Logan, Certified Child Life Specialist at La Rabida, how parents can help their child understand the importance of masks and ways to get kids excited about wearing them.

How do you get a child to understand why wearing a mask is important?

Becki: First and foremost, model appropriate mask wearing. Wear the mask over your nose and mouth and wear it properly in public. Young kids watch the adults they trust and take cues from them.

Explain in age appropriate language why they need the mask. For preschoolers and young school-age children, it can be as simple as saying something like "wearing a face mask helps people from getting sick." Along with the explanation, provide choices when possible, such as which color of mask or a type of decoration to put on it.

And lastly, play is important! Little cloth masks for stuffed animals and dolls are useful. Look online for their favorite characters to print out, and either draw on a mask or make one with a paper towel that you can put on. Let them decorate their own masks. The more the kids play with masks and are familiar with them, the more comfortable they will be with the concept of wearing one when they need to.

How can parents explain why masks are important without scaring them?

Keep explanations simple and truthful. Asking them if they have questions and give them the opportunity to ask, even if it is more through play. Kids pick up on safety. They know and learn that we wear coats when it is cold to keep us safe from the cold, we wear shoes to keep our feet safe from hard things or dirt on the streets, and they know we wear seatbelts to keep us safe in cars. Little reminders like this can help.

Is there a certain type of mask that is best for a younger child (3-6)?

Listen to your kid! If something is really, really uncomfortable they won't wear it or will be very unhappy if they have to. For some kids, soft ear loops might be more comfortable. For others, a tie in the back might be better. If you can, try out a couple of different types and ask your child what they like.

For kids with special sensory needs, this is especially important. Different fabrics next to the skin can be liked or disliked. There have been some special masks made that help with special needs such as ones with soft Velcro, plastic windows for mouths, and ones that fit over hats.

Do you find that kids drool, chew, or frequently play with the mask? How should parents handle this?

Yes, kids can be messy. Things like drool and sticky hands can ruin a mask. Certainly have back-ups when possible if you are going out into public. Let your young child help pack the back-ups in their school backpack. This way they will know where to find a clean, new mask when the one they're wearing gets dirty.

La Rabida's Lifelong Impact

La Rabida has been improving the lives of children in Chicago for over 120 years, and we've met some pretty incredible kids along the way. We recently connected to a former patient, Rev. Fr Richard Petranek, who was aboard what we now refer to as the S.S. La Rabida inpatient unit. Richard was at La Rabida in the 1960's when he was diagnosed with Viral Myocarditis. We caught up with Richard and he shared his memories of his time at La Rabida.

"It was fifty-six years ago but I remember it as clear as a sunny day. A freshman at suburban Riverside Brookfield high school, I was on the wrestling team enjoying an undefeated season. In the words of Jimmy Cagney, I was "On top of the world." Soon my world would be transformed forever. During wrestling practice, I began to suffer sharp chest pains that would force me to stop and breathe very slowly until the pain passed. After a couple of weeks of this, I told my parents who took me to our family physician and I soon found myself at the University of Chicago. A few days later I was transferred to La Rabida where I met Dr. Burton Grossman. Unbeknownst to me, my life was about to change forever.



I'll never forget Dr. Grossman calling me into his office. I sat up in my wheelchair and he, sitting behind his desk, quietly and gently said to me "Richard I hear you love to play football and wrestle at R-B." I excitedly responded, "I sure do, I love it!" "Well," he said, "I have some difficult news for you. You are going to have to give up playing sports." "Oh for just a short time?" I hopefully asked. "No," he said, "I think you will need to quit playing sports for some time." Boy did the tears flow down my face; my world had come to an end! Little did I know that Dr. Grossman and the staff were going to throw open the windows of my life to a whole new, exciting, and intriguing world that would impact me forever.

The next several months were difficult but my life slowly began to change. Dr. Grossman and his dedicated staff of nurses, technicians, and social workers showed me a myriad of choices and opportunities that awaited me. With their help, I discovered what is really important in this life: friendship, kindness, love, and support. Yes, my time at La Rabida was sometimes challenging but I thank God that I had the opportunity to be a patient with such wonderful caring and loving people. My stay at La Rabida put me on a path to discover my calling and purpose in which I have tried to fulfill. I will always be thankful for the benefactors, doctors, and staff who make La Rabida a true place of healing, health, and wholeness."

Masks are a Must: La Rabida's Annual Employee Picnic



Every August, La Rabida celebrates the dedicated and hardworking staff who keep the hospital afloat during the annual employee picnic. This year our staff took part in a socially distanced picnic with hand delivered gourmet boxed lunches from Virtue in Hyde Park.

While the celebration looked a little different this year, we still found a way to make it fun. We asked our staff to put on their thinking caps and get creative to design a silly, fun mask. Designs included everything from inspirational messages, one-of-a-kind patterns, and even photos of puppies. Staff submitted their "Masks are a Must" selfies and were shared with the team. Masks are vital in keeping our community safe amidst the pandemic, so why not have a little fun with them?

LA RA IN THE NEWS



HUBBARD RADIO

Brenda Wolf, President and CEO of La Rabida, recently sat down with Rachel Kelsos of Hubbard Radio to discuss the impactful work taking place here at the Gem on the Lake. The Hubbard Helps series highlights individuals across Chicago who are making a difference in their community. Tune in [here](#).

CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

The way we provide care has shifted tremendously over the last several months, and patients like Alessandro are benefiting greatly. Dr. David Soglin, La Rabida's Chief Medical Officer, spoke with The Chicago Sun-Times about the future of telehealth and how it can positively impact our families. Read the story [here](#).



Help Us Help Our Patients

While we grapple with the changes that COVID-19 continues to have on our community, some things have remained the same. The children we care for are still living with complex medical conditions and disabilities and require expert medical care. Today, and every day, our team is committed to providing the support that our families deserve while working to protect them during the pandemic.



Help us navigate these uncertain waters and ensure that our children and families continue to get the care they need.

Donate Today

Save the Date

Friends of La Rabida Celebration

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2020

This year's gala event is going virtual!

In accordance with safe, social distancing guidelines, the 2020 Friends of La Rabida Celebration will be streamed online. You can expect to hear from our dedicated healthcare heroes and the families they've touched. We hope that you will join us - from the couch - for a special evening celebrating La Rabida's mission.

Details to follow

For more information, please contact Lona Slaughter at lslaughter@larabida.org or 773.256.5955.