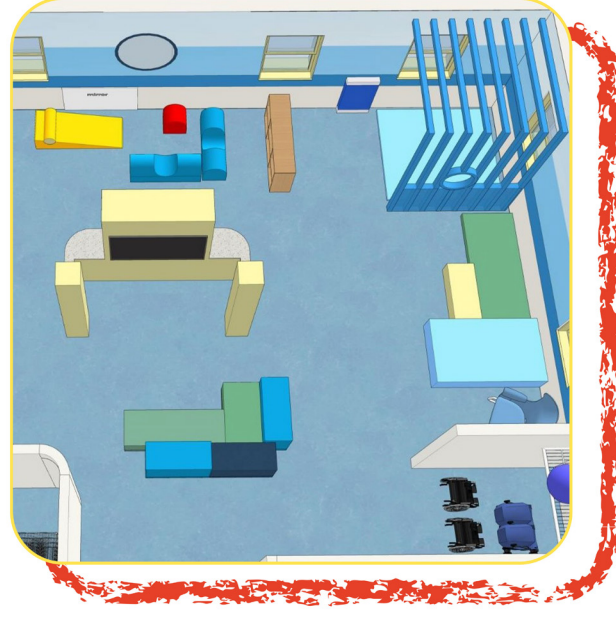


## La Rabida Begins Inpatient Unit Redesign



Next month, La Rabida Children's Hospital will begin construction on an ambitious redesign of the hospital's inpatient unit to improve how care is delivered to patients. The investments will meet the growing need for complex care for patients with unique medical and technology needs.

"In the last few years we've seen both the level of medical complexity among our patients increase, as well as the overall demand for our services," according to Brenda Wolf, president and CEO of La Rabida Children's Hospital. "We evaluated all our needs, and examined every aspect of how we could innovate and advance the care we provide. These changes will ensure we continue to provide high quality, innovative, and developmentally focused care that is centered on the needs of our children and their families."

The project will transform the space in a number of ways including the combining of the north and south inpatient units into one connected space with a new welcoming entryway for families. The combined unit will feature a new, dedicated playroom that allows play and therapy services to be more readily accessible. The playroom is purposefully designed to help both children and infants play in developmentally appropriate ways, while also creating a space where interdisciplinary care teams can provide an ideal therapeutic environment for patients and families to thrive.

The project will also add several new patient rooms, create new relaxation spaces for patient, families, and staff, as well as redesign workspaces for staff that will increase collaboration between clinical disciplines. All patient rooms will also be updated to the latest technology.

"La Rabida has cared for children for more than 125 years, and this redesign across our inpatient unit will help make sure we continue to provide developmentally and family-focused, state-of-the-art care to our children well into the future," said Wolf. Construction will be done in phases to ensure patient care is not disrupted. The first phase of the \$10 million project is expected to begin this March with all work completed in mid-2023.

If you'd like to become a supporter of this important project, please reach out to Anne Wilson at 773-256-5718.

## Meet Asia



La Rabida is focused on treating the whole child this includes both their physical and social-Raising a child who is dependent on medical technology - either for a short time or throughout their growth and development - can be stressful and complicated. For 5-year-old Asia and her mom, Adilene, life with a feeding tube has been an uneven journey.

A feeding tube (also called a gastrostomy tube or g-tube) is inserted through the belly and provides nutritional support for children who are unable to safely take food and liquids by mouth. Every child is different, and while some may need the benefits of a feeding tube for their entire lives, many children can be weaned off the tube as they grow and heal. La Rabida is highlighting Asia's story as part of Feeding Tube Awareness week, a week used to promote the positive benefits of feeding tubes as lifesaving medical technology.

Asia was born premature with a cleft palate and an undersized jaw. After five months in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), multiple surgeries, and several weeks of recovery aboard the S.S. La Rabida inpatient unit, Asia finally went home to her family. Her condition and the surgeries to repair her face and mouth affected Asia's ability to eat. In early 2018, the decision was made to surgically implant a feeding tube that would ensure she was receiving the nutrition her growing body needed.

Over the next several months, Asia refused to take any nutrition by mouth. "It got to the point that Asia wouldn't take a single bite. She would see food and start crying," shared Asia's mom, Adilene. "Sometimes I would pause the tube feeds and be like, okay, I see you're hungry. You're going to have to eat food because I know that you're capable of doing it."

That's when Adilene turned to the team at La Rabida's Oral Motor Feeding Clinic for support. The team of physicians, nurses, dietitians, speech therapists, social workers, occupational therapists and physical therapists helps families develop therapies and strategies that promote good eating habits and reduce stress at mealtimes.

"I had never heard of La Rabida before, but as soon as I got here, I felt welcomed by everyone"

"The first thing we establish with families is that they understand that tube feedings are a meal as well and should not be viewed as another medical procedure," says Elizabeth Maciel, M.S., CCC-SLP, a Speech Language Pathologist at La Rabida. "Even if a child is not eating yet, they can still participate in feeding experiences. This can include a child sitting at the table while receiving their tube feed, watching others eat, and playing with cups/spoons."

Asia and her mom meet with the team at La Rabida every few weeks to create positive experiences with food. "During this process, it is very important to let the child be the one deciding what foods they are willing to try and when," said Elizabeth. "When you allow a child to participate and choose if they want to try a food, it can make mealtimes less stressful and more fun for the patient and the caregivers."

By using these strategies at home, Adilene has seen great progress, "It's amazing that now she knows the difference between eating food and a tube feeding. She knows that if she gets a tube feed, she's getting full because it's food. She says no, I don't want as much from the tube because she's already full from the food that she just chewed and swallowed." Asia's favorite food this month? "Peanut butter, she can't get enough!"

"La Rabida gives us the support and courage to continue with the therapy at home"

Asia is now down to only 1 or 2 tube feeds a day and her care team is expecting to remove the feeding tube later this year. "We want our families to know that their g-tubes," added Elizabeth.

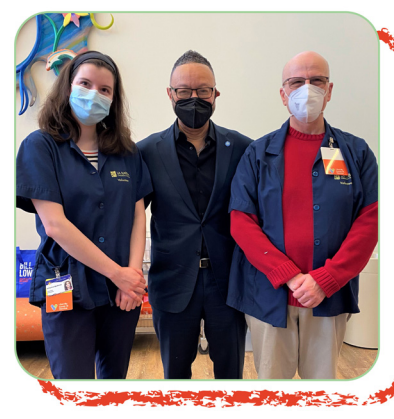
## A Day Full of Love



Thanks to SHE 100.3 FM for helping spread some Valentine's Day cheer! The annual card drive was a big hit as our staff passed out hundreds of cards to La Rabida patients and their siblings. The handmade cards from the listeners at WSHE helped make it a day to remember!



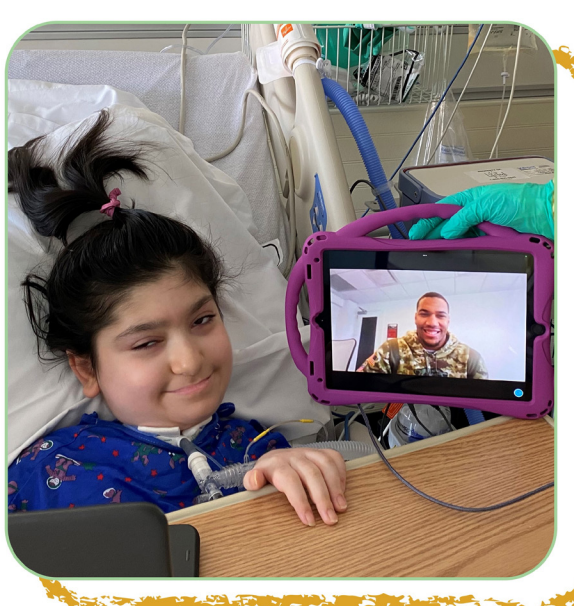
97.1 FM The Drive made this Valentine's Day special for our care teams and support staff. The radio station dropped off heart Shaped Lou Malnati's pizzas to spread a little love. Nothing like a slice of Chicago deep dish to warm your heart on a cold winter day!



County Commissioner Bill Lowry stopped by on Valentine's Day to share some special treats and hand out cards to our patients and staff. Thank you to everyone who helped make the visit special!



## The Chicago Bears Virtually Visit the S.S. La Rabida



La Rabida is focused on treating the whole child this includes both their physical and social-The NFL season may be over, but a couple La Rabida patients got a special visit from Bears Linebacker Charles Snowden this week. 14-year-old Chris and 10-year-old Fatma were treated to a special Swag bag of Bears gear, including an autographed hat, Bears flag, and other memorabilia. Each patient spent a few minutes chatting with #49 over zoom and got to hear a bit about professional football. Thanks to The Chicago Bears and Charles Snowden for the special 'virtual' visit to the S.S. La Rabida Inpatient Unit!

### Help Us Help Our Patients

At La Rabida Children's Hospital, our mission is simple: we're dedicated to improving the quality of life for each of our patients who live with complex conditions, disabilities, and chronic illnesses. We treat patients regardless of their family's financial circumstances. We are able to do this because of the support of individuals like you. Help support our mission today by visiting <https://larabida.org/donate>

DONATE TODAY

