

## Nakia Raps About Her Experience with Cerebral Palsy



Seventeen year old Nakia is living with cerebral palsy. While challenging at times, she doesn't let the obstacles she faces get in the way of her love of making music and sharing her story with others. Earlier this summer Nakia set out to make a rap and decided it should be about what she knows best – her personal experiences and life with CP.

Nakia has grown up within the halls of La Rabida, first arriving to the Gem on the Lake when she was three years old. By working closely with her physical therapist, Nakia grows stronger with each session so she can reach her goals. "Hopefully one day I will be able to walk on my own without a wheelchair or walker," shared Nakia. "I'm trying to get my muscles stronger during therapy. I know I can do it."

"Nakia has overcome a lot. I would say therapy has helped her become the woman that she is," explained Laorraine, Nakia's mom. "If it wasn't for therapy, I don't think she would be able to do the things that she's doing now." Looking for a way to express her creativity and share her journey, Nakia wrote her very first song. "My rap is about myself and what I have gone through," said Nakia. "I am really proud of myself. This is something I've always wanted to do. It's so much fun."

One day Nakia hopes to become a professional musician and uplift others through her lyrics. "I want to tell others to not let what other people say bother you," shared Nakia. "Even though things might be hard sometimes, you can push through."

## Meet Jennifer



This is Jennifer. Jennifer and her family first came to La Rabida when she was just one year old. Now a happy and social 9-year old, Jennifer continues to visit the Gem on the Lake and is thriving thanks in part to the support of her care team at La Rabida.

October is Down Syndrome Awareness month, with about 6,000 children born each year with the chromosomal condition. Most people have 46 chromosomes in each of their cells, Down syndrome occurs when people have 47. This extra chromosome can have an impact on a child's physical and mental development.

When Jennifer's mom, Ana, was 5 months pregnant she received the news that her daughter had Down syndrome. "Jennifer is the first in the family with Down syndrome," explained Ana. "I didn't have any experience with it before." Ana wasn't sure what was in store for Jennifer, but she made it her mission to ensure that her daughter would live a full life. Navigating this journey can be overwhelming, but with the right team on their side Jennifer and her family have received the support they need at La Rabida to do just that.

From speech therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy, Jennifer works hard every week to grow stronger and more independent. With the help of her team of therapists, Jennifer has made tremendous progress. "I have seen a lot of improvements in Jennifer since being at La Rabida," explained Ana. "Jennifer's speech has really improved and she is able to communicate better. Physical therapy has also helped her with activities like jumping and going up the stairs. She has also learned to write and get dressed on her own thanks to occupational therapy." We are so proud of how far Jennifer has come and can't wait to see what she'll do next!

## 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.

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## La Rabida's CAC Renovates Space to Improve Access to Care



La Rabida's Children's Advocacy Center (CAC), located south of Chicago in Park Forest, serves children who have experienced child abuse, sexual abuse, and violent crime. To expand access to services and improve the quality of care, the CAC recently completed a series of renovations to their facility that will improve the safety, well-being, and security of our kids.

The CAC takes a multidisciplinary team approach that combines efforts of law enforcement, child protection investigators, prosecutors, medical personnel, and mental health providers to provide the best possible outcomes for children who have experienced abuse and violent crime. From the coordination of investigations, forensic interviews, advocating on behalf of the child, and providing support and case management services, our team at the CAC is there every step of the way as a child's case progresses through the criminal justice and child protection systems.

Nearly 70% of the children served by the CAC come from low income households. Our advocates at the CAC assist families impacted by child abuse and mistreatment by offering emotional and crisis support and helping families secure resources such as housing, employment, public aid, mental health care, and medical services. With few service providers in the area, the CAC meets the needs of an underserved community, often providing the only connection families have to necessary resources. Year after year the CAC continues to see a growing number of cases, serving more than 600 children in the past year.

The recent improvements at the CAC include a new waiting room and interview room that allows staff to see multiple families at a time and a kitchen to provide children with a meal if they do not have easy access to food. The team also installed window treatments to improve privacy, soundproofing in the interview rooms, an enhanced security system, and new flooring for easier accessibility.

The goal of these updates were to improve the safety, well-being, and security of our children and families while they are at the CAC. These important improvements were made possible thanks to the support of volunteers, donors, and grants.

## Witching You A Happy Halloween From the Gem on the Lake!



Happy Halloween from our passengers aboard the S.S. La Rabida! With the help from our friends at Spirit of Children and Holiday Heroes, this Halloween will be one to remember for our patients and their families.

Having the best costume is the most important part of Halloween, and Spirit of Children is making sure that our patients are decked out from head to toe. From pumpkins and witches to dinosaurs and princesses, both our inpatient and outpatient kids had the opportunity to pick out the perfect costume for their Halloween celebration.

For some extra spooky fun, the team at Holiday Heroes created Halloween themed activity boxes. Filled with craft supplies, our kids can make boo-tiful art projects! To keep our patients safe and socially distant, our team of child life specialists will "reverse trick-or-treat" with our patients by delivering the care packages to each of our kids.

Thank you to Spirit of Children and Holiday Heroes for making Halloween so special for our patients and families!

**FRIENDS OF LA RABIDA AWARDS CELEBRATION**  
 La Rabida Celebrating 125 Years

**PLEASE JOIN US ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2021**  
 Reception 6 p.m. | Dinner 7 p.m.  
 The Ritz-Carlton, Chicago  
 160 East Pearson Street at Water Tower Place, Chicago  
 Business Attire | Valet Parking Available

**LIVESTREAM OPTION AVAILABLE**

**CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP**  
 ABC 7 Chicago and Disney

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT**  
 Andrea Zopp, Cleveland Avenue

Visit [larabida.org/gala](http://larabida.org/gala) for sponsorship information or to register.

We are committed to keeping our guests as safe as possible to ensure that your event experience is an enjoyable one. Please be vaccinated and wear a mask.

**LA RABIDA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**