

Springtime on the Lake

Serial Casting: A Step in the Right Direction



One's first steps are something to celebrate. For Variye, shortly after beginning to walk for the first time, he started walking up on his toes. Over time, his muscles became so tight he was unable to get his feet flat on the floor. This made it impossible for him to walk unsupported by a wall or his parents' hand.

This not only impacted his ability to walk independently, but also contributed to very poor balance and made playing with his friends very difficult.

"At first I was scared, but I was ready to take on whatever," Variye's mom says.

His physical therapist knew immediately Variye needed serial casting.

Serial casting is a treatment that helps lengthen shortened muscles caused by muscle tightness or contractures. It's a non-invasive intervention to help improve joint flexibility and allow for improved standing and walking alignment. Serial casting can be utilized in a variety of medical conditions including cerebral palsy, spina bifida, brain or spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, congenital abnormalities, club foot and sensory toe walking.

The road to recovery would be hard, but Variye's family and therapists were prepared to rise to the occasion. "My baby is a trooper," Variye's mom says. "He doesn't really whine or cry about things. If there's something in front of us that we have to tackle, we go head on as mom and son."

With support from his family and care team, he is now receiving outpatient physical therapy and can now stand and walk independently. He is now working on his higher-level balance and coordination skills because he is able to achieve feet flat on the surface and now has a stable base to stand on.

"Variye and his mom came to every appointment, followed all directions and worked hard at his home exercise program every week," says Kim Vanklompberg, a La Rabida physical therapist. "Week after week, Variye made visible improvements in his gait pattern until he was standing and walking with his feet flat and without any help!"

Variye is making great strides in catching up his skills to those of his peers. He is able to play on a playground with his friends without support from his parents and walk around without needing to hold onto someone's hand.

"[Coming to La Rabida] makes you feel better that you're somewhere people are actually genuine and care about your child almost as much as you do," Variye's mom says.

Child Life Q&A



When it comes to the child life team it's all fun and games...no, really. The child life team is there to help our patients cope by providing them with social and emotional support. If that means painting and sensory play, then so be it!

The child life team is also responsible for some of the events that bring patients joy. They make sure our patients don't miss out when special guests like Elsa or Batman come to visit. Child life specialists are also responsible for making holidays around the hospital extra special for our patients with our annual Elf Room and Spirit Halloween costume giveaway.

For kids, being at a hospital is stressful. The child life team works tirelessly to reduce patients' anxieties and pain by empowering them through medical play, art and more. All of these tools are pain management techniques that help patients cope with their treatment.

Now that you know a little bit about the work the team does, let's meet them!

Desiree

Why did you choose to work at La Rabida?
There is a family-orientated atmosphere in this place. This place can feel like a second home, you know what they say, there is no better place than home.

Why did you choose to become a Child Life Specialist?
What's your favorite memory as a Child Life Specialist?
Becoming a Child Life Specialist has allowed me to find that I am still a KID AT HEART. One thing I will cherish forever is how I put a smile on a child's face.

What's your favorite activity to do with our patients?
Sensory activities, you will be amazed at some of the facial expressions you will get in response to sensory.

What's your favorite part of your day?
Seeing "READY TO PLAY" posted on patients' doors.

What's your favorite children's cartoon and why?
SpongeBob SquarePants, because the show expresses genuine happiness and fun.

Erica

Why did you choose to work at La Rabida?
The care that we give to medically complex children and their families and the La Rabida mission to provide care to children regardless of their family's financial and social circumstances.

Why did you choose to become a Child Life Specialist?
What's your favorite memory as a Child Life Specialist?
I have always worked with children, but the child life profession has awarded me the opportunity to work with children who are living with a chronic illness or have experienced a traumatic event in their life. As a child life professional, I have a chance to see the impact of my work in my daily interactions with the patients and their families.

Since you first started working at La Rabida, what has changed and what has stayed the same?
All the changes are always made with the goal to make the facility and care we give to the patients and their families better, but the one thing that remains the same is La Rabida's commitment to provide quality care.

What has been your favorite event/holiday at the hospital and why (e.g. Sharing Notes, Therapy Dogs, Halloween, etc.)?
Halloween is my favorite La Rabida celebration -- the unity of the employees dressed in creative costumes, the festivities and camaraderie with everyone.

What's your favorite children's book and why?
The Birthday Box by Leslie Patricelli is about a little boy who is more excited about the box that holds his gift than the actual birthday gift! I love this book because it shows the power of a child's imagination.

Megan

Why did you choose to work at La Rabida?
I have received a master's degree in Developmental Disabilities with the concentration track of a Certified Child Life Specialist. I chose to work at La Rabida as it stood out as a hospital where I could put all my knowledge and education to use. La Rabida is unique and everyone that works here has the most amazing relationships with the patients and families we serve. La Rabida feels like my second home and I am proud to be a part of a hospital as nurturing as this one is.

Why did you choose to become a Child Life Specialist?
What's your favorite memory as a Child Life Specialist?
Over the years my course of studies, employment, and volunteer choices have led me to the realization that the most fulfilling times in my life have transpired when acting as a caregiver for children. It is for this reason that I have chosen the career path as a Child Life Specialist as it enables myself to be an integral part of a child's development. My favorite memory as a Child Life Specialist has been preparing patients for medical procedures and supporting them throughout by engaging in coping techniques.

What's your favorite activity to do with our patients?
My favorite activity to do with the patients is to engage in crafts! I love to work with paint whether it be to get handprints or footprints of our little ones or painting on canvases with our older patients!

What's your favorite part of your day?
My favorite part of the day is being able to collaborate with patients, families, and other disciplines to create a beneficial care plan that tends to the unique needs of each patient at La Rabida. Being able to see the progress in development for each patient is truly a rewarding experience to be a part of.

What's your favorite children's book and why?
My favorite children's books are from the "No, David!" book series by David Shannon. These books explore a child's adventures and imagination! It is through play that children learn most and shows how children explore the world around them even if it means making mistakes along the way.

Shannon

Why did you choose to work at La Rabida?
I've always had a passion for working with medically complex children and heard many wonderful things about the patients, families and staff here at La Rabida!

Why did you choose to become a Child Life Specialist?
What's your favorite memory as a Child Life Specialist?
I have always wanted to work with children in a way that could positively impact them and their families during difficult times. Child life was the perfect fit for me that allowed me to do just that while also incorporating play and fun in sometimes not so fun settings. My favorite memory as a child life specialist, thus far, has been the holiday seasons in the hospital. It's wonderful to have the opportunity to bring some holiday cheer into the hospital for patients and families through different activities and special events.

What's your favorite activity to do with our patients?
I really like making foot print and hand print crafts. These can be created in a variety of fun ways for birthdays, seasons, holidays and milestones. They can be a great sensory activity for the patient and then become special keepsakes for caregivers and family.

What has been your favorite event/holiday at the hospital and why?
HALLOWEEN! It was so fun handing out costumes to the patients and their siblings and seeing how excited they were! The Ghostbusters and Elsa coming to the hospital also made that time extra special for our patients.

What's your favorite children's cartoon and why?
Growing up my favorite cartoon was Arthur. Today, I find myself laughing to Bluey a lot, so Bluey is a current favorite of mine.

NASCAR Visit



Our new friend from NASCAR, Ricky Stenhouse Jr., made a pit stop at La Rabida to celebrate his win in the Daytona 500! Ricky and his wife added to the celebration by hand delivering NASCAR teddy bears, toy cars, and memorabilia. La Rabida's longtime friend Ron Kittle from the White Sox also stopped by to give him a warm welcome to Chicago. We're excited to celebrate NASCAR's 75th anniversary and its arrival to Chicago this summer!

Going Home for Spring



Spring is about new beginnings. For Jermari and Mia, they get to begin their new journey beyond La Rabida. Nothing beats seeing them leave with a smile on their faces. Bon Voyage!

Disney Magic at La Rabida



Our patients may recognize a few friendly faces in the hallways. Some of their favorite Disney characters can now greet them through the Disney magic and interactive murals. All they need is some pixie dust and the Disney Team of Heroes app!

Help Us Help Our Kids

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. Children don't choose their circumstances, and we never let those circumstances impact the care children receive. 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



Save the Date

La Rabida's 34th Annual Golf Classic

August 7, 2023

Harborside International
11001 South Doty Avenue East
Chicago, IL 60628

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