



Stony Brook Medicine celebrates opening of state-of-the-art children's hospital

BY MELISSA ARNOLD

Nine years ago, a flag was planted in the ground on the campus of Stony Brook University Hospital. The marked space was declared the future home of Stony Brook Children's Hospital, a facility that would provide state-of-the-art care and technology for even the sickest children in Suffolk County.

Last month, that vision became a reality. On Oct. 17, an official ribbon cutting celebrated the completion of the new 71,500-square foot, four level pediatric facility.

Among the speakers at the ribbon cutting was Delaney Unger, a 14-year-old osteosarcoma survivor. "Due to my intense regimen of

chemotherapy I became known as a 'hospital kid.' I went from never stepping foot in a hospital to spending four to five days a week for nine months on 11 South in Stony Brook Children's Hospital. It became my second home. During my time there, the doctors, nurses and Child Life specialists became family to me. They were there for me with whatever I needed," Delaney told the crowd.

"I must say, I am a little jealous of the new beautiful Stony Brook Children's Hospital. I can attest that not only will the children who stay here get the best possible care, but they will also do so in a fantastic new facility," she said.

"There was a lot of work to do while we waited for the new building to be completed, both in terms of new facilities and building the

'intellectual infrastructure' — increasing the number of pediatric providers, building our programs, creating separate facilities for testing and spaces that are just for kids," said Dr. Margaret McGovern, vice president for health system clinical programs and strategy at Stony Brook University Medicine and physician in chief of Stony Brook Children's.

Since McGovern's arrival at Stony Brook in 2007, the hospital has more than doubled its pediatric faculty. They now boast more than 180 providers across over 30 different pediatric specialties, allowing the hospital to offer a full range of care for kids in one place, from allergies and nutrition to orthopedics, cardiology and oncology. The additional specializations have led to the creation of the nation's first

pediatric multiple sclerosis center, as well as a comprehensive Duchenne muscular dystrophy clinic and accredited cystic fibrosis center, among others.

One of the busiest places at Stony Brook University Hospital is its pediatric emergency department, located adjacent to the general emergency department. The ED opened in 2010 and is staffed entirely by health care providers trained to work with children.

Child Life services

"With 440,000 children in Suffolk County, there needs to be local access to the care they require," McGovern said. "The pediatric emergency department is on track to see 25,000 patients this year, so clearly there was a need for this.

It's staffed 24/7 with physicians trained for work in pediatric emergency departments, along with Child Life professionals who help children and their caregivers understand what's going to be happening during their care, support them through difficult procedures, and create an environment that's more welcoming for kids."

Over the past few decades, Stony Brook's Child Life services have become an important part of caring for pediatric patients and their families in hospital settings, said Stony Brook Director of Child Life Services Joan Alpers.

"The work we do is meant to normalize the environment by providing playroom experiences that might look like home, as well as other activities including pet therapy, art therapy and even horticulture therapy," Alpers said. "We also provide education on a patient's medical condition or procedures in child-friendly language so that they have a better grasp of what's going on with their health and what kind of care or procedures they'll have in the hospital. The more you understand about what you're experiencing, the less scary it is."

In addition to making kids feel more at ease in the hospital, Child Life at Stony Brook is also responsible for a Family Advisory Council and a Youth Advisory Council.

The Family Advisory Council is comprised of approximately 10 parents of past or present hospital patients. They serve as guides and supports for other families, helping connect them to resources in the hospital or educational literature. They also provide feedback to hospital staff on ways to improve hospital stays for both patients and their caregivers. The Family Advisory Council helped to select color schemes and artwork in the new children's hospital, suggested room amenities and reviewed written materials.

Similarly, the Youth Advisory Council gives adolescent patients the chance to speak their minds and plan hospital social events at a time when they can often feel lonely or unable to make their own choices, Alpers said.

"We think about things from the perspective of those who spend a lot of time at the hospital," said Marge Reilly, a Bohemia resident whose 17-year-old daughter, Caitlyn, lives with cystic fibrosis. "Having a child in the hospital can be scary and overwhelming, so we're here to do what we can to advocate for families and help them feel more comfortable."

A sneak peek

A community open house was held on Nov. 2, welcoming more than 1,200 families, former and current patients, doctors, staff, public officials and volunteers for a sneak peek of the new facility and to have some fun.

Kid-friendly activities were a big part of the day, many of them designed to educate children and their caregivers about medical services and making healthy choices. Rethink Your Drink showed just how much sugar is in popular beverages; virtual simulations allowed attendees to try their hand at robotic surgery; a challenging video game demonstrated the dangers



On every floor of the new Stony Brook Children's Hospital building, you can be a kid. In addition to delivering the highest quality of pediatric care, the hospital is equipped with a lighthouse in its waiting room, separate child and teen playrooms, as well as common areas and an outdoor garden. More than 200 pieces of art adorn patient rooms and waiting rooms. A committee of volunteers acquired art with a Long Island nautical theme, reflecting their belief that the aesthetic experience is essential to the intrinsic well-being of patients.

of distracted driving; and the Teddy Bear Clinic invited little ones to gear up and "treat" stuffed animals before bringing them home. Brody the pet therapy dog made a special appearance and entertainment was provided by the Forest Brook Elementary School chorus and the Stony Brook University Marching Band. There was also the opportunity to tour the new hospital and take a look inside a real ambulance to learn about its equipment.

Single-patient rooms

Tour-goers got an early look at the hospital's patient rooms and other amenities included with kids in mind. Each of the 48 patient rooms at Stony Brook Children's is private, giving each child the peace and quiet they need to rest and recover. Private rooms also mean more space for parents or caregivers who typically stay with their children during their time at the hospital. Typical hospital rooms leave parents trying to sleep on a cot or crammed into an armchair, while Stony Brook Children's has a pull-out sofa bed in each room.



Photos courtesy of Stony Brook Medicine

Visitors to the hospital may notice right away that there are no traditional nurses' stations at Stony Brook Children's. "Care is now going to be centralized at the patient's bedside, and nurses will do all of their charting in alcoves outside each patient room," McGovern explained. "Medications for patients will now be located in individual lock boxes outside the patient's room, which improves safety and prevents medication errors. It makes for a smoother, faster process for delivery of medication."

Child-friendly environment

Families and patients who are well enough to venture out of their rooms can enjoy multiple play spaces, including dedicated spaces for teens, a rooftop garden, the Ronald McDonald Family Room, livestreams from the Long Island Aquarium in Riverhead and more.

Getting all of the University Hospital's current patients over to the new building on Nov. 17 was no small task, but McGovern said the hospital staff was well prepared.

"Both the University Hospital inpatient unit and the new hospital needed to be fully staffed as patients were moving between locations, so we were double-staffed for the entire day," McGovern explained. "Everyone wore different colored T-shirts depending on their role, and a command center was set up in the new hospital. There was a sequential process of who got moved and when — we rehearsed it with multiple practice sessions, and everything was very carefully scripted."

The development and construction of Stony Brook Children's Hospital, a \$73 million project, was made possible through generous donations, as well as support from Stony Brook University and local and state legislators.

"What could be more important than the health and safety of our children?" asked Danielle Knapp-SanGiovanni. The Knapp Family Foundation was among the first donors to the project, pledging a \$2.5 million match that inspired more than 700 additional donations. "The new Children's Hospital offers the very best facility and the very best pediatric specialists and therapies to Long Island children and their families," she said. "My family and I are thrilled that we were involved in making the dream of a new children's hospital a reality."

It's also a dream come true for staff members like Alpers, who are finally moving into the new building after eagerly watching the construction progress next door.

"The building is spacious and warm, the art on the walls and the colors they've chosen are gorgeous, and the respect for families and for nature is so evident," she said. "This is what a children's hospital is supposed to be."

For further information, visit www.stonybrookchildrens.org

On the cover:

Upon entering the lobby, visitors have access to more than 180 pediatric specialists trained in over 30 specialties. The hospital treats more than 8,000 pediatric inpatients, 25,000 emergency room patients, more than 106,000 pediatric outpatients and performs more than 3,700 pediatric surgeries each year.



At Stony Brook Children's Hospital, family members are key members of the care team. Doctors and nurses recently gave family members an exclusive look behind the scenes to the new facility specifically designed with them in mind. Pictured from left, Maureen Cole, associate director of nursing, Children's Hospital & Women's Services, Stony Brook Children's Hospital; Dr. Margaret McGovern, vice president for Health System Clinical Programs and Strategy, Stony Brook Medicine and physician-in-chief, Stony Brook Children's Hospital; and Dr. Carolyn Milana, interim chair, Department of Pediatrics, Stony Brook Children's Hospital with children on the tour.



The new Ronald McDonald Family Room provides a welcoming lounge space for family respite, comfort and support complete with shower and laundry facilities, TV and computer room. Research shows that staying close by allows parents to better communicate with their child's medical team and improves adherence to complicated treatment plans.