



Mt. Washington
Pediatric Hospital

Handprints

FALL 2023

WHAT'S INSIDE

Pages 1-2

Get to Know the
New Ability Center

Page 2

Upcoming Events

Page 3

CEO's Message
Where Are They Now?



Page 4-5

Employee News

Page 5

Mythbusters
5 Minutes With...



Page 6

Department Spotlight
Prior Authorization



Page 7

MWPCRS, MWPH's
Satellite Rehab Location,
Celebrates Five Years



Page 8

Patient Parent Perspective
Kudos

OUR PATIENTS ARE ABLE! Get to Know the New Ability Center



Jennifer Bocian, PT, DPT, senior physical therapist working with a young patient

In May, providers, staff, patients, and families celebrated the opening of Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital's (MWPH) new Ability Center. Combining excellence in pediatric rehabilitation with family-centered convenience, the Ability Center is a more than 4,000-square-foot space dedicated to providing state-of-the-art outpatient rehab services for children and adolescents.

At the Ability Center, MWPH's team of rehabilitation experts provide comprehensive, personalized, interdisciplinary, and family-centered care. The team starts by conducting an initial evaluation of each patient's strengths, challenges, and needs. Thanks to the significantly expanded space available, the rehab team can see more patients, reducing wait times for outpatient appointments and getting patients on the road to rehabilitation sooner. The Ability Center is

home to outpatient rehabilitation therapy appointments, day programs, and therapy for inpatients, all of which have a strong interdisciplinary component to facilitate each child's continued progress.

"Interdisciplinarity sets MWPH's pediatric rehabilitation program apart. We start with the unique needs of each child, and we develop a plan that supports that child with making progress toward individualized goals. Our team starts with the goal, then tailors our support using all the available tools in our toolbox, including all of our pediatric rehabilitation disciplines as well as our child life and therapeutic recreation staff," said Julie Quinn, PT, MS Ed, PCS, MWPH's director of rehabilitation. "The Ability Center enables us to bring that individualized, interdisciplinary approach to many more children."

continued on next page >>

Ability Center *continued*



As seen
in *The
Baltimore
Sun*



TAKE A LOOK AT THE ABILITY CENTER'S SPECIALIZED SPACES

Purposely built for pediatric rehabilitation, the Ability Center goes far beyond standard rehab equipment. Our specialized spaces include:

- Concussion evaluation is a focus area, and our **balance room** is equipped with the BITS machine to evaluate patients who have had a concussion or who have vestibular challenges.
- The center's large, open gym space features the **Vector**, a dynamic support system for ambulation and jumping, as well as a second suspension system for a variety of swings.
- Among our specialized treatment rooms is a **room dedicated to early development**, providing a safe space for young children to practice crawling, pulling up to stand, and walking skills.
- Our modality room is set up specifically for **dry needling** and electric stimulation, to help address neurological and orthopedic issues by improving circulation and speeding healing.
- In our **orthopedic room**, we have specialized equipment to use in the Schroth method, a specialized physical therapy strategy for children who have scoliosis.
- For children with sensory processing difficulties, our **sensory motor room's** equipment includes sensory toys and a variety of suspension equipment—to meet age level and sensory needs.
- Children who are working to improve language and/or the use of their hands functionally to play or write can benefit from the various tabletop activities available in our **communication/fine motor room**.
- Our **kitchen space** encourages children to learn bimanual skills in a fun new way, maximizing their ability to participate in daily activities at home, from getting a snack on their own to helping bake a batch of cookies.

"My patients have really enjoyed the kitchen," said Amanda Aberg, MS, OTR/L, CBIS, CPAM, senior occupational therapist at MWPH. "For children working on feeding/eating skills, it feels more like home to sit with their parents around a communal table."

For children working on mobility, they are more motivated to walk around the kitchen to find supplies to make a snack or playdough/slime to take home with them. For teens working on executive functioning, learning to follow a more complex recipe addresses these needs in a way that doesn't feel as much like traditional therapy and directly carries over to something they can replicate at home.

A true community effort, the Ability Center's construction was supported by MWPH donors as well as the hospital itself. "We are beyond thankful for all the donors who contributed to our new space," said Jennifer Bocian, PT, DPT, senior physical therapist at MWPH. "The patients and families all remark on how open and updated it is and are always smiling when they come in."

Overall, the Ability Center maximizes patients' rehabilitation success with a wide variety of technology in one place, ready for staff to access to help each patient get the most out of each therapy appointment. It's one more way MWPH is fulfilling its mission to maximize the health and independence of each child we serve.

To learn more about the Ability Center, or to schedule an appointment for your child, call **410-367-2222**. ♥

UPCOMING EVENTS

MONTHLY FAMILY DINNERS

Please check signage around
the hospital for dates.

Questions? Call Michelle Hanover at 410-578-2651

OCT
01

WALKING WITH GRACE

McDonogh School
8600 McDonogh Rd
Owings Mills, MD 21117
9 a.m. – noon

Join us for a family fun walk to benefit MWPH. After the walk, enjoy face painting, a balloon artist, food, and more.

Admission is free. Please register by Sept. 24.
one.bidpal.net/walkingwithgrace/welcome

OCT
08

SAY YES TO THE DRESS... AGAIN! BRUNCH AND DRAG SHOW

Mt. Washington Tavern
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Brush off the dust, unwrap the keepsake box, and put that wedding dress, prom gown, tux, or favorite outfit on—all to support the great work of MWPH! You will be in good company as drag queens, led by Brooklyn Heights, don their favorite dresses for an engaging drag show and brunch.

Tickets: \$50

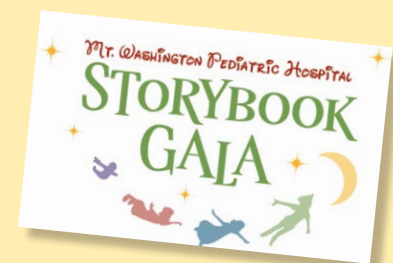
For tickets: one.bidpal.net/sayyes/welcome

OCT
28/29

ZOO BOO!

Maryland Zoo
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Come celebrate Halloween and the fall season with the Zoo's 40th annual Zoo BOO! festival. There will be games, prizes, contests, live entertainment, and free trick-or-treating! MWPH is proud to sponsor the costume contest.



NOV
04

9TH ANNUAL STORYBOOK GALA

Owings Mills Marriott Metro Centre
7 p.m. – midnight

Tickets are sold out, but the wait list is open and volunteers are still needed.

Learn more at mwph.org/storybookgala.

DEC
17

SAVE THE DATE 10TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY TOY SHOP

More details coming soon.

Message from the President

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be officially on the job here at MWPH. In my first “message from the president” for Handprints, I’d like to share a bit about my experiences over the last couple of months.

I spent much of the month of July walking the halls, trying to take it all in and start to get to know what we do by seeing it first hand. It has been a pleasure to meet and talk with the staff and see the children and families we’re helping. I have also enjoyed participating in some events, including Christmas in July and a Saturday visit from the local Corvette club.

Everyone has welcomed me warmly, and it has been a privilege to spend time watching and listening, seeing our dedicated staff in action.

My impressions so far are encouraging. I have seen the ways in which everything we do revolves around the child and family. At MWPH, we’re like spokes on a wagon wheel with child and family at the center—that is so evident as I have walked these halls. So many people contribute to the child’s care—visibly or invisibly—and we all combine to create the welcoming and healing environment MWPH is known for.

Sometimes, the behind-the-scenes folks, from housekeeping to environmental services, and from security and maintenance to

admissions and finance, have interactions with patients and families that may seem small but are very important to the child’s overall care. Their friendly conversations, which don’t revolve around the child’s medical issues, provide key moments of respite and normalcy for families.

I look forward to sharing more updates in future *Handprints* issues. For now, I want to thank you for the warm welcome. It’s very good to be here.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Klein".

Scott Klein, MD, MHA
President and CEO

Where Are They Now?—Austin Mandras



Austin then

When he was just 18 months old, Austin Mandras endured anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction to an allergen, such as a certain food or insect bite. He was diagnosed with multiple life-threatening food allergies and eosinophilic esophagitis, and he was on an Elecare-only diet.

He came to MWPH in 2015, after having developed an aversion to food. He associated eating with being sick and in pain, and he just didn’t want to do it. He had participated in a different organization’s feeding program, which hadn’t helped. In March 2015, Austin was admitted into MWPH’s intensive feeding program. When he started, he would only eat three things: mashed avocado, mashed sweet potato, or mashed banana.



Austin now

“We couldn’t have imagined how much MWPH would turn his feeding around,” recalled Austin’s mom, Erin. “The first week, he ate a hot dog, which was the biggest deal ever.”

With the help of the psychologists, therapists, and the entire feeding team, after six weeks, Austin was eating everything. “It saved him—and us. It really changed our lives,” Erin said.

Austin turns 10 this September, and he is a sophisticated eater. He eats all meats, fish, chicken, burgers, hot dogs, all vegetables, and starches. Away from the dinner table, he is an energetic child who loves to play soccer and is an elite gymnast for his age group. He loves to build with Legos and spend time outside.

Erin credits MWPH’s feeding department for putting him on the path toward a full and thriving life. “MWPH not only made him feel safe and comfortable with food, but it also gave him the confidence to manage his food allergies,” Erin said. “He has just taken off, all because of MWPH’s program.” ♥

EMPLOYEE NEWS



GET TO KNOW OUR STAR EMPLOYEES

The STAR employee award honors those employees who personify our CARES values—Considerate, Attentive, Respectful, Efficient, Safe. These honorees are recognized as outstanding role models in our hospital.

July

Christine Patterson (l) and Susan Tagliaferro (r)

“Christine and Susan both are strong advocates for their patients and families. They each have a great working relationship with the medical team and all other disciplines. We are so fortunate to have them on the respiratory team!”



August



Erica Allen



Megan Schermer

“They go above and beyond for their patients. As we all know, the transition from the hospital to home with these complex patients can be both overwhelming and terrifying. For the parents and caregivers, knowing they always have a resource just a call away is so reassuring. Their hard work does not go unnoticed by their provider or their patients and we are lucky to have them as part of the outpatient team!”

September



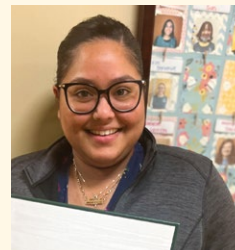
Name: Michelle Hanover
 Title: Patient Family Liaison
 Department: Office of the CEO
 How long have you worked at MWPH: 10.5 years
 What is your favorite thing about your job: Working with our families to provide support, guidance, and resources. I also enjoy collaborating with families to identify gaps in resources and advocate for, develop, and implement programming to bridge those gaps.
 Name one thing that most people don't know about you: I'm a licensed manicurist.

CONGRATULATIONS

Weigh Smart® was awarded a \$15,100 Thomas Wilson Grant to provide a “weekend backpack” of food for area families as part of our Weigh Smart® program. Food packages, which are enough to feed a family of four for two days, include milk, proteins, vegetables, cereal, and fresh fruit. These backpacks supplement the foods Baltimore City children receive through free breakfast and lunch programs at school.

DAISY AWARDS

Venesha Toolsee, LPN



“Once my daughter Mia was admitted here, I was relieved when I met all the staff, especially Venesha. She talked to me, listened to me, and helped me have a breath of fresh air. Venesha went above and beyond for Mia and is so caring, loving, professional, and attentive. She deserves this recognition.”

—Patient Parent

Kia'aina (Kia) Akiona, LPN



“Kia has been instrumental with the rehabilitation of our son. He has also taken time to teach us some techniques and training on how to care for him, even though at times, days were busy. He made us feel special and like we were a priority during our entire stay at MWPH.” —Patient parent

PROMOTIONS

- **Ildebranda Fischbach** from Nutrition Asst to Nutrition Asst Supervisor
- **Sonya Johnson-Branch** from Physical Therapy Asst to Senior Physical Therapist
- **Megan Little** from EVS Tech to EVS Supervisor
- **Merri-Beth Markey** from Physical Therapy Asst to Certified Occupational Asst
- **Haley Turner** from Nurse Grad to RN
- **Shantay Whitney** from Registrar to Patient Access Coordinator
- **Katie Yeager** from Communications Coordinator to Communications Manager

MYTHBUSTERS



Myth busted by Elizabeth Sterling Jarrett, Pediatric Psychologist

MYTH: Avoiding situations that make you anxious relieves anxiety.

FACT: Many people have situations that they avoid due to feeling anxious or worried. These are

sometimes known as anxiety “triggers.” Some of the most common triggers include heights, enclosed spaces, tests, and overwhelming social situations. Many people will say that they manage anxiety triggers by simply avoiding the trigger. For example, if you avoid crowds by not going to the mall, festivals, or shopping centers, then you can avoid anxious thoughts and accompanying physical symptoms (e.g., heart racing, sweating, feeling light-headed) associated with being in crowded settings.

However, this mindset is harmful. Although avoidance does provide short-term relief, in the long term, it makes anxious thoughts and symptoms grow significantly. Then, when individuals find themselves in a situation where the trigger is inescapable after avoiding it for so long, they often experience severe anxiety that can include panic attacks and catastrophic or racing thoughts. That’s why when individuals seek out therapy for anxiety, treatment often involves exposing the individual to feared situations in a controlled and safe way. This allows patients to build their confidence in their ability to tolerate anxiety symptoms and the urge to avoid or escape. In summary, it’s true that facing your fears can actually be helpful when learning to manage anxiety.

If your child is struggling with feelings of anxiety, we can help. Visit mwph.org/health-services/behavioral-health for more information about our psychology services.

CONGRATULATIONS BECCA



Please join us in congratulating Rebecca Clement, MS, OTR/L on finishing coursework and passing the exam to become a certified lactation counselor! With the addition of Rebecca, our lactation team of three is available and ready to help with all things related to breastfeeding and pumping.

Congrats Becca—we’re so “pumped” for you!

LINDA HUTTER recently represented MWPH and gave a lecture at the Education Management Solutions Summit in La Crosse, WI. She presented to their academic and clinical simulationists. Her talk was entitled, “Through a Pandemic and Beyond: Lessons to Build On.”



5 MINUTES WITH

Marneli Laguardia



In this issue, we spend five minutes with Marneli Laguardia, a financial and decision support analyst at MWPH. Born in the Philippines, she got to know MWPH during her time with the University of Maryland Medical System’s (UMMS) accounting office, and almost a year and a half ago, she joined MWPH’s finance team.

How would you summarize your role?

Under the CFO’s direction, I perform an advanced

level of hospital and healthcare financial analysis, then I engage in data reporting and analysis to support clinical and administrative functions. Our team works with executives and department managers to help them get the data and reports they need. We also work closely with UMMS’s accounting team to make sure that what they’re reporting in their documents aligns with what we know with regard to finance here at MWPH.

I’m one of the people behind the scenes who works to help make the kids’ lives better.

What brought you to your field and to MWPH?

Growing up, I watched my aunt, who is an accountant, and became interested in the field. I went to college and got a degree in accounting and finance. I began my career in accounting for a for-profit company, then I transitioned into healthcare accounting. I joined UMMS’s accounting department, where I handled MWPH as an account for UMMS. Then, I made the jump to the finance side—a closely related, but different, type of work.

I am so happy that I made the choice to join MWPH. It’s a great feeling to know you’re helping make the kids’ and parents’ lives better. MWPH also has a family-like environment with lots of warmth and friendliness from everyone on the team, which I like.

What do you find most challenging about your role?

What do you find most rewarding?

The biggest challenge is becoming familiar with all the healthcare-specific terms and abbreviations I need to know.

As far as rewarding aspects, this is the first time I’ve felt fulfilled in my job and happy at work. I feel appreciated for what I do, and I have the sense that I am making a difference, even though I am not interacting with patients and families.

What kind of impact do you hope to have on MWPH?

I want to make our processes better, so we can help the head of each department to streamline their work and free up time to pursue high-impact initiatives at the hospital. If my team can take something that took a manager a day to do manually and develop an automated process so it only takes an hour, that frees them up to do more for the kids.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION



*Shown at far left:
L to R: Satya Christian,
Staci Lockett,
Naquetta Gray*

*Above:
Angela Wise-Anderson,
Knickkia Johnson-Hall*

Left: Hollie Henderson

*Prior Authorization Department staff
not pictured:
Quiara Hubbard,
Samantha Donars,
Antoinette Bruce,
Jacquetta Williams-Carter,
Towanda Connor*

THE PRIOR AUTHORIZATION DEPARTMENT'S MISSION is to make sure that all prework that is necessary for an insurance claim is done before the patient comes in for an outpatient appointment. That prework includes chasing down referrals, securing authorization for services that may take place, and getting the correct insurance information for claims. The department also works on behalf of families, assisting patients with appeals if services are not covered, advising families of their estimated out-of-pocket expenses, and connecting them with financial assistance if needed.

“We like helping families. Our goal is to make everything go smoothly, so patient families don’t have any unwelcome surprises,” said Knickkia Johnson-Hall, manager of the outpatient prior authorization department.

“

We like helping families. Our goal is to make everything go smoothly, so patient families don’t have any unwelcome surprises.

”

The prior authorization department works closely with many other departments in the hospital, including billing, registration, scheduling, and health information management. This fall, the department is instituting a cross-department shadowing program,

where prior authorization department members can spend a couple of hours a week observing how other departments work, what they do, and the challenges they face. The program’s goal is to boost understanding and compassion by increasing team members’ insight into all the steps in the process of scheduling, authorizing, coding, and billing for patient visits.

“We’re inviting other departments to come to us, we’re going to other departments to shadow them, and we’re encouraging other departments to shadow each other,” Johnson-Hall said.

Even though it’s behind the scenes, the prior authorization department makes a real difference for families. Johnson-Hall shared an example to illustrate what makes her work fulfilling:

“We have a special arrangement with one insurance plan for our behavioral health services. Because the company finds such value in the behavioral health services we provide for its members, it gives us an exception to cover the services. I recently got a call from a mother who has a child with a behavioral health concern. We had an approval letter in place in her child’s file, but her child’s services were not being covered at the in-network level. She was in tears. We investigated and reworked the entire exception process with the insurance company, so we could complete the exception request forms ahead of time. I got that mom’s claim reprocessed, so she could feel comfortable bringing her child here, and I made sure that no other families would have to go through similar stress in the future. I was so happy to be able to fix that for her.” ♥

MWPCRS, MWPH's Harford County Satellite Rehab Location, Celebrates Five Years



Five years ago this month, MWPH merged with an outpatient rehabilitation clinic located in Harford County, Maryland. Under its new name, Mt. Washington Pediatric Community Rehabilitation Services (MWPCRS), this center enables MWPH to bring its excellent physical, occupational, and speech therapy services to northern Maryland.

“Our programs here have been full since the beginning,” said Jessica Maher, PT, manager of rehab at MWPCRS, who has worked at MWPH for 23 years. “There is such a large demand for community-based outpatient rehabilitation services here.”

Located 30 miles north of Baltimore in Forest Hill, MD, MWPH's Harford County location gives families easier access, so they don't have to travel one hour each way for a weekly 30- to 60-minute appointment. This satellite location reduces barriers for families, so they can more easily follow through with the recommended treatment plan for their child.

This location allows families to access services closer to home, allowing more children to receive regular therapy services, even if they don't live near the main hospital. Children can visit the hospital's main campus for interdisciplinary clinics, such as our feeding and balance clinics, supplementing the services they're receiving at the satellite location.

“I think it has been a wonderful addition to the hospital. It's an important way MWPH is reaching into the community, bringing services closer to home to meet the needs of our children and families,” Maher said.

For children whose needs extend beyond outpatient therapy, this location's close connection with MWPH gives families seamless access to higher levels of care at MWPH's flagship location.

“We can collaborate with the main hospital to bring specialty services here or assist families in attaining them when needed,” Maher said. Examples include intensives such as rehab day and feeding day programs, neuropsychological testing, or psychiatry services.

The location also offers a range of beneficial trickle-down effects for MWPH as a whole. By educating local providers and hospitals in northern Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania about MWPH's services, the Harford County location functions as a referral stream for the flagship hospital.

In short, MWPCRS brings outstanding outpatient pediatric rehabilitation into the community, all backed by the specialty rehabilitation expertise MWPH is famous for. ♥



MWPH: IN THE COMMUNITY



This summer, more than 40 patient advocates, ranging in age from 7 months to 24 years, and representatives from 32 children's hospitals, including MWPH, participated in this year's Family Advocacy Day in Washington, DC. MWPH patient Parth Patel's family shared their personal journey with the medical industry to help lawmakers understand the importance of prioritizing children's healthcare needs.

The Patels, along with leaders from MWPH, had the privilege of meeting personally with Senator Chris Van Hollen, as well as Congressmen John Sarbanes and Kweisi Mfume. They were also able to speak with representatives from the following offices: Senator Ben Cardin, Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, and Congressman Glenn Ivey.

Congressman John Sarbanes said in his meeting, “It's important for families to come and tell their stories, because lawmakers need to know what's at stake.”

We are grateful for Parth and his family's courage in continuing to tell his story to make a difference!





Patient Parent Perspective

Cortney and Dennis Lane



Cortney and Dennis Lane are parents to two children: Leah, who turns 7 in September, and Maddux, who is 5. Leah has been going to MWPH since she was a baby.

How did your family first connect with MWPH?

Leah was born with a rare neurological condition, a brain malformation called lissen-

cephaly that affects only about 1 in 100,000 children. She was also diagnosed with microcephaly, epilepsy, spastic cerebral palsy, fine and gross motor delays, speech delays, and feeding challenges.

What services has your family received at MWPH?

As an infant, she started with physical therapy and aquatic therapy. Then in 2020, Leah began participating in MWPH's summer intensive rehab day clinics. This summer, she did modified intensive therapy in the new Ability Center. In addition to

the intensive physical, occupational, speech, and feeding therapy she receives each summer, she has ongoing outpatient physical therapy at MWPH during the year. Leah is also a patient of Dr. Nichols, who works closely with us, and she receives Botox injections regularly for tight muscles related to her cerebral palsy.



Although we used to travel to Boston to get intensive therapy each year, now that MWPH has opened the new Ability Center, we can find everything Leah needs here.

What stands out about MWPH?

We walk in the door, and everyone greets her by name. She smiles and giggles, because she knows she's going to see people who care about her. The therapists truly look at her individually. They consider what she can do well and what she may be struggling with, and they use that to guide what they are doing with her. They are receptive, responsive to my questions, and mindful of Leah's needs.

What advice would you give to parents coming to MWPH for the first time?

Thinking back, we had so many questions and worries about Leah when she was born—about what would happen in the future and what her life would be like. My advice to other parents is to let your child show you the way. Leah showed us in her own way how she would grow and thrive. Just be there with them to guide them, and take everything day by day.

KUDOS for our Caring Staff

"I love the staff, care, and atmosphere at Mt. Washington. We've been coming here for a year and a half, often several times a week, and I don't think there was ever a time anyone was rude or uncaring. Staff at all levels have been so kind and make me feel like my granddaughter is special and loved."

—Patient Caregiver

"Rebecca Felmeister is absolutely wonderful! She has been very accommodating and has provided numerous resources and positive reinforcements to assist my daughter in the physical therapy process. She was very patient and kind to us during each session. She made herself available as needed to accommodate last minute scheduling changes as well as making herself available after discharge to track progress or concerns. Thank you so much, Ms. Rebecca."

—Patient Parent

For information or questions about *Handprints*, contact **Katie Yeager**, Communications Manager at katharine.yeager@mwph.org



Mt. Washington
Pediatric Hospital

Where Children Go to Heal and Grow

Est. 1922

An affiliate of University of Maryland Medical System and Johns Hopkins Medicine



"Like" us on Facebook



Follow us on Twitter



Follow us on YouTube



Follow us on Instagram @mwphstories



Connect with us on LinkedIn