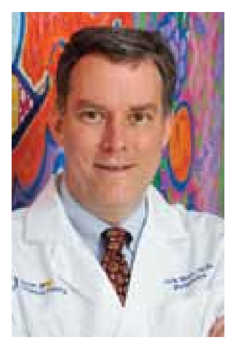
UNDER THE Rainbow

BATSON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Safe Arrival

Marissa Neely's journey to health

The University of Mississippi Medical Center
Spring 2014


Dr. Rick Barr


Guy Giesecke

Dear Friends,

In spite of our long winter, it appears springtime has finally arrived in Mississippi. Flowers are blooming, the land is awash with color and a sense of renewal permeates the air.

In keeping with this sense of renewal, this issue of Under the Rainbow features stories about some former patients who blossomed into accomplished artists, new research that may change the way we think about autism, a 100-year-old donor with a legendary daylily garden and a program at Children's that follows moms and babies through high-risk pregnancies to a safe birth.

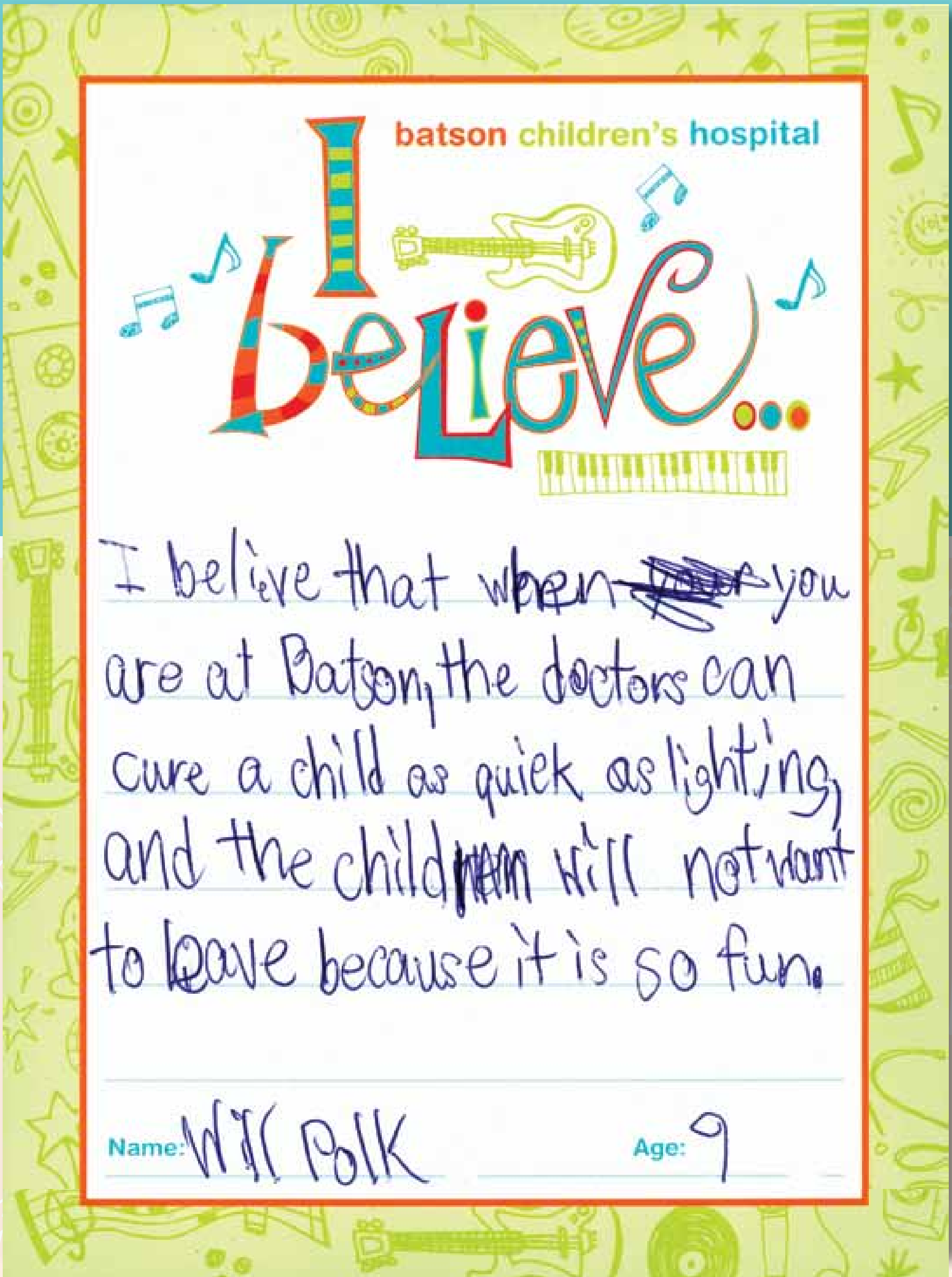
Each of you is a part of these miracles and the beautiful lives of the children and families we care for each and every day. Thank you for joining us in our mission to improve the life of every child in Mississippi. We believe we can do it. Young Will Polk believes it too. Thank you, Will, for believing in us.

With gratitude,

Dr. Frederick "Rick" Barr,
Suzan B. Thames Professor
and Chair of Pediatrics

Guy Giesecke

Guy Giesecke,
Chief Executive Officer,
Children's of Mississippi


batson children's hospital

I believe...

I belive that when ~~your~~ you are at Batson, the doctors can cure a child as quick as lighting, and the child~~ren~~ will not want to leave because it is so fun.

Name: Will Polk Age: 9

{ features }




Spring 2014 contents

volume2
issue2

{ every issue }

Children's of Mississippi
University of Mississippi Medical Center

{ credits }

Chancellor, University of Mississippi
Dan Jones, M.D.
Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Dean, School of Medicine
James E. Keeton, M.D.
Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chair of Pediatrics
Frederick E. "Rick" Barr, M.D., M.Sc.
Chief Executive Officer, Children's of Mississippi
Guy Giesecke
Chief Nursing Officer, Children's of Mississippi
Terri Gillespie
Editor
Jennifer Hospodor
Writers
Jennifer Hospodor
Gary Pettus
Jack Mazurak
Photographers
Jay Ferchaud
Jim Albritton
Designer
Mary Harvel
Associate Director for Public Affairs
Tena McKenzie

Under the Rainbow is published twice a year by the **Division of Public Affairs** at the **University of Mississippi Medical Center**.

Send story ideas and photos to **jhospodor@umc.edu** or mail to:

Jennifer Hospodor
Division of Public Affairs
University of Mississippi Medical Center
2500 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39216-4505

On the cover: A peacefully sleeping **Marissa** gets a kiss from mom Tambra Posey.

The Art of Healing

Former patients find that adversity can be transformed into a thing of beauty.

written by **Gary Pettus**

When they were children, they faced obstacles that would bring most adults to their knees.

Mary Margaret Pierce: brain tumor. Gracie Earnest: brain trauma. Jeremy Thomley: cystic fibrosis.

All became patients at Batson Children's Hospital. And then, all became artists.

In reality, they were artists from the day they were born; it was adversity that shaped the type of artists they would become.

MARY MARGARET PIERCE

You are Mary Margaret Pierce, 16, of Columbia – star softball player, star of a school musical and (you hope) future star of the high school prom – and you're told you have a brain tumor.

Your life has always been bright and vibrant, like a stained-glass window. And now you learn that its resemblance to windows is even more profound.

What do you do when you learn that you're breakable?

* * *

Today, at age 27, she likes things that come with a story.

She especially likes old windows, and thinks of each one as a link between inside and outside, between our homes and the universal vistas we cherish.

"We see the dog barking outside through it," she said. "We see the family coming home through it.

For more information about Mary Margaret Pierce and her work, visit mmartwindows.blogspot.com.

At her studio in the Sawhorse, a shop owned by her cousin and friend, **Harald von Gahlen**, **Mary Margaret Pierce** of Columbia pieces together one of the windows to be displayed in Batson.

We see kids playing outside. We see the rain and the sun."

She sees all these things in her mind as well: her own memories and those she imagines once belonged to someone else, even as she remakes and reframes their battered pieces into something glorious and new. She is a mosaic/stained glass artist; windows – usually old and discarded – are her frames.

She gives something broken or breakable another chance – like the chance she needed when she was 16 and her health shattered.

It had come at her hard. "I felt like I had ropes in my neck," she said.

Her vision would go black, "as if someone had turned a switch off."

> It was a moment of peace; whether I survived, I would be taken care of.
>
> • Mary Margaret Pierce

Normally, **Mary Margaret Pierce** works with well-worn window frames, but the ones for her display at Batson are new. She "stressed" them to make them appear old, using a sander and heat and other methods.

She had "insane" headaches. A softball pitcher who had injured her shoulder, she went to a sports medicine doctor, who associated the injury with her migraines.

A CT scan showed otherwise.

"The bottom falls out of your world," said Charlotte Pierce, her mom.

It was medulloblastoma, a tumor that tends to spread to other parts of the brain and spinal cord.

"It was: 'Oh; OK. We're actually calling this something now,'" Mary Margaret said. Giving it a name, she said, was a "relief."

At Batson, where she had been transferred from a Hattiesburg hospital, doctors removed the tumor. But, as a precaution, she would still require radiation and chemotherapy.

"I didn't have time for this," she said. "This would interfere with softball. I had a prom to go to.

"I had no idea what I was about to go through."

The treatments made her so sick, her mother said, "we thought we'd lose her."

Many of her friends moved on.

"It was a scary thing to see this emaciated girl in a wheelchair," Mary Margaret said.

After a while, she didn't ask them to come around anymore.

Still, even as her body shrank, she grew – emotionally.

"In high school, you normally don't have to deal with your own mortality, or someone else's," she said.

"It was hard to relate to people my age who worried about what to wear to the football game.

"The biggest thing I missed was being able to be a kid, to be unaware of life's harsh reality.

"But the only thing I regret is not embracing the fact that I was sick and not having fun with it. Like when my hair fell out during chemo. I wish I had gotten a big, hot-pink wig and rocked that wig."

One day before treatments began, as she lay asleep in a hospital bed, a feeling of well-being flooded her body.

"It was like swallowing something really warm that goes down your chest, except it kept going," she said. "I woke up and my minister was praying over me.

"It was a moment of peace; whether I survived, I would be taken care of. That's all I needed to know."

And, of course, she was right. Some months later, she stopped losing weight.

But, by her senior year, she had missed a lot of school. Unwilling to repeat a year because of her absences, she took the GED, then the ACT, and entered Mississippi State University. She studied fashion merchandising and took art classes without graduating.

At one point, she lived in the Jackson area, selling furniture, then cars.

"I hated it," she said.

Once, on an off-day, she began browsing a mosaics shop. Eventually, she took mosaic classes, she said.

"Then, one day, I saw a stack of windows in the corner, and that's all she wrote.

"To me, they looked like blank canvases; 'I can do something with that.'"

Drawing, painting had always attracted her. This was even better.

Mary Margaret began creating her art about four years ago and now uses space in a shop owned by her cousin and friend, a carpenter/cabinetmaker.

She orders glass by the sheet and uses broken bottles. Her tools include cutter wheels, artist's paintbrushes and a mosaic adhesive.

The windows are salvaged from flea markets or piles of trash at construction sites or demolished homes. Sometimes, older residents recognize a window's pedigree: "So-and-so lived in that house."

Her art is on display at the Artwistic Revolution, a downtown Columbia gallery. Her works explode with color in floral, star and other patterns. One is titled Que Sera Sera, after a song from one of her favorite movies, The Man Who Knew Too Much.

In February, she finished a large window that dazzles the eye with sun and rainbow themes. The window is on display at Batson.

People cannot resist touching her windows. She cannot forget the girl who kept running her hands over one: "I just knew she was going to slice her hands. But she kept saying, 'I can see it; I can see it. I can see the colors.'"

The girl was blind.

Mary Margaret's own hands and arms have been sliced and punctured; the scars are souvenirs from her sharp-edged art and from IV needles.

"Sometimes I don't even feel it when I get poked," she said. "Anyway, as someone told me, you're not an artist until you hurt yourself."

GRACIE EARNEST

Gracie Earnest took to drawing when she was a girl, using the one hand that still moved and the fraction of her eyes that could still see.

Today, at 25, she is still left-handed, and left-seeing, because she has no choice.

But she has come far since the accident that shaved off the top of her mother's car and sheared the top of her baby's skull.

Gracie was 2 1/2; she was not supposed to ever breathe on her own again, or talk or, in spite of the bad hand it had dealt her, view the world with such pleasure and hope. All of which she does today.

"She's like our Peter Pan child," said her mom, Gia Earnest of Clinton. "She never grows up, and we're very appreciative of that."

After July 8, 1991, Gracie was not supposed to grow at all.

For more information about Gracie Earnest and her pottery, visit her Facebook page "Made by Grace Pottery."

Working in her studio in a room set aside for her by her parents **Eric** and **Gia Earnest**, **Gracie Earnest** paints some of her favorite shapes: small birds, quail, dragonflies and crosses.

"I don't remember what happened that night," she said. "I do remember there was blood all over me."

It was the night Gia had promised to buy her daughter some mermaid sandals. They piled into the car: Gia, Gia's friend and her friend's daughter, and Gracie, elevated in her car seat.

On U.S. 49 in Orange Grove, where they lived at the time, the driver of a flatbed trailer truck made a U-turn in the dark, his taillights broken. Gia did not see him in time. The car went under the truck, losing its roof, while Gracie, the only one hurt, almost lost her life.

In the emergency room, doctors told Gia and Eric Earnest that the swelling in their daughter's brain would kill her. They had 72 hours to tell her goodbye.

After three days, her seizures started. After several months of hospital care, she was still breathing, but not talking or making a sound, even when needles jabbed the arm that could still feel them.

Weeks of speech therapy apparently were doing no good – although there was the day that Gracie seemed to notice the therapist's toy dog when it barked.

The next day or so, Gia asked Gracie if she'd like some chicken noodle soup, not expecting a reply.

"And she barked," Gia said.

Soon, Gracie was singing Deep and Wide, a favorite hymn.

Then, the words came. A precocious child who had been potty trained before the accident, Gracie suddenly asked her mom, "'Where are my big-girl panties?'"

"It was a rocket ship after that," Gia said, describing her daughter's ascent.

"Amazing Grace" was born.

Her nickname really took off some time after the family moved to Clinton, when Gracie was 4 or 5, and she began seeing doctors at Batson Children's Hospital.

Despite her progress, she was frequently hospitalized. At home, a constraining routine began.

Gracie had to be bathed. Her seizures were so frequent and severe, Gia had to stay home with her. The family couldn't go out to dinner. Gracie couldn't go on church trips or stay overnight with friends.

> We totally trusted Batson. It was the best decision we ever made.
>
> • Gia Earnest, mother of Grace

When **Gracie Earnest** was a young girl, her grandfather used to tell her, "'Gracie, girl, you're going to do something with your art one day.' He's my angel," she said.

Finally, the year Gracie turned 13, surgeons decided to remove the left side of her brain – a hemispherectomy.

"We totally trusted Batson," her mom said. "It was the best decision we ever made. We got our lives back."

Since then, her seizures have dropped to about three per day; you would hardly know she was having one. In 2002, Gracie was the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals Mississippi Champion.

Seven years later, she earned a certificate from Clinton High School, the year her sister Amy Beth graduated. Then, she watched her friends from school disappear as they took jobs or went to college.

Once, she found a job at a car dealership, but it didn't work out.

Gracie can't sit at a desk for long; she needs frequent breaks. She finds it difficult to sleep except during the day, often staying up all night.

Her parents worried about her state of mind.

"Everybody told her, 'You can't go to college and you can't go to work,' " Gia said.

Though the accident had paralyzed Gracie on her right side, she has regained the use of her right leg. But she walks with a limp and still can't use her right arm, although wrist surgery in October helped straighten it and ease her pain.

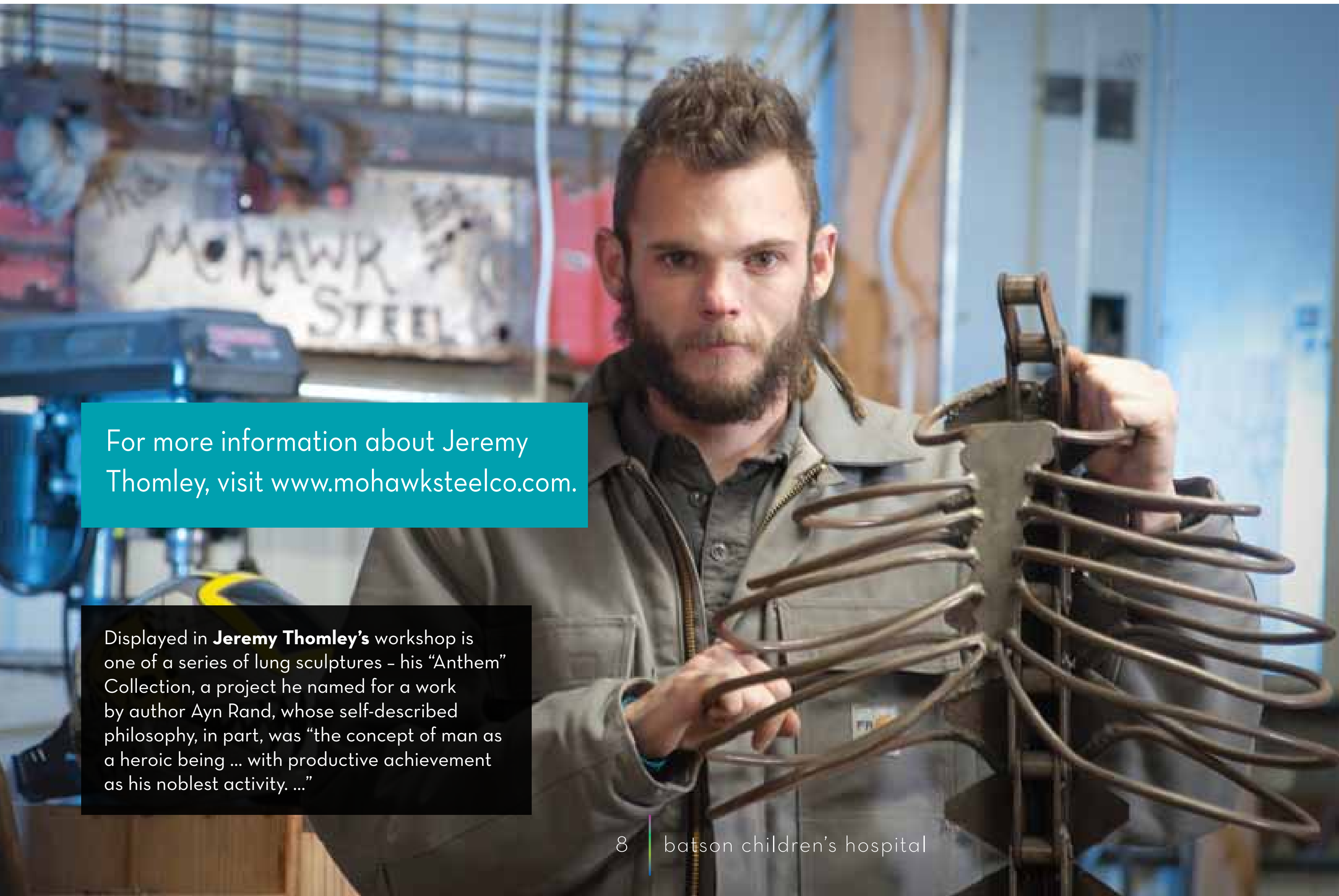
Part of the right side of her face is paralyzed. Her right field of vision remains dark in both eyes. To see anything, she has to turn her head to her right and slide her eyes to the left. She can't drive, and the part of the brain that enabled her to manage money was lost in the surgery, Gia said.

"We had to find something she could do at home."

For a while, Gracie had visited a pottery shop on Saturdays. She enjoyed being surrounded by the pieces on display, objects that had been, basically, earth – now re-made into works of art.

Gracie learned that she could order unfinished pottery, earthenware and paint it at home: owls, birdhouses, egg plates, butterflies, dragonflies, crosses.

She embellishes them now in her own workshop and then sells them on Facebook and at markets



For more information about Jeremy Thomley, visit www.mohawksteelco.com.

Displayed in **Jeremy Thomley's** workshop is one of a series of lung sculptures – his "Anthem" Collection, a project he named for a work by author Ayn Rand, whose self-described philosophy, in part, was "the concept of man as a heroic being ... with productive achievement as his noblest activity. ..."

and festivals, where her mom peddles her own crafts.

At Christmas, Gracie donated the money she made from ornaments to Batson.

"I thought I would do something for them since they were so sweet to me," she said.

For Gracie, Gia said, the important thing is this: "She has a job."

At night, while her parents sleep, Gracie works alone, her paintbrush poised, her head cocked at the drab, bare shapes arranged in her room of possibilities, and she thinks, "What am I going to do to make this beautiful?"

Then she does her job – using the one hand that still moves and the fraction of her eyes that still see.

JEREMY THOMLEY

Jeremy Thomley must "take" his breaths, he says, because they will not come along quietly.

In spite of all the warnings to slow down and give it a rest, to acknowledge his breath-precious condition – no, because of those warnings – he has never surrendered. He will not let this thing define him.

He is not cystic fibrosis. He is not a lung-clogging, life-threatening chronic disease. He is Jeremy Thomley, artist and welder. Jeremy Thomley, rock climber, of all things.

He hangs onto life by his fingertips, not desperately, but joyfully and proudly, voluntarily ascending heights that would test healthy lungs – and this is not just a metaphor. He takes his breaths and he makes them like it.

"I've put myself in terrible situations," he said, "just to see what would happen next."

He is into rebellion, and there are few things more in-your-face than the pieces he builds in his Oak Grove workshop: "lungs" of steel, for instance. Even his process of creation smacks of audacity.

Of all the instruments he could use to make art and a living, a welding torch, with its lung-irritating, ozone-producing ways, is not the safest for him.

Tools and machines – the bigger and louder, the better – have always fascinated him.

As a toddler, her son enjoyed taking apart the dishwasher, said Jane Thomley of Hattiesburg.

One day, she heard the battering-ram sound of ice cubes being slaughtered in the kitchen. She found her son, age 4, trying to make a pina colada in the blender.

Struggling to keep up with him, she put him on a trampoline to wear him out.

She let him do things a parent with a cystic fibrosis child is cautioned against. The disease wasn't going to define her either.

She accepted the diagnosis, not the prognosis. "Four or five years to live?" she said. "That was absurd. That was not acceptable."

Jeremy is one of Jane's three children, and the only one to get the disease.

The diagnosis was made at Batson when he was 4 months old. His symptoms included salty-tasting skin and a ruthless appetite. But he did not lose weight, not then or later. In the first grade, he took a "man's lunch box" to school. Before bed every night, he had a steak. He ate eight meals a day.

His mom, Jeremy said, "was the best doctor I ever had."

To unclog the mucous from his lungs, she performed the obligatory chest percussion on him when he was a child – but with a twist, tapping him firmly in time to recordings of military marches.

"'We're going to be warriors?'" he asked her one day.

"I said, 'Yes, we're going to wear capes and fight,'" Jane Thomley recalled. "He asked me if anyone ever won, and I said I didn't think so, but he was going to be the first."

Using a welding torch, **Jeremy Thomley** fine-tunes one of his metal gramophone sculptures.

She gave him momentum. The courage was his. Down with the flu a few years ago, he lay in a hospital bed, an IV stuck in one arm while he performed bicep curls with the other.

As a boy, he won drawing contests. As a teen, he made aquariums out of broken TV sets. This passion for creating grew with him, as did the size of his art. He became attracted to big, bold pieces, bursting with power in three dimensions: sculpture.

"I want to build things that will outlast me," he said.

His workshop, located on the farm, is a chaotic collection of rusted car doors suspended from the ceiling, colored wine bottles, propane tanks, a mannequin torso, welding gloves, work benches, welding torches, shelves, metal sprockets, clamps, springs.

While some of his finished pieces are displayed here, one of the most massive rises 25 feet high outside the RAMP Sports factory in Park City, Utah: a Yeti made from recycled ski and snowboard scraps, created with fellow artist Daniel Bell.

Another stands on private property in Mississippi: a 30-foot high, 11,000-pound bottle tree named the Whomping Willow after the vicious plant from Harry Potter. Among its components are fragments of an old farm tractor.

"It's telling stories that inspires me," he said. In this case, the tractor tells the story: "It helped feed families."

He had learned how to do this, how to weld, to turn metal into art, not long after he went out on his own and was living in the Florida Keys. He sold his creations there locally. Now, he sells them everywhere.

When he returned to Mississippi, he became friends with other artists, including Mary Margaret Pierce of Columbia, in the town where he lived for several years and where he helped start the Artwistic Revolution, the cooperative gallery that displays their art.

Sculpture became his "avenue for self-discovery." But it isn't his only one.

A member of the Mormon Church, he was on a church mission a few years ago in the mountains of Utah when he learned that rock climbing is a sport.

"I thought I was strong," he said, "but when I went climbing with some guys I met there, I couldn't do anything." Now he can.

> I want to build things that will outlast me.
>
> • Jeremy Thomley

Sponsored by such companies as CamelBak, he built his own career, scaling heights in Canada, Spain, South Africa and, most recently, the 3,200-foot face of a tabletop mountain in Venezuela.

Through rock climbing, he discovered what his body can really do, which is a lot. He also discovered something else.

"The adrenaline, when you're afraid, is amazing," he said. It puts you in the moment. It stops time.

He's 31 now, about six times older than he's supposed to be, according to the original prognosis.

His mother speaks with parents of young CF patients, sends them photos of her robust son, to give them hope.

But Jeremy was 24 before he could begin to talk to others about cystic fibrosis. "It's still emotional for me," he said, "because it still isn't over. We live on the edge of a knife."

He makes that clear with one of his sculptures, a chain wrapped around a large rock.

"Sometimes my ribs feel like a cage," he said. "Sometimes they feel like they're protecting me, like your family."

Standing in one of the only open spots in her legendary daylily garden, **Mary Burkett**, is going to start removing duplicate varieties in order to plant new ones.

MARY'S GARDEN GROWS

Mary Burkett has nurtured many things in her 100 years, including an estate that will help Mississippi's most vulnerable children.

written by **Jennifer Hospodor**

Mary Burkett and her dog **Muffin**, who she rescued from the local animal shelter.

Burkett gives **Dr. Rick Barr**, Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chair of Pediatrics, a tour of her daylily garden during one of his visits.

Centenarian Mary Burkett has a passion for daylilies.

It began back in the 1950s when the only ones you could find were yellow or orange and over the past 60 years she has cultivated nearly 500 varieties in as many colors.

She has one of those gardens that people drive long distances to see and counts gardening as her favorite hobby.

Her other hobby – real estate – has grown a garden of a different variety, one that will help thousands of sick and injured children at Batson Children's Hospital.

Burkett is leaving the bulk of her estate, sprouted from real estate investments, to the children's hospital. The Hattiesburg resident has never stepped foot in Batson and with no children of her own and no relatives who've been treated there, she has no personal story of triumph or tragedy that framed her choice to include Batson in her will. Her reasons for doing so were far more simple. She loves children.

"I feel like somebody has to take care of them because they cannot take care of themselves," said Burkett. "I want them to get the best of care."

Although she's hesitant to admit it, caregiving is another of Burkett's hobbies.

"Ms. Burkett is a truly beautiful person, and it is clear her life has been dedicated to bringing beauty, joy, and most of all hope to others," said Dr. Rick Barr, Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chair of Pediatrics. "With this gift, she is now committed to bringing hope to children."

The eldest of three daughters, Burkett has spent the better part of her century on this earth looking after others – aunts, neighbors, handymen and of course, Muffin, her rescue dog.

And she didn't just tend to their emotional needs; she very often was in the position to help them financially thanks to a wise real estate investment she made more than a half-century ago.

A child of the Great Depression, Burkett subscribes to a simple lifestyle, preferring to save rather than spend. Real estate was the one exception.

"I'm not usually adventurous, but in real estate I was."

She giggles when she talks about her 1948 purchase of 20 acres west of Hattiesburg, recalling that she had no idea it would end up being such a worthwhile endeavor.

That property, which she spent every last cent of her savings on, ended up being zoned for commercial use and she held onto it long enough for the value to skyrocket.

> "Ms. Burkett is a truly beautiful person, and it is clear her life has been

For more information about how to make a legacy gift through your estate plan, please contact Natalie Hutto 601-984-2306.

❶ During her tenure at Gulfport Memorial Hospital, **Mary Burkett** enjoyed research more than clinical work because it changed every day.

❷ **Mary Burkett**, standing right, and her two sisters, **Margaret**, seated, and **Ava**, grew up in the Great Depression, which she admits left a lasting impression on her.

dedicated to bringing beauty, joy, and most of all hope to others."

- Dr. Rick Barr

When she finally sold it, she used the profits to buy municipal bonds that are now being paid off early.

She continued to invest in real estate over the next 50 years, but still enjoys gardening above all else – fitting for a woman almost born at the 1914 Rose Parade in Pasadena, California.

Burkett's parents, both second-generation Mississippians, moved briefly to Los Angeles so her dad could learn the sheet metal business. Just before their return to Mississippi, Burkett's mother, desperate to see the parade, seriously considered making the trip to Pasadena. Luckily, she decided it was too risky and Burkett was born the next day on January 2.

After her parents returned to Hattiesburg, Burkett never left the state again unless it was on vacation. She received her degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in medical laboratory sciences and spent 40 years as a registered medical technologist.

She retired in 1962 from Gulfport Memorial Hospital. She loved living on the coast. Something about the water and the "easy-going" people always appealed to her, but in 1976 she returned for good to Hattiesburg, where she eventually established scholarship funds at her alma mater, University of Southern Mississippi.

Thirty years later, she encountered Batson Children's Hospital for the first time through a letter sent to donors from the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals program at Batson. Even though she's never visited the hospital, Burkett learned all she needed from those letters. Each time she would receive a letter with information about the hospital, Burkett would reply with a small donation.

This went on for nearly seven years until one day, Burkett enclosed a handwritten letter to Barr, who co-signs the CMNH letters with hospital chief executive officer, Guy Giesecke.

"I almost fell out of my chair when I read Mary's letter, especially the last paragraph," Barr said. "It was similar to other letters I receive in that it outlined her personal connection to child health issues and her dedication to research in her career, but that last paragraph, that was really special."

That paragraph explained that Batson would be included in her will and that the hospital would receive a significant portion of her estate.

The declaration, worthy of some fanfare, was done in a most matter-of-fact way. Burkett simply sees it as her duty.

"I try to follow a Christian faith and I feel like if you're in a position to help somebody and if it doesn't hurt you, then do it."

Dr. Barry Berch, right, assistant professor of pediatric surgery, and **Dr. James Bofill**, professor of maternal fetal medicine, examine **Marissa** in the neonatal intensive care unit, where she stayed for seven weeks after her birth.

Safe Arrival

Little Marissa Neely's battle to be healthy began in the womb.

written by **Jennifer Hospodor**

At just 24 weeks into her pregnancy, Tambra Posey went in for what she thought was a routine screening. Instead, she was told her growing baby girl had a growing tumor.

Posey scoured the internet for information on the diagnosis – sacrococcygeal teratoma (SCT).

The facts didn't faze her.

> *SCTs are one of the most common tumors in newborns, occurring in 1 in 35,000 to 40,000 live births.*
>
> *SCTs develop from the fetus' tailbone and can grow to tremendous sizes.*
>
> *SCTs are a serious fetal condition and can cause heart failure in the fetus.*

The images did.

"I was fine until I saw pictures and I started crying," Posey acknowledged.

Marissa swaddled in her crib in the neonatal intensive care unit.

> “It is very satisfying to get a mother and baby treated successfully.”
>
> - Dr. Barry Berch

And anyone would. The pictures are gruesome and frightening; large masses distorting tiny bodies.

“I didn’t know what was in store. How big would it get? Would they have to take her early? Would it hurt her heart?”

She would find some answers and some peace of mind from team members at the University Center for Maternal and Fetal Care – a group of obstetric and pediatric specialists who collaborate to get moms and babies through complex pregnancies. The maternal-fetal medicine team sees an average of one SCT every two years.

Dr. Barry Berch

“We practice high-risk obstetrics,” said Dr. James Bofill, professor of maternal fetal medicine. “So we watch the mom, but we also do a good deal of prenatal diagnosis to make sure that the baby appears normal in its growth and development.”

The team assured Posey that her baby girl had developed normally to that point, in spite of the SCT.

Dr. James Bofill

Like many fetal anomalies, the closer a baby is to full-term at birth, the better. With a wait-and-see approach, attention turned to the baby’s heart.

“What made this difficult is that this was a rapidly growing tumor,” Bofill said. “It was growing so quickly that it was stealing blood from the baby and the placenta and becoming a bigger burden day-by-day.”

Although Posey said everyone on the team made things as easy as possible for her, she admits to questioning what she had done to cause this.

Team members assured her there was nothing she could’ve done any differently.

The truth is that no one knows what causes these errant cells to miss their marching orders to become muscle or bone or skin and develop into these tumors instead.

“I felt like they were watching us really closely,” Posey said. “They just kept telling me, ‘You’re okay, she’s okay.’”

Dr. Barry Berch, assistant professor of pediatric surgery, who met with Posey to discuss the process for removing the tumor, believes putting a mom at ease and answering the inevitable questions are part of the process.

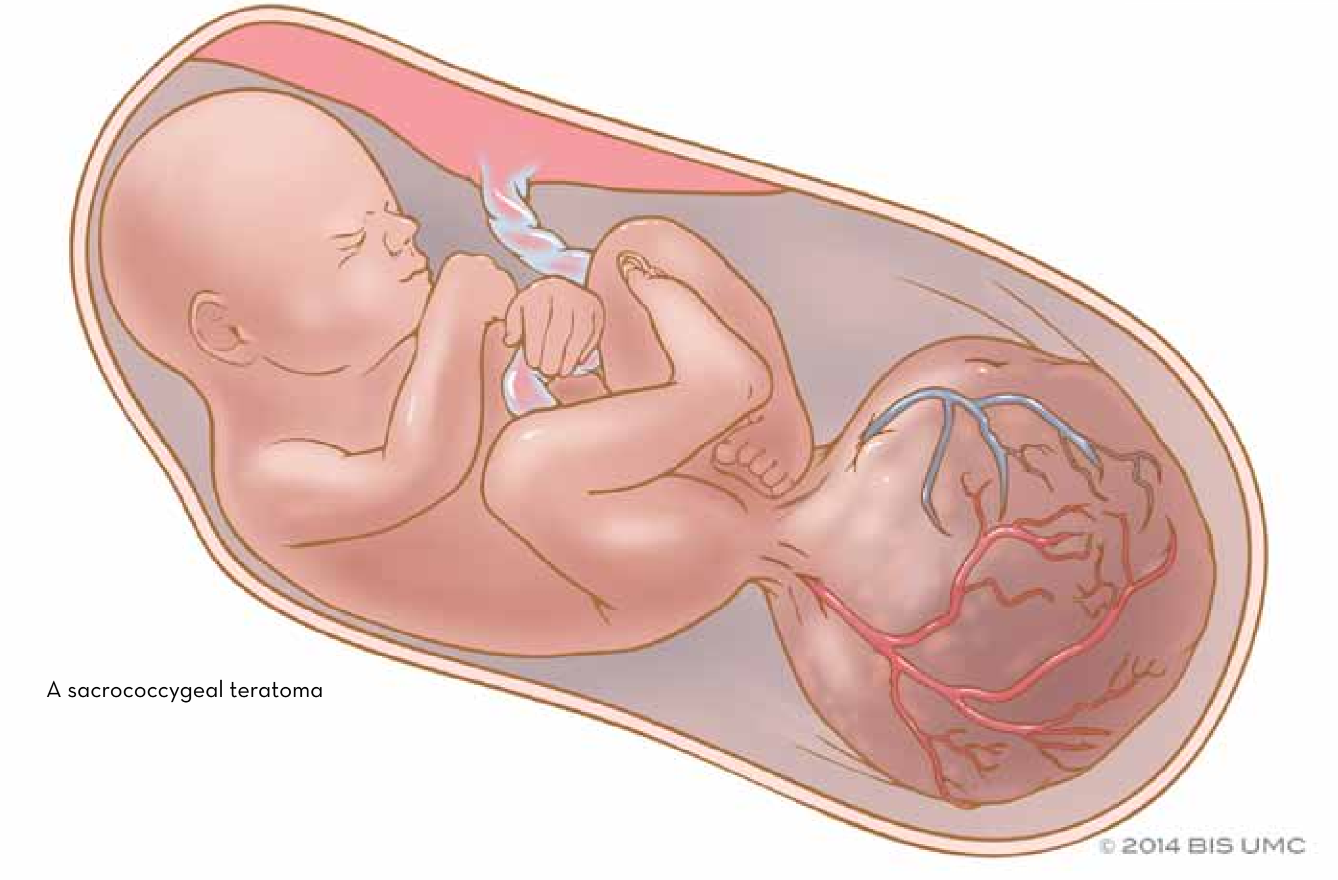
“This can be scary and I think having multiple specialists telling her it’s going to be okay just provides some peace of mind,” Berch said.

Several weeks passed uneventfully until two days before Christmas when Posey went in for a 30-week checkup feeling like she was going into labor.

Her doctor put a fetal heart monitor on her and realized that the baby’s heartbeat was dropping periodically. He sent her straight to UMMC.

“We got here and they said, ‘You’re having this baby today.’”

A few hours later Marissa Re-Ane arrived safely in this world via emergency cesarean section, ten weeks before her March 5 due date. She weighed four pounds and 13 ounces. The tumor



A sacrococcygeal teratoma

© 2014 BIS UMC

accounted for more than a third of her total weight.

One week later, Berch surgically removed the tumor and part of Marissa's tailbone – a precautionary move to prevent regrowth. She stayed in the neonatal intensive care unit for seven weeks and her scar is healing well according to Berch.

"SCTs of this variety are rare and it is very satisfying to get a mother and baby treated successfully," Berch said.

A battle had been won but the war was not over.

There was one unanswered question remaining; one thing that Posey would not find out until Marissa was born and the mass was removed.

Would it be cancerous?

According to Bofill, only about five percent of SCTs have a malignant component and unfortunately, Marissa's was one of the five percent.

The usual course of treatment at this point is intense chemotherapy to kill whatever cancer cells remained in Marissa's tiny body.

"...with Marissa's preterm status and size, we as a group chose not to give chemotherapy at this time since the tumor was completely resected," said Dr. Sharon McDonald, assistant professor of pediatric hematology-oncology.

McDonald watched as Marissa's high alpha-fetal protein levels – a key indicator of relapse – dropped into the normal range.

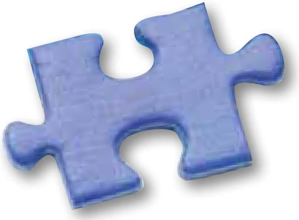
She is considered in remission from cancer.

But with a recurrence rate of about 20 percent, Marissa will be followed by the Children's Cancer Center at Batson Children's Hospital for the next couple of years where she will undergo routine imaging to make sure the tumor does not begin growing again and her alpha-fetal protein levels will continue to be monitored.

"They keep telling me she's doing good," Posey said.

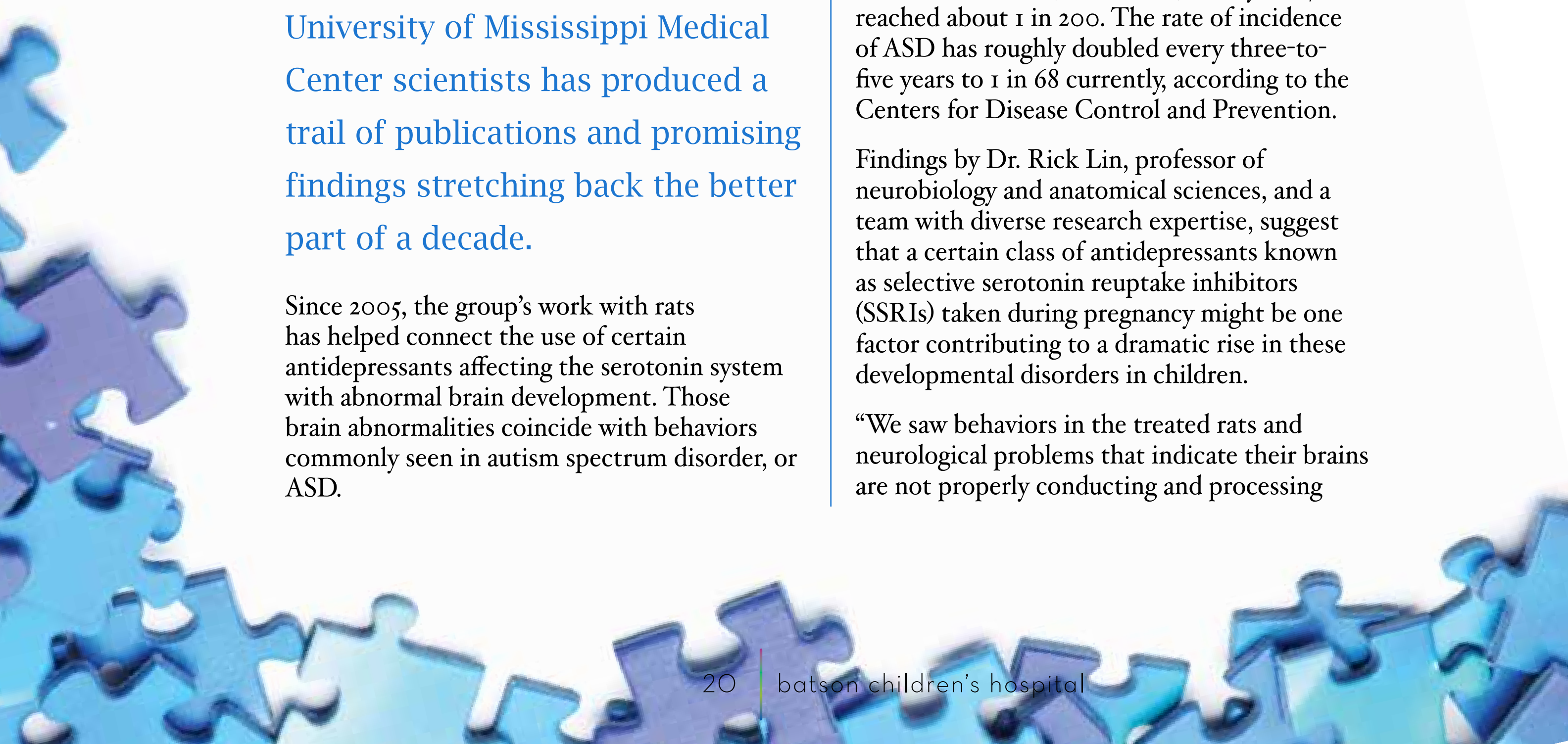
To look at her now, swaddled in a blanket sucking peacefully on a pacifier, one would never know what it took to get her to this point or if struggles may lie ahead.

PIECES of the Puzzle



A group of UMMC researchers takes on autism spectrum disorder one study at a time.

written by **Jack Mazurak**



Research into autism spectrum disorder by a core group of University of Mississippi Medical Center scientists has produced a trail of publications and promising findings stretching back the better part of a decade.

Since 2005, the group's work with rats has helped connect the use of certain antidepressants affecting the serotonin system with abnormal brain development. Those brain abnormalities coincide with behaviors commonly seen in autism spectrum disorder, or ASD.

The rate of ASD rocketed in U.S. children in the past decades. In 1996, the rate of incidence was less than 1 in 1,000 births, but by 2007 it reached about 1 in 200. The rate of incidence of ASD has roughly doubled every three-to-five years to 1 in 68 currently, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Findings by Dr. Rick Lin, professor of neurobiology and anatomical sciences, and a team with diverse research expertise, suggest that a certain class of antidepressants known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) taken during pregnancy might be one factor contributing to a dramatic rise in these developmental disorders in children.

"We saw behaviors in the treated rats and neurological problems that indicate their brains are not properly conducting and processing

Scientists at the University of Mississippi Medical Center including **Dr. Rick Lin**, front, **Dr. Kimberly Simpson**, left and **Dr. Ian Paul**, research possible causes of autism spectrum disorder by drawing together a broad range of fields including neuroanatomy, behavioral studies, pediatrics and physiology.

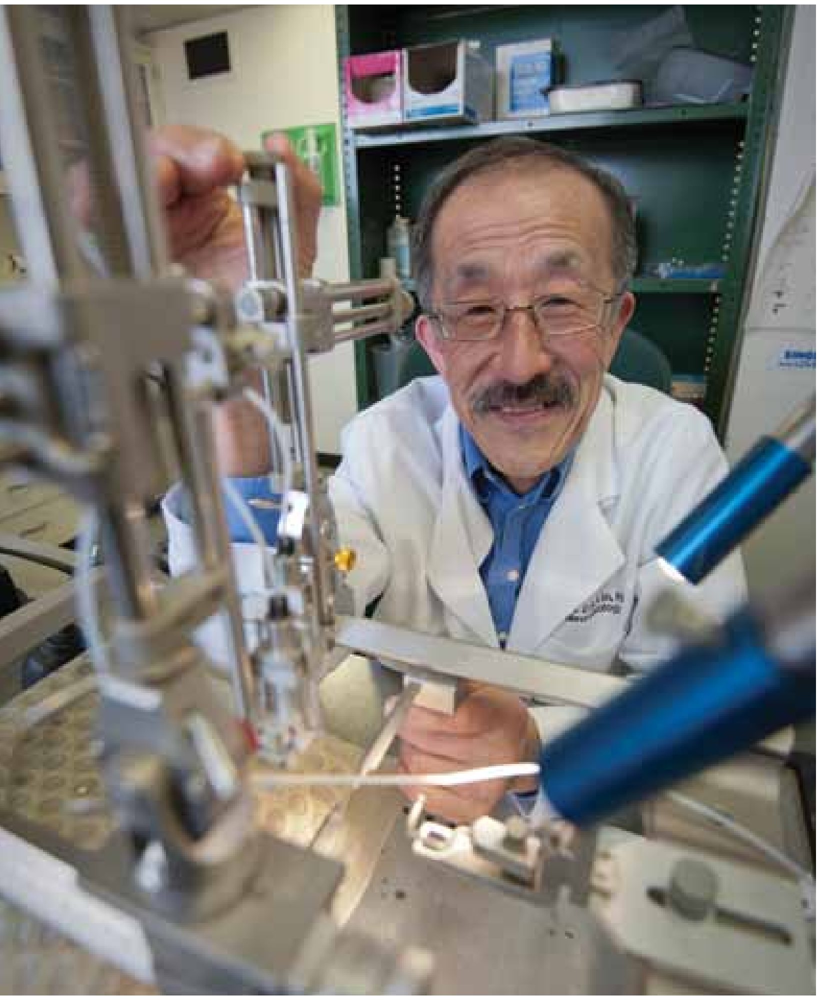
information," said Lin, who also holds appointments in the Department of Pediatrics and the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior.

"However, based on this work alone, it would be premature to conclude that a pregnant mother should stop taking SSRIs. A pregnant mother may do more harm to her baby through untreated depression than by taking prescribed SSRIs."

* * *

Lin, who grew up in Taiwan before moving to the U.S. in 1969 for master's and doctoral study, quickly pointed out how the research connects fields, including neuroanatomy, pharmacology, otolaryngology and physiology.

The core UMMC group includes Dr. Ian Paul, professor of psychiatry and human behavior, and Dr. Kimberly Simpson, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomical sciences, along with researchers in pediatrics.



Dr. Rick Lin, professor of neurobiology and anatomical sciences, researches what effects antidepressants have on developing brains, and how those abnormal developments may relate to autism spectrum disorder.

The three began officially working together after Simpson gave a seminar on the brain's raphe nucleus, the origin point of virtually all serotonin neurons. Since Paul was working on behavior studies with SSRI-treated rats, he asked Lin and Simpson to look for changes in the raphe nuclei of his rats' brains.

"A couple of weeks later, I got the kind of phone call scientists live for," Paul said. "Rick called me up and said, 'Ian, you gotta come see this!'"

Lin and Simpson had found stark differences in how well serotonin neurons developed in the brains of treated versus untreated rats.

"After that, it was a matter of three scientists, their post-docs and students pedaling as hard as we could to figure out what had happened to the brains of those animals and why, and to try to narrow down the precise behaviors affected so that we could connect the changes in the brain with specific changes in behavior," Paul said.

In 2008, Lin received an Exceptional, Unconventional, Research Knowledge Acceleration, or EUREKA, grant from the National Institutes of Health. The NIH gives those selectively and only to top performers nationally. The $1.3 million grant allowed Lin four years of flexibility to follow the autism research in directions he saw most promising.

"It's a team effort. If you don't have a team that works together, you are not going to make those jumps from one field of expertise to another," said Dr. Rick Lin.

* * *

In a 2011 paper, published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the researchers described treating rats with the SSRI citalopram during key stages of brain development.

Rats are born at an earlier developmental stage than humans, equivalent to the end of the sixth month of fetal development in humans. Most rats received treatment for two weeks, beginning eight days post-birth, a neurodevelopment period equivalent to the third trimester and early infancy in humans.

In contrast with control-group rats, the investigators found the treated rat pups didn't want to play and displayed poor social behaviors as adults. The treated rats also showed abnormal responses to changes in their environment, freezing at the sound of a novel tone, or showing little interest in new toys.

Paul, a behavioral research expert, noted that treated male rats more often – and sometimes exclusively – exhibited those abnormal traits. Similarly, ASD is diagnosed more often in human males than females.

Another abnormality common in ASD is a thinner corpus callosum, Simpson said. Like a massive nerve-fiber bridge, the corpus callosum connects the brain's two halves, sending electrical signals between them.

> "I just want to help the kids."
>
> *- Dr. Rick Lin*

Lin and Simpson analyzed brain samples of their rats, documenting reduced sizes and connections. They also found unraveled and poorly formed myelin sheathing on neurons in the corpus callosum. Like un-insulated wires arcing, poor myelination can cause signals to be slowed, diverted or lost.

Using the same rats, Dr. Michael Merzenich, professor of otolaryngology and physiology at the University of California San Francisco and member of the National Academy of Science, analyzed their primary auditory cortices, a part of the brain involved in translating sound from the ear into cognitive perception. He found functional abnormalities consistent with ASD.

"The cortex is sluggish and represents sounds with low accuracy. The listening cortex is delayed in development and is impaired into adulthood," he said.

Delayed development of the ability to understand spoken language is a hallmark of ASD in children, Merzenich said, and contributes to struggles with language and reading.

* * *

Subsequent studies include the group's new paper, accepted this spring by the journal Psychopharmacology. The study helps explain how and which chemical signals in young, developing brains are likely involved in producing lifelong ASD-like behaviors and sensory problems.

Again using rat pups, they tested the citalopram model against various different drugs that, like SSRIs, target the same subcategory of serotonin receptors in the brain. The researchers found no matter which drug the rats received, almost all showed ASD-like behaviors and sensory deficits.

The findings further link increased stimulation of a certain class of receptors in the brain during development to social and sensory abnormalities that last into adulthood.

In a separate study, Lin, Simpson, Paul and other investigators found citalopram exposure decreased the density of serotonin fibers by 40 percent in the brain's olfactory bulb – a structure involved with communicating smell information. However, they found the change only in male rats, not females.

The results, published in the journal Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience in May 2013, could point to mechanisms behind sense-of-smell problems often noted in people with ASD.

* * *

Now Lin is establishing the Center for Excellence in Developmental Disorders Research, or CEDDR, which would focus on how the brain develops abnormally and what the long-term repercussions are. Investigations may span the human life cycle from prenatal conditions to late-life diseases.

Again pulling from a wide field of experts, Lin wants to draw connections between the roles of parental genetics, mothers' health, the impact of irregularities in the placenta on early-life inflammation, anatomical abnormalities in the brain, behavioral deficits, and long-term risk for Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative diseases.

As well, he hopes to start clinical trials for ASD treatment and prevention.

"Rick has a way of surveying the landscape and looking at how he can bring different people together and align their interests, not to just take steps forward but to make leaps," Simpson explained.

Lin puts it more directly:

"I just want to help the kids."

Dr. Aaron Shirley receives award for diversity efforts

Dr. Aaron Shirley, one of the state's civil rights icons, received the 2013 Herbert W. Nickens Award from the Association of American Medical Colleges in November.

Honored for his lifetime of service in support of diversity in medical education and the elimination of health disparities, Shirley received the award at the AAMC's annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pa.

Originally from Gluckstadt, Shirley completed medical school and an internship in Tennessee before entering private practice in Vicksburg. He set his sights on a pediatric residency out of state, but was invited to apply for a training slot at UMMC by then chair of pediatrics, Dr. Blair E. Batson. After much prayerful consideration, he accepted, becoming the first African-American resident — and the first black learner in any program — at UMMC in 1965.

Dr. Aaron Shirley gives his acceptance speech after being presented with the Herbert W. Nickens Award.

He went on to serve as a clinical instructor in the Department of Pediatrics for more than 40 years. His career highlights in health care include co-founding the Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Center, which became a model for federally-funded community health centers nationwide, and development of the Jackson Medical Mall in partnership with Jackson State University, Tougaloo College and UMMC.

Herbert W. Nickens, for whom the award is named, was the founding vice president of the AAMC's Diversity Policies and Programs unit. "His passionate leadership contributed greatly to focusing national attention on the need to support underrepresented minorities in medicine," according to the AAMC.

Collaboration brings pediatric subspecialist to Tupelo

Dr. Jessica Sparks Lilley, a pediatric endocrinologist on the faculty of the University of Mississippi Medical Center and Batson Children's Hospital in Jackson, has established a practice in Tupelo in affiliation with North Mississippi Medical Center. Lilley will provide care to children with diabetes and other endocrine conditions such as disorders related to growth and puberty.

Lilley's arrival in Tupelo is part of an effort to provide more convenient access to subspecialty care in areas far removed from the state's only children's hospital. This summer, she will be joined by a pediatric cardiologist.

Lilley is from Belmont in Tishomingo County. She joined UMMC last July as an assistant professor, after completing a fellowship in pediatric endocrinology at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt University in Nashville.

A Mississippi State University graduate, Lilley earned her M.D. at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. She completed her residency in pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Pa.

Lilley said she had an awareness of childhood endocrine problems at a young age, having relatives with Type 1 diabetes.

Dr. Jessica Lilley

"They had to drive long distances to see a pediatric endocrinologist," Lilley said. "Witnessing that really stuck with me, and having the opportunity to partner with my home state's only children's hospital and the nation's largest rural hospital was a dream come true."

Dr. Lilley is currently seeing patients in the East Tower of North Mississippi Medical Center. Call toll-free 888-815-2005 for an appointment or consultation.

Sue Weatter, third from left, executive director of the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence, presented the award to Giesecke and, from left, Terri Gillespie, Dr. Rick Barr, Dr. Jimmy Keeton, Shannon Wentz, Dr. Phyllis Bishop and Cindy Black.

Children's staff receives achievement award for quality

Children's of Mississippi, the health system anchored by Batson Children's Hospital, received a 2013 Achievement Award for Performance Excellence in December from an institution associated with the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's only presidential award for performance excellence.

Guy Giesecke, chief executive officer for Children's, said the accomplishment was a team effort between the staff, the leadership and the physicians.

"We all have a common goal, which is to improve the health of Mississippi's children," he said. "I'm very proud of the direction we've been going and this award confirms that so much of our hard work has paid off and verifies the high level of quality and service to our patients from an outside organization that looks at hospitals throughout the southeast."

The state-level award, presented by the Alliance for Performance Excellence, represents the required first step toward attaining a coveted Baldrige Award.

Shannon Wentz, director of quality and coordinated care, helmed the lengthy application process that began in the spring. The effort included an extensive written report that examined seven strategic areas within the organization including leadership, strategic planning, customer and market focus, workforce focus, operations focus and results, and measurement, analysis and knowledge management.

"It really made us flesh out every area of the organization," she said. "We really had to look deep into our processes."

Sue Weatter, executive director of the Arkansas Institute for Performance Excellence, presented the award and noted that many organizations would like to have earned the honor.

"The fact that you accomplished it in such a small amount of time is truly amazing," Weatter said.

Wentz and Dr. Rick Barr, Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chair of Pediatrics, remarked that everyone was pleasantly surprised to attain the "Achievement" level of the award, which is the second highest level. There are four levels with the highest level being the Governor's Award.

"We just thought the process would make us a better organization," Barr said. "We knew we'd find out things about ourselves that we're doing well and we'd also find areas of improvement and we did."

Wentz said when she was hired a year ago, she knew there was great work going on within the organization, but also saw a need for recognition of that work from outside authorities.

"This is a validation of the work we all do every day," she said.

IN the NEWS

Division of Pediatric Endocrinology joins international effort to prevent Type 1 diabetes

The Division of Pediatric Endocrinology is now part of Type 1 Diabetes TrialNet, an international network of researchers led by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that is exploring ways to prevent and delay type 1 diabetes.

As a member of TrialNet, the division offers screening for relatives of people with type 1 diabetes to determine their risk of developing the disease. TrialNet screening, which consists of a blood test, identifies specific risks for developing type 1 diabetes up to 10 years before symptoms appear.

Screening is available at no charge to people who are age 45 and under and have a parent, sibling or child with type 1 diabetes; or age 20 and under and have a niece, nephew, aunt, uncle, grandparent, half-sibling or cousin with type 1 diabetes.

“This screening is extremely important for families with a history of type 1 diabetes,” said Dr. Naznin Dixit, principal investigator and professor and chief of pediatric endocrinology. “It offers a better understanding of the development of type 1 diabetes and helps discover innovative ways of preventing and delaying type 1 diabetes.”

Those identified as having an increased risk of developing type 1 diabetes may be eligible to enroll in clinical studies that test methods of preventing and delaying the disease. If diabetes can be delayed – even for a few years – then those at risk may be able to postpone the difficulties of trying to control glucose levels and the potential development of complications.

For people identified as already being in the early stages of type 1 diabetes, TrialNet offers intervention studies that are testing ways to slow down the disease’s progression.

Dr. Naznin Dixit

It is estimated that as many as three million Americans have type 1 diabetes. TrialNet is asking everyone who has a family member with type 1 diabetes to get involved in this research by getting screened.

For more information about type 1 diabetes screening and research studies offered at UMMC, please call 601-815-9172 or email ped-clinicalresearch@umc.edu.

New pediatric specialists added to faculty

Children’s of Mississippi added the following specialists to the staff recently to meet the growing needs of our patients. For more information about our services or to make an appointment, please visit www.ummchealth.com/children.

Claire Gilliam, M.D.	General Pediatrics
Carrie Freeman, M.D.	Critical Care
Sajani Tipnis, M.D.	Neonatology
Neelesh Tipnis, M.D.	Gastroenterology
Nourelhoda Farah, M.D.	General Pediatrics
Melissa Rhodes, M.D.	Hematology-Oncology
Eric Dec, M.D.	Genetics

Dr. William Cleland, chief medical officer, left, presents Dr. Benji Dillard, division chief of pediatric emergency medicine, with the Q Award.

Pediatrician selected for Q Award

Dr. Benjamin C. Dillard, division chief of pediatric emergency medicine, received the Q Award from chief medical officer Dr. William Cleland in January.

The Q Award is presented quarterly by UMMC's Quality Administration to a Medical Center physician who promotes quality and improves patient safety.

Dillard was nominated for the award by Jennifer Stephen, clinical director of pediatric emergency and lab services, who wrote that Dillard emphasizes quality in many aspects of his role at the Medical Center.

According to Stephen, "Benji has accepted committees, councils and task force appointments to supplement pediatric knowledge and emphasis," but she said the greatest demonstration of his quality service lies in "the teaching of students and residents in the pediatric ER."

Pediatric journal selects Barr for editorship

Dr. Rick Barr, Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chairman of Pediatrics, was recently named assistant editor for Child Health with the Southern Medical Journal.

Dr. Rick Barr

His editorship began January 1, 2014.

A monthly electronic publication of the Southern Medical Association, the journal has a multi and interdisciplinary focus that covers a broad range of topics relevant to physicians and other health-care specialists in all relevant aspects of the profession.

Terrence Stamps, left, and Addie Porter wait to help the next patient family at the new valet parking stand outside Batson.

Batson adds valet parking service

Batson Children's Hospital began offering valet parking in November. It is free for same-day surgery patients and $7 for all others. The service is available Monday-Friday from 5:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Dr. Avichal Aggarwal, second from right, assistant professor of pediatric cardiology, receives the 2013 Mahatma Gandhi Award from The Honorable Baroness Sandip Verma, from left, junior minister of Energy and Climate Change in the United Kingdom, Dr. S. Z. Ansari and Gauhar Nawab, chairman of Euro Group Hotel International Ltd.

Gandhi Award goes to pediatric cardiologist

Dr. Avichal Aggarwal, assistant professor of pediatric cardiology, received the 2013 Mahatma Gandhi Award from the government of India and the Non-Resident Indians Welfare Society of India on Oct. 4, the 144th birthday of Mahatma Ghandi.

The Honorable Baroness Sandip Verma, junior minister of Energy and Climate Change in the United Kingdom, presented the award to Aggarwal in the presence of international dignitaries during a function of the Global Achievers Conclave at the House of Lords in London, England.

Aggarwal said it was a "humbling experience to be considered and eventually chosen as a recipient of such a prestigious award."

"To attain such recognition in my field is a vision I could certainly never imagine."

The award recognizes people of Indian origin for their significant contributions in their respective fields in the country of their residence and in the service of wider global community.

Aggarwal, one of only 30 recipients worldwide, was instrumental in reviving the pediatric heart transplant program at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. He serves as medical director of the program.

"My goal is to continue working tirelessly toward serving children who are born with heart defects," he said.

Dodge-Khatami joins Children's Heart Center

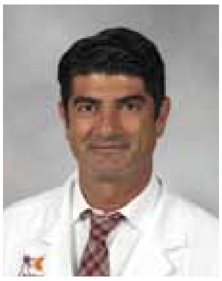
Dr. Ali Dodge-Khatami has joined the University of Mississippi Medical Center as professor of surgery in the division of pediatric and congenital heart surgery.

Dodge-Khatami previously was professor of cardiovascular surgery, chief of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and head of the Congenital Heart Program at the University of Hamburg School of Medicine in Hamburg, Germany.

"We are thrilled to recruit a senior world class pediatric and congenital heart surgeon to Mississippi," said Dr. Jorge Salazar, chief of congenital heart surgery and co-director of the Children's Heart Center. "His presence will greatly strengthen our program and ensure its long term success."

Dodge-Khatami completed premedical studies in the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Neuchatel in Neuchatel, Switzerland, in 1986. He earned a Swiss Federal Diploma of Medicine at the University of Geneva Medical School in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1991 and completed a residency in general surgery at Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève in Geneva from 1991-93. From 1993-96, he did a cardiovascular surgery residency at the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Vaudois in Lausanne, Switzerland. He completed a cardiovascular-thoracic surgery fellowship at RUSH-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, Ill., from 1996-98 and a pediatric cardiovascular-thoracic fellowship at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Ill., from 1998-99.

He served as senior registrar at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, London, U.K. from 1999-2000 before becoming a staff surgeon at the Academic Medical Center in Amsterdam, Netherlands from 2000-03. During that time, he was also a cardiothoracic surgeon committed to congenital cardiac surgery at Wilhelmina Children's Hospital in Utrecht, Netherlands. In 2003, Dodge-Khatami earned a doctorate from the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands, based on his research on tracheal reconstruction and healing. He then became a staff pediatric cardiovascular surgeon at University Children's Hospital in Zurich, Switzerland from 2003-08.



Dr. Ali Dodge-Khatami

The highlight of his career thus far, he says, has been traveling the world on humanitarian missions with International Children's Heart Foundation to build congenital heart surgery programs in developing countries.

He is a member of several professional organizations, including the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, the European Association of Cardio-Thoracic Surgery, the Association of European Paediatric Cardiologists, the World Society for Pediatric and Congenital Heart Surgery and the American Society of Echocardiography.

His plans for research with the Children's Heart Center include applying results to develop a new operation for babies born with only one ventricle.

"You never stop learning in this job," he said. "There's always room for improving and kind of molding things together so that it's even better."

Children’s launches patient satisfaction effort

In a continual quest to improve patient satisfaction, Children’s of Mississippi recently embarked on a campaign aimed at both patients and employees.

The campaign, called “I Care for Kids,” is meant to spark motivation and inspiration in the hearts and minds of Children’s employees by focusing on the important work they do in Batson Children’s Hospital and the various pediatric clinics.

“This campaign is an acknowledgment that our staff is our greatest strength,” said Shannon Wentz, administrator for quality and ancillary services for Children’s of Mississippi. “We realize employee happiness equals patient happiness.”

The campaign was born out of leadership’s desire to create a mission and vision statement specific to Children’s. They surveyed the staff, asking why they come to work each day and used those answers to formulate the statements. A recurrent theme emerged, according to Terri Gillespie, chief nursing officer of Children’s.

“I walk through the halls daily and the passion of the staff is palpable,” Gillespie said. “It is written on every staff member’s face, in every patient interaction they have. Now it is time to share the theme that is common to all of us – we care for kids.”

The campaign recognizes and praises individual staff members at every level of the organization, from housekeepers to surgeons. Components of the campaign that focus on the staff’s hard work include personalized pins for staff and an intranet page featuring videos (links below) of various staff members who have been singled out for providing exceptional service, as well as a short article on the Children’s Champion Award winner – a staff member nominated by fellow Children’s staff members.

Patients and families can get involved by sharing ideas, compliments or concerns about their hospital stay. A dedicated phone line has been established and comment cards will be available at various places throughout the hospital and clinics.

Video available at youtube.com/batsonhospital, search channel for “I Care”

Joely Henderson, child life specialist, and patient Aiden Johnson tour the Gitter Gallery artwork.

New Orleans gallery donation livens up Batson, Wiser hallway

The New Orleans-based Gitter Gallery recently donated a collection of American folk art to Batson Children's Hospital.

The collection of 30 pieces found a home on the first-floor hallway leading to Batson and Wiser Hospitals and was unveiled at a special reception.

Hospital staff, patients and others passing through the hallway marveled at the vibrancy of the works and remarked at how the art had livened up a once-bland hallway.

"We work very hard to create a child-friendly atmosphere in Batson Children's Hospital and this addition is an incredible step in that direction," said Terri Gillespie, Children's of Mississippi chief nursing officer.

Gillespie said there is evidence that art has positive benefits in a health-care setting, including reducing patients' stress and anxiety.

Doug Gitter, who owns Gitter Gallery with his wife, Cathy, said these benefits were the motivation for the donation.

"I believe that art helps heal and if, for a moment in time, it can help take the child away from the injury, adversity or illness that brought them here in the first place, then it will have accomplished not only the artists' mission, but my mission as well," Gitter said.

The Gitters have made similar donations to children's hospitals and other health-care facilities throughout the country.

Video available at youtube.com/batsonhospital, search channel for "Gitter"

a little Sunshine

A spectrum of visitors who brightened our halls

1 Santa Claus chats with **Mekel Johnson**, 3, of Hattiesburg, during a "cyber stop" at the hospital with help from Cisco Systems' Santa Connection Program.

In town for the Dixie National Rodeo, several rodeo clowns and queens stopped by to see patients. Famous rodeo clown **Lecile Harris** spends some time with **John Matthew Davis**, 9, of Canton. 2

3 **Alijah Howard** (a.k.a., Iron Man), 5, of Greenville, gives a thumbs up to the Kona Ice penguin during Batson's Fall Carnival.

Batson patient **Christopher Pena**, 5, of Richland, examines a football cleat almost as big as he is during a tour of the Mississippi State football team's locker room thanks to Special Spectators Sports. 4

5 "Assemble the minions!" Batson's 3rd floor staff poses as the cast from the motion picture "Despicable Me" for Halloween, much to the delight of their patients.

Express Employment Professionals brought their goodwill ambassadors, the Express Clydesdales, to visit patients in February. One particularly friendly horse makes friends with patient **Victoria Gaffney**, 11, of Pascagoula. 6

7 During the Valentine's Day party, **Jeremyiah Moye**, 4, of Picayune, gets a special visit from Mississippi National Army and Air Guardsmen, from left, **Tommy Smith**, **Shane Fayette**, **Clay Channel**, **Kyle Waggoner**, **Willie Hearns**, **Tim Chesney** and kneeling, **Domingo Rodriquez**.

Move over Prince Charming. Batson patient **Christopher Stamps**, 4, of Flowood, wears his crown well while meeting Disney princess Belle during a VIP meet and greet event sponsored by The Sunshine Kids Foundation and Disney On Ice. 8

2

3

4

6

7

Inspiring HOPE Saving LIVES

> Support from our community is instrumental to our success. These connections with you, our supporters, inspire hope in our hearts and those of our patients and in turn, save lives.

Former patient Kaylen Crayton, 5, of Canton, gathered 269 coloring books, 219 boxes of crayons and $181 during her coloring book and crayon drive to support the children at Batson. She delivered them during the holiday season.

Dr. Neva Penton Eklund, associate professor and chair of Pediatric Dentistry and Community Oral Health, congratulated Rush 2 Brush 5K and Fun Run participants Caleb Henderson and Serenity Moore. In its 10th year, the event raises approximately $5,000 annually for the pediatric dentistry program.

At Clinton High School's 'Pink Out Pep Rally' in October, student groups presented a $7,000 donation to the Children's Cancer Center. Batson Children's Hospital representative Ruth Thomas, second from right, accepted the donation from teacher and philanthropy coordinator Megan Berry, second from left, and students, from left, Kristen Timlake, Darren Hudson, and Casey Barnett.

Employees at the 1st Mississippi Federal Credit Union in Meridian raised more than $9,000 for Batson during a holiday fundraising campaign that included a cookout and an LCD TV raffle. The credit union fundraises under the Credit Unions for Kids brand, a Children's Miracle Network Hospitals program.

Joe Sanderson, second from left, CEO and chairman of the board of Sanderson Farms, and Century Club Charities president John Lang, left, present proceeds from the 2013 Sanderson Farms Championship to Sara Ray, Friends of Children's Hospital chairman, and Dr. James Keeton, vice chancellor for health affairs and dean of the school of medicine. The tournament raised $300,000, but two anonymous donations catapulted the total to more than $500,000.

Representatives and sponsors of the “This Is the Way We Praise Him” showcase donate more than $9,000 to Dr. Rick Barr, left, Suzan B. Thames Professor and Chair of Pediatrics, and Guy Giesecke, center, CEO of Children’s of Mississippi. Attending the presentation are, from left, Dan Modisett, general manager of WDBD/WLBT, Staccia Hunter, executive director of the We Make It Better Foundation, Torrez Harris, program director of 95.5 FM, Joy Redmond, WDBD anchor and Maggie Wade-Dixon, WLBT anchor.

Nine-year-old Zachary Varela rounds the final corner in the Fun Run at the 4th Annual Jingle Bell Jog benefiting the Children’s Cancer Center.

Video available at youtube.com/batsonhospital, search channel for “Jingle”

The Sigma Nu fraternity at Ole Miss donated $25,000 to Friends of Children's Hospital from their 2013 Charity Bowl. Attending the presentation are from left, Suzan Thames, honorary chair of Friends' board, Friends board member Sidney Allen Sr., Sigma Nu Commander Will Andrews, Charity Bowl chairs Paul DeForest and Patrick McDaniel, pledge J.D. Maloney, board member Kristin Allen and Sigma Nu alum Sidney Allen Jr.

More than $42,000 was raised at the inaugural Troopers Care Scramble Golf Tournament for Batson's palliative care program. Dr. Rick Boyte, third from right, professor and chief of pediatric palliative care, accepted the donation from Mississippi State Troopers, from left, Mike Holmes, John Minor, Timothy Fuller, Charles Lamb and Wade Zimmerman. Joining him were Mississippi's First Lady Deborah Bryant, second from left, and Lauren and Brent Casavechia, far right, whose son Hayden was a patient of the palliative care team.

Inspiring HOPE *Saving* LIVES

{ The Radio People and community "believe" in Batson and make radiothon a success. }

Malia Wallace, 10, of Jackson with **Tiffany Key**, child life specialist

Kennedy Gunter, 7, of Collinsville and **Antonia "Toni" Marino**, 9, of Petal

Rayne Deuel, 7, of Brandon, and **Burks** of KHits 104.5

Scott and **Traci** from US 96.3, **Emma Welch**, 3, of Starkville with parents **Casey** and **Martha Ann**

We believe...

Deejays from The Radio People's ten stations across central Mississippi gave credence to the theme "We believe..." during the 13th Annual Mississippi Miracles Radiothon in March. And their belief paid off when the 39-hour broadcast raised a record $416,209. The money funds equipment, research and programs that ensure Batson Children's Hospital will be able to provide the most advanced level of care to all of Mississippi's children.

Video available at youtube.com/batsonhospital, search channel for "Radiothon"

Carter Cline, 3, of Brandon

Kambree Burton, 13, of Mize, with mom **Gina**

John Matthew Davis, 9, of Canton and **EJ** of Mix 98.7

Victor Young, 19, of Jackson

Aiden Robinson, 3, of Brandon

Tavi Belser, 7, of Madison, and mom **Kimberly**

Children's of Mississippi
University of Mississippi Medical Center

University Medical Center
Division of Public Affairs
2500 North State Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39216-4505

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Jackson, MS
Permit No. 247

{ stay connected }

facebook.com/batsonhospital

#blairebatson

youtube.com/batsonhospital

instagram.com/batsonchildrenshospital

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Kristy's Trail Ride
May 23-26

Miracle Treat Day
August 14

Enchanted Evening Under the Stars Gala
August 16

Good Neighbor Day
September 10

Trustmark Pro-Am Golf Tournament
September 29

Candlelighters Art Auction
October 2

The morning sun lights up Mary Margaret Pierce's mosaic window, which was installed in a Batson lobby window in March. To read about Mary Margaret's art, see her story on page 2.