

# Making a difference... TOGETHER

A quarterly publication for MeritCare Foundation donors, Spring 2004 • Volume 11, Issue 4

## MeritCare Children's Hospital and Children's Miracle Network celebrate 20 years together



### On the air with Sandy and Larry

Over the years, well-known radio and TV personalities have hosted local segments of the Children's Miracle Network celebration. But only two have been hosts for all 20 years: Sandy Buttweiler and Larry Ristvedt, both from KFGO-AM. With graciousness and warmth, they recently took the time to share a few memories from their CMN histories. We look forward to seeing them once again on this year's celebration, broadcast live on June 5 on KVLV TV 11.

*Larry and Sandy  
in 1985.*

*Larry and Sandy  
in 2004.*



***In the past 20 years, you've met many children who have been featured on the CMN celebration — children who have had serious medical problems, but are now back to living their lives. When it comes to the kids, what has made an impact on you?***

**Sandy:** I'm always struck by what it's like when we sit down with these kids and interview them. They're so brave, so strong, so open — and wise beyond their years. Hearing their stories and talking to them, Larry and I can just turn into little puddles in the corner, but the kids— maybe it's because they've already been through so much in their short lives— often comfort us.

**Larry:** I can't help but think of the parents of these kids. They're just ordinary folks whose lives are going along fine and dandy, when suddenly this lightning bolt strikes — it might be cancer, it might be an accident. You look at the parents and you realize just how fortunate we are to have this specialized facility in Fargo. I like to think this televised celebration triggers a lot of hugs — hugs of parents who are grateful for their children.

***Through your involvement in the CMN celebration, you've spent time at MeritCare Children's Hospital. Your impressions?***

**Larry:** Those tiny babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit are just extraordinary. You see the high-tech equipment, but then you see a good old rocking chair. It's a wonderful combination of high-tech and high-touch.

**Sandy:** I'm amazed at what we've learned over the years as far as the equipment — what it does and why it's needed. And it's pretty cool to realize many of these pieces of equipment were purchased with CMN funds.

***The vignettes featuring area children are taped, but the rest of the local broadcast is live. Live television — what's it like?***

**Sandy:** Fun! The people we work with, the kids, the fast pace — I love it all.

**Larry:** Terror. After all these years, live television still scares the dickens out of me, but when it's over, it sure feels good to know you might've done some good for someone.

***Working with CMN for so many years, are there friendships that have developed?***

**Sandy:** There have been so many friendships with so many great people, plus I met my husband through the CMN. Eighteen years ago when Doug (Hamilton) was a co-host, I was introduced to him.

**Larry:** I don't have anything quite that dramatic, but I can sure tell you we've met some good folks over the years — the families, the volunteers, the medical people, the production staff, the businesses and individuals who year after year donate. And if you can, please make sure to include something about the people at MeritCare Foundation who put this whole thing together. They and all the behind-the-scenes people are the ones who make us look good. All we have to do is step in and fill in the blanks.

**Sandy:** Absolutely. If we've done our job, it's because others have made it happen. I think Larry put it perfectly when he once said, "This is really a privilege."

***Behind the scenes at the broadcast***

Viewers see the hosts, but the hosts rely on the behind-the-scenes work of people like Jeff Petrik of KVLV-TV. 'Petey', too, began with the CMN 20 years ago and today continues as producer/director.

***You've been playing a part for 20 years with the CMN broadcast —what stands out?***

## 20 years of changes...

MeritCare, then St. Luke's, was designated a Children's Hospital by the National Association of Children's Hospitals and related Institutes (NACHRI) in October of 1985. That was also the first year that the television broadcast was held locally to raise money for this children's hospital. All money raised that year remained here to support these programs, precisely as it does now.

Just that summer, July, 1985, the MeritCare intensive care nursery unit was in the news across the United States. It was here that a baby boy, born four months prematurely and weighing only 12 ounces, gained nationwide attention. At the time, this was the smallest documented case of an infant to survive premature birth. He spent the next five months in the intensive care nursery which is now called NICU — Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. National publications credited the hospital's skill and highly specialized care for his survival.

The NICU at MeritCare Children's Hospital actually started in the 1970's in a separate room just off the family birth center. In 1981 they expanded to allow for the increase number of babies, and pretty soon the NICU will expand again with the renovation that is to begin this year. Joan Douville, R.N. has worked in the NICU for 20 years. "The biggest change that I've seen is the ventilator management — the types we have access to and the

Just how much fun this has been. Nothing beats fun for having a good time, and the CMN celebration really exemplifies that. The other thing I have to mention is I

believe strongly in MeritCare Children's Hospital and the Children's Miracle Network. I like the fact that all the money raised here stays here, helping kids in our region. "

"I've been really lucky over the years in that I've had terrific help from many behind-the-scenes people, including my associate producer/director Sean Kelly. I've thoroughly enjoyed my 20 years with the CMN, have met some very nice people and hopefully we've done some good."

***A big thank you to Sandy, Larry and Jeff for their 20 years with the Children's Miracle Network event. Their dedication has made a real difference in the lives of many.***



onset of the use of an artificial surfactant. Normally when the babies lungs are mature they inflate with the first few breaths and they stay open because of their natural surfactant chemical. When this doesn't happen we have the artificial surfactants that can make this happen." This drug, used for the inside of immature lungs, may have saved thousands of premature infants nationwide born with an often fatal breathing difficulty called Respiratory Distress Syndrome.

Another change in ventilator management came with the use of nitric oxide, also a lung therapy. "Introduced in the 90's," explains Mary Myers, R.N., Pediatric/PICU Clinical Coordinator, "it is used for kids who have a problem due to decreased blood flow through the lungs. This in turn decreases their ability of delivering oxygenated blood to the body. Nitric oxide increases blood flow to the lungs." The use of inhaled nitric oxide can also decrease the incidence of chronic lung disease and death in premature infants with Respiratory Distress Syndrome.

Joan also notes another change in the patients in the NICU. "In 1978 the viability of a 29-week gestation baby was the 'edge' of whether or not they'd survive and if so, how many complications they would have. Now we're at 23 or 24 weeks gestation for the critical time for a child. Also, new therapies for the prenatal mom to delay labor impacts the care we'll have to give the baby. "

## Being a Champion for CMN

Each year a child from the region is chosen as North Dakota's representative in the national Children's Miracle Network program. This year, Brandon Lee, an 11-year old from Fargo is our champion. Diagnosed at age 10 with a brain tumor, Brandon's perspective about the neurosurgery to remove it was "I want to get it over with. I have a life to lead." Brandon wanted to know everything about his disease and was involved in all of the treatment decisions. His determined attitude has taken him far. Just months after completion of his surgery and chemotherapy, Brandon is back playing football, hunting, and golfing.

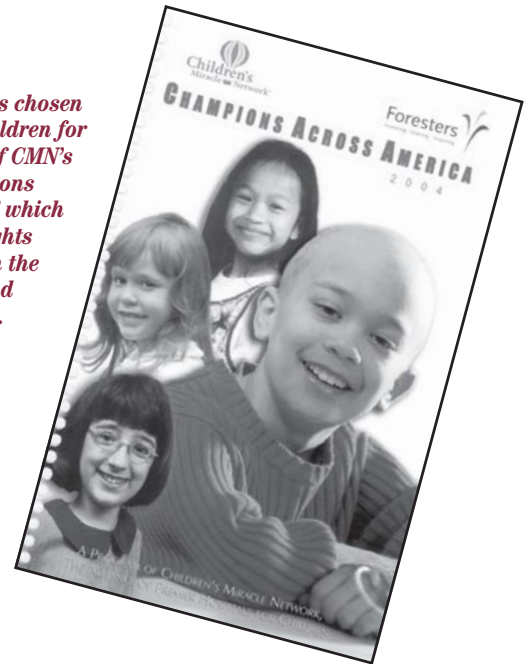
Across the US, 50 children with medical stories similar to Brandon, represent their region. These children show courage, tenacity and perseverance, thereby representing the over 17 million kids treated each year at Children's Miracle Network children's hospitals and demonstrating the importance of these specialized hospitals.



MeritCare Children's Hospital is one of the 170 hospitals chosen by CMN and has been a part of this network for 20 years.

Being a Children's Miracle Network hospital is an important distinction. From pediatric cancer treatment and intensive care to walk-in clinics and child safety programs, these children's hospital provide the specialized care for kids that cannot be found elsewhere. All of these non-profit hospitals depend on community support.

*Brandon Lee was chosen as one of the children for the 2004 cover of CMN's annual "Champions Across America" which annually highlights 50 children from the United States and 11 from Canada.*



As a representative, Brandon Lee and his family traveled to Washington, D.C. where he and the 49 other champions shared the stories of how their lives are better because of children's hospitals. All of the children and their families are able to take this trip because of a sponsorship by the Foresters.

*In the photo to the left, our Champion, Brandon, spends a few minutes with President George W. Bush, who kneels to see the same point of view as the children around him.*

From there, the Champions gather in Florida at Walt Disney World where their stories are told again in preparation for the national television production of the Children's Miracle network Celebration. This broadcast can be seen locally on KVLV TV – 11 from noon to 10pm on June 5, 2004.

MeritCare Children's Hospital staff recognize the importance of their affiliation with the Children's Miracle Network and the funds raised. "The money really does make a difference." says staff member Deb Emo, R.N. "Donors provide important services that the regular budget can't include. These donations help purchase equipment, monitors, specialized beds, and even bedside carts so supplies are always within reach."

Elaine Clemenson, R.N. adds: "You never know when you might need our services. There are people that travel many hundreds of miles to come here and if we weren't here it could be disastrous"

*(continued from front)*

“CMN funds a lot of our playroom which is so nice to have the assortment of activities for the kids for diversion. It funds all of the Child Life Specialists salaries. I couldn’t imagine working in a Ped’s department without them.” says Karen Norman, R.N. “They are a very important part of our team. With CMN funds we have also been able to purchase high tech equipment for all of our units like special trauma beds for PICU, isolettes for ICN, and ventilators for the ICU’s. Another invaluable resource that CMN helps us provide is our school re-entry program on Peds. With this funding we are able to go out to the classrooms of some of our patients that have been diagnosed with an ongoing disease or condition that may effect them for an extended period of time. We are able to update and explain to the friends what is going on in the patient’s life, and how it may affect that child, and their family and friends. We are able to provide information to help alleviate fears as well as answer questions and hopefully make it easier for the child when it comes time to be back in school.

“To me” adds Karen, “the most important thing donors should know about the money raised for CMN is that it stays right here with us to continue improving our total care to our patients and families. It helps us to be the best that we can be.”



*Brandon Lee spends time with Child Life Specialist Kristine Schimek during his cancer treatment at the MeritCare Children’s Hospital.*

## Brandon Lee, our 2004 CMN Champion

In the fall of 2002, Brandon Lee began experiencing painful headaches, a condition unusual for an athletic nine-year-old boy. On New Year’s Eve, when Brandon’s headache became so severe that he could no longer tolerate the pain, his parents, Kimi and Jason, knew something was terribly wrong. They rushed Brandon to MeritCare’s Emergency Center, where doctors discovered a tumor behind Brandon’s eye.

Brandon was immediately admitted to MeritCare Children’s Hospital and placed under the specialized care of a pediatric neurologist and pediatric oncologist. Surgery would be Brandon’s best option so he began taking steroids to shrink the tumor. On January 6th, Brandon’s tumor was successfully removed and his road-to-recovery, including chemotherapy and radiation treatments, began.

Today Brandon is 10-years old, has finished his treatments and plans to be very active in school sports and plays, as well as hunting. He is also planning for his future. His long-term goal is to become a NFL football player and a registered nurse. Brandon wants to give something back and would like to work with children who have cancer.

Kimi and Jason, Brandon’s parents, feel truly blessed to have such an experienced and caring team of doctors, surgeons and nurses at MeritCare Children’s Hospital. “To do what they do every single day and to watch all these children go through their treatments and pain, yet always seem to carry a smile...it’s truly amazing,” says Kimi. “They are very caring and special people, and we could not have made it through Brandon’s surgery, treatments and hospitalization without them.”



(continued from page 2)

Changes have been seen throughout all of MeritCare Children's Hospital.

Deb Emo, R.N. has worked at MeritCare Children's Hospital in the Pediatric/PICU for over 20 years. "The biggest change," Deb says, "is in the types of children we see and the different treatments that are used. We used to have 'chronic ventilator' children. Kids who basically had to live here because there wasn't the home health care there is now. They may have started out in the NICU but because of the length of stay required they were moved into the PICU. It seemed like there were at least three or four at a time that 'lived' with us. Now with the use of artificial surfactants we don't see many of them."

"Another change," reports Deb, "is because of the emphasis now on safety, especially the use of car seats and bike helmets. It wasn't unusual 20 years ago to have a child admitted with injuries because they were the 'buffer' between mom and the dashboard of the car."



*Elaine Clemenson, R.N., reviews a pediatric patient's x-ray using the new PACS system implemented at MeritCare*

Co-worker Elaine Clemenson, R.N., who has also worked in Pediatric/PICU for 20 years, agrees with Deb about the types of patients. "There maybe aren't as many pediatric patients as before, however, they are sicker when they are admitted but get better faster. One big challenge is the new equipment and technology — it's more intense.

"Funds raised for Children's Miracle network send us to workshops for all this increasing technology. It's a fast paced changing world and we have to keep up with it to continue to give the very best care." Deb also appreciates the opportunity to go to these workshops. "When attending we find out that MeritCare is at the same level or even ahead of what larger institutions are doing."

Karen Steffens, R.N., another 20-plus year veteran, also notes the increase in the use and type of technology. "With it we have seen a reduction in length of a hospital stay, more family involvement, surgical technique changes, and an increase in oncology resources."

"I think that our basic care philosophy is still the same as it was 20 ago." responds another 20 year staff person, Karen Norman R.N. "We try to do our best to satisfy our patients and their families. Some of our good changes include pain management techniques coming full circle. When I started, it was thought that children didn't experience pain like adults did. Now we know that they do and we do our best to help relieve it by many different techniques.



*Karen Norman, R.N., setting up an IV for a pediatric patient*

Our use of Child Life Specialists has really blossomed too. We utilize them in so many ways. When I first started, they were called 'Play Ladies' because that is what they did, they helped the children play. Now, they not only assist the patients with fun activities, but they do a lot of education and doll therapy. They are used not only on Pediatric/PICU and at the Roger Maris Cancer Center, but throughout the hospital whenever their help is needed. They supply a lot of education for parents and provide outreach with different programs that they help with."

Karen Steffens, R.N. summarized it this way: "Whether it was 20 years ago at MeritCare Children's Hospital or today, we are truly working for the children; striving to improve diagnosis and treatment, education, and child comfort issues."

***Editor's Note: We were able to talk with only a few staff people who have been at MeritCare for twenty years or more. MeritCare is fortunate to have a large number of staff — physicians, nurses, technical and support staff — who have dedicated over 20 years to the outstanding care of children in this region.***



**MeritCare**  
Foundation

*www.foundation.meritcare.com*

*MeritCare Foundation  
PO Box MC  
Fargo, ND 58122-0302*

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Fargo, ND  
Permit No. 163



## Children's Miracle Network Celebration

- ◆ **Saturday June 5th, 2004 — Noon to 10pm —  
Live on KVLV-TV 11**
- ◆ 20th year of this live broadcast to benefit  
MeritCare Children's Hospital
- ◆ Patients and their families share heartwarming  
stories
- ◆ Broadcast at the Little Country Theater,  
Askanase Hall at North Dakota State University  
in Fargo.

### 2004 Calendar of Events

- May 15th** - Run for the  
Children Half-Marathon,  
5K Fun Run/Walk and 1K  
Kiddie Run. Log on to  
[www.runforthechildren.com](http://www.runforthechildren.com).
- June 5th** — Children's Miracle  
Network Television  
Celebration broadcast on  
KVLV TV 11
- June 21st** — Children's Golf  
Classic, Moorhead  
Country Club
- June 26th** — Miracle Ride  
from Fargo or Grand  
Forks to Mahanomen  
*For more information  
contact the Foundation at  
(701) 234-6620 or online at  
[www.foundation.meritcare.com](http://www.foundation.meritcare.com)*