



Making a difference... TOGETHER

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Providing for our children's future

MeritCare Children's Hospital is being renovated due to the generosity of many. One of the major supporters in making this dream of a renovated children's hospital come true is Mike Hofer.

"Our kids are our future" and that is one of the reasons that Mike and his business partner, Dan Paulson provided a substantial gift to the MeritCare Children's Hospital. "Rather than sending a family out of town for medical attention they have it close to home," Hofer says. "And that is very important because we can keep the patient clientele here."

Mike and his wife Karen have lived in Fargo-Moorhead since 1968. Hofer says "There aren't many better places to live than here." Mike and Karen provide a wide range of donations to benefit children throughout the community. "When we make a donation, the emphasis is on the kids."

Hofer's long-standing relationship with MeritCare began with his x-ray training in 1971. In 1997, Hofer and Paulson created Imaging Solutions, a medical imaging company. The company provides access to advanced imaging technologies through a variety of options. Based in Fargo, Imaging Solutions has 50 imaging centers located throughout the country.



Mike Hofer, President and CEO of Imaging Solutions reflects on the importance of donating to the renovation of the Children's Hospital.

With his commitment to this community, Hofer says that he appreciates seeing the renovation of MeritCare's Children's Hospital and the wide variety of medical services available on a local basis.

It is people like Mike, believing 'our kids are our future' who make this renovated Children's Hospital a reality.



Specialists create positive results

Leah Vigum is a happy five-year-old who attends pre-school and loves to sing and dance. It is difficult to look at her bright smile today and believe that at the tender age of four months the unthinkable could have happened.

On the morning of Jan. 5, 2000, Mike and Nancy Vigum had no idea their lives were about to change forever. Leah's parents brought their healthy, giggling, baby girl to her daycare, like they did most days, but that afternoon they picked her up to find her suffering convulsions. Leah was rushed by ambulance to MeritCare Children's Hospital in Fargo, N.D. where a team of highly trained pediatric specialists was waiting for her. "We feel so fortunate to have had the facilities and brilliant, talented staff of the Meritcare Children's Hospital within our area in our time of need." says Mike, Leah's dad.

Continued on Page 3



Designed to delight the child in all of us, murals will fill the walls in the renovated Children's Hospital. Regional artist Hans Gilsdorf has created a Renaissance style village with bright colors and entertaining characters. The artwork is designed as a distraction from their hospital surroundings and to engage the children's imagination. This one-of-a kind setting for a children's hospital is another way to make MeritCare a child and family friendly place.

Nurses anticipate new surroundings

Bright colors, flowers, trees, mailboxes outside the rooms and corners marked as village street signs are three design highlights of the new children's hospital at MeritCare — the first ones you see as you enter the unit. "The new renovation will provide an improved experience for the whole family," says Marcia Stubstad, a pediatric oncology nurse. "With a renaissance village filling the hallways, it will also be fun!"

What isn't so obvious are elements built in to support state-of-the-art patient care. According to Stubstad, new features will provide functional, efficient, and flexible staff and work spaces making it easier for all of the nurses to do their jobs. Each room will have an area called a server that holds all the needed equipment and supplies. "These items are easier to access, but less visible to kids in order to provide a more soothing visit," says Stubstad. "If a child has to be monitored, decentralized servers are just one thing that makes my job easier, because supplies are just a step away." Architects have also made the area flexible in order to adapt to future changes.

Stubstad says the comfort of the patient and their family is most important. Studies show that when family surrounds a sick child, the recovery is significantly helped. Every room will be a private room and have a family zone where parents can sleep at their sick child's bedside. Laptop computers with games will stimulate play and an internet connection will allow the family to stay connected to home. The hallways will be filled with

wonderful murals that detract from the fact that they are in a hospital. Every design takes the family into consideration. "After all," Stubstad says, "happier kids and families make for a better experience for everyone."

Food service – kid style

Order a Mickey Mouse® shaped pancake for dinner? Certainly. Burger bites and a fruit cup at 10 am? If that's what they want.

"One of the big challenges when caring for hospitalized children is getting them to eat," says Liza Zolondek, MeritCare Food Services Manager. "Especially for the oncology patients since they never know when they may be hungry." Children can order anything off the new kid's menu between 6:30 am and 8 pm. "When you're not feeling well, you may not want conventional food at conventional times," adds Zolondek.

MeritCare Food Services has developed an innovative menu that draws from the list of kid's favorite foods, like grilled cheese or chicken strips, balanced with nutritious items such as soups and berry flavored yogurt. "We also wanted to have fun names like smashed potatoes that would encourage eating," says Zolondek. "Overall, the goal is to provide nutrition to help them feel better and making the food appealing and available when the child wants it."

Family realizes value of private rooms

Jason and Kimi Lee know all too well how important privacy can be when a child is hospitalized. Their son Brandon had just had brain surgery for a malignant tumor behind the eye. While recovering in MeritCare's Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, there was much activity surrounding Brandon's bed, which was only closed off by curtains. On one side, there was an infant suffering from a heart condition. On the other side, there was a small child who had suffered an aneurysm.

"Five or six hours after the surgery, Brandon was trying to get rest when the baby next to him flat lined," Kimi Lee, Brandon's mother said. "Brandon sat up in his bed and yelled 'flat line.'" "I think he thought he was the one who flat lined," Kimi says. Because of the space needed to care for the critical infant, Jason and Kimi were ushered out of the intensive care area.

Kimi stressed that their family's experience had nothing to do with the MeritCare staff. She says that they were wonderful throughout Brandon's stay. The incident had to do with the old design of the intensive care unit that was an open space separated with only curtains. "What Brandon needed was a quiet, dark place to get some rest," Kimi said.

"The hospital's renovations are very important for the family's privacy," Kimi says. "I look forward to seeing it all come together!" She feels that the Children's Hospital renovation is going to make a world of difference. All rooms in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit will now be private and more space is being provided for the family to stay with their child.

The Lees are also very excited to see the improvements made in the oncology units because her family spent so much time there. Currently Brandon is doing well. Kimi said that at his last appointment in January, Brandon graduated from appointments every three months to every six months. Brandon's cancer is in remission and he is an active young man.



Specialists create positive results

Continued from Page 1

Leah's injuries were life threatening and required the expertise of several pediatric specialists including critical care, rehabilitation and psychology. Leah's medical team suspected she was a victim of shaken baby syndrome, resulting in a severe brain injury.



A sure sign of independence, Leah waves goodbye as she takes the bus to preschool at Norman County East. This is a momentous step for a child who suffered a brain injury as an infant.

The Vigum's world was turned upside down. The unthinkable truth was more than any family should have to bear. Leah had subdural and retinal hemorrhages, requiring two weeks of care in the MeritCare Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Her treatment included draining fluid from her brain, placing her on a ventilator and intravenous seizure medication. After being released from the PICU, Leah required extensive speech, occupational and physical therapy — therapy that continues today.

"The quality of care Leah received was absolutely incredible," says Nancy Vigum, Leah's mom. "The neuro-surgeons, pediatricians, pediatric intensive care doctors, the rehab, OT, PT, Speech Therapy, Respiratory Therapists, the nurses, and social workers were all wonderful. They impressed us with their team efforts, always searching for the perfect plan, and not stopping with anything short of that. We always felt that Leah was in the perfect hands. We never doubted their ability or their action plan when it came to her intensive care."

The Vigum family has had to overcome a lot. Through it all, Leah has been an inspiration. She works very hard at her ongoing therapy sessions and continues to make developmental progress. The best news is she has never lost her smile.



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Tom Dawson, Chair of the Children's Hospital Campaign accompanies Dr. Ron Miller, Children's Hospital Medical Director, through the renovated hospital while construction was taking place.

Below, Dr. Miller explains the type of equipment that will be placed in patient rooms. "The technology in these rooms," says Dr. Miller, "is so advanced it makes nanotechnology look like a Model T."



Above, Tom Dawson and Dr. Miller stand in awe of the vivid colors that fill the murals. "Kids will know immediately," says Dawson, "that they are in a very special place with people who will take good care of them."



Donors played a vital role in the renovation and expansion of MeritCare Children's Hospital. Their support helped create a distinct, family-centered and child friendly space with a healing environment, state of the art equipment and quality patient care. "Making a difference...together for our children" has become a reality.