



Making a difference... TOGETHER

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Moorhead teen survives life-threatening infection

The infection that nearly took the life of 17-year-old Brady Johnson began simply: a bloodless finger prick while opening a caulking tube with a utility knife. It happened last August 23 while Brady was helping out on a landscaping project at work. "The poke was just an itty-bitty thing when he came home that day, and ten hours later, his hand looked like an inflated rubber glove," says Mark, his dad. "By the next morning, he was in excruciating pain, he was lightheaded and he looked very sick."

Mark drove Brady from their home in Moorhead to MeritCare Walk-In Clinic in Fargo. "Within 60 seconds of looking at him, Dr. (Connie) Magura knew exactly what it was — necrotizing fasciitis," says Mark. "She sent us immediately to MeritCare Emergency Center."

A rare bacterial infection, necrotizing fasciitis can rapidly destroy skin and the soft tissues beneath it. About 30 percent of people who develop the infection — sometimes called "flesh-eating" bacteria — die from it. Keys to survival include prompt diagnosis, aggressive antibiotic use and surgical removal of the affected tissue.



"Dr. Magura called ahead, so when we arrived at the Emergency Center, the team was ready for us," says Mark. "Right away they started Brady on powerful intravenous antibiotics." Mark called his wife, Mary, to let her know what was happening with Brady, the youngest of their three children. At the lake with relatives, she immediately drove to MeritCare, arriving shortly before Brady's emergency surgery.

"Spreading like wildfire"

"It was very frightening. I could see the infection spreading like wildfire with red streaks going up his left arm. Brady was just so sick," says Mary. "I held his hand before surgery, and we prayed for the medical team. We prayed for healing hands."

In the first surgery, Dr. Jeffrey Haasbeek, fellowship-trained hand and wrist surgeon at MeritCare, successfully removed infected tissue from the left hand and arm. That afternoon, Brady spiked a fever of 103.5 — a sign the infection still threatened. He underwent another emergency surgery to remove more tissue. In the hours that followed, the team of doctors, including infectious disease specialists, kept a close watch. Hospitalized at MeritCare Children's Hospital, Brady continued to receive infusions of powerful antibiotics. Pediatric nurses cared for the wound, keeping Brady as comfortable as possible with pain medication.

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The next day, his temperature again shot up. The medical team ordered an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) scan to determine the next step, including the possible amputation of his left arm if the scan showed further spread of infection. "I didn't want to alarm Brady, but I knew we had to tell him," says Mark. "I also had to tell him to fight — and through the panic, the tears and the fears, he did. He really was amazing." In the meantime, Mary called loved ones. "I was on the phone telling friends and family we needed the power of prayer," she says. "We were up against time and we needed a miracle."

A turning point

The MRI came back clear. "That was the best news we could have asked for because it meant at least the infection was under control," says Mark. That evening, Brady's temperature began to drop; the next morning, the red lines on his arm began to fade. Brady's spirits lifted, too. "His friends were a huge part of his healing. So many of them came to visit," says Mary. "And the nurses in the Children's Hospital were great — they knew how to have fun with Brady. Here was this 16-year-old, 5'10" 210 pound football player, and they joked that they would pull him around in the little red wagon just like the other Little patients in the Pediatric Unit. He would just laugh; I think that helped him heal, too."

After a third surgery to close the wound, Brady was able to go home, having spent a full week in the hospital. For the next month, he continued to receive outpatient intravenous antibiotics and physical therapy to regain further function in his left hand. A fourth surgery followed in December. Initially the surgery was to treat an unrelated previous football injury to the left shoulder, but an X-ray revealed additional infection in the collarbone, prompting removal of the infected area and another course of antibiotics.

A junior at Moorhead Senior High, Brady today feels healthy and good. Though he had to sit out the 2005 football season, he now works out with trainers and looks forward to a possible return in 2006. In the meantime, he has discovered new ways to make a difference, including participation in the recent Cares for Kids Radiothon. "Brady came on the air several times and gave live interviews about his experience. He was fabulous, and people really responded to his message," says Big Dog, host on Y-94. Mark and Mary participated in the Radiothon, too.

For Mark, a MeritCare Foundation Board member for three years, and Mary, a Foundation volunteer, the experience carried additional meaning. "It makes me more proud than ever to be associated with this organization. I was involved in the campaign to raise money for the Children's Hospital renovation and now that campaign has even more significance for me," Mark says. "We knew what the medical team at MeritCare was capable of, but now we have firsthand knowledge of how this team can come together and work in a coordinated effort to save a life — our son's life. We couldn't be more grateful."



Mary and Mark Johnson interview with Ryan Kelly, host on the River 95.1 FM, during the Cares for Kids Radiothon.

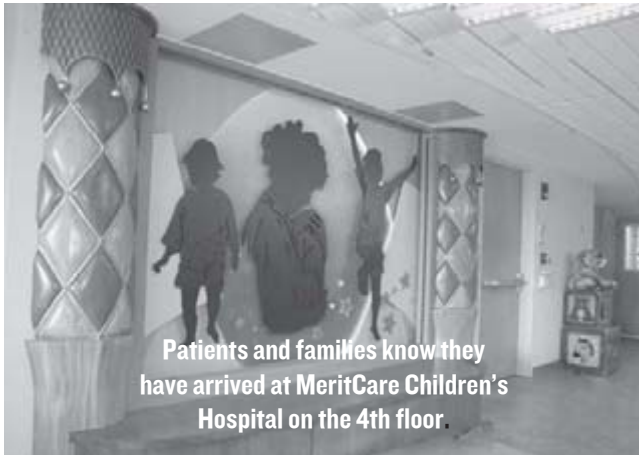


Cares for Kids Radiothon Tops the Charts

The Wolf 104.7 FM and the River 95.1 joined long-time host Y-94 this year. Listeners donated \$81,241 while the Cares for Kids Radiothon was broadcast February 23, 24 and 25, 2006. Money raised during this year's radiothon will support special programs, such as the Child Life Program, and high tech equipment including Space Lab Monitors that are placed beside each baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Thank you to all the donors who gave to the Children's Hospital, and to the families who shared their stories this year.

Mom, Camille, and baby, Seth, share their story during the Cares for Kids Radiothon.



Patients and families know they have arrived at MeritCare Children's Hospital on the 4th floor.

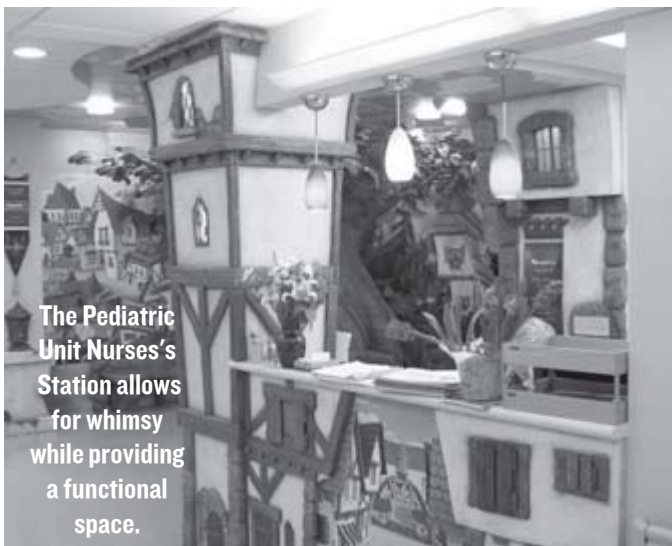
Phase I, the Pediatric wing, celebrated its 1st anniversary on March 29th.

Making a difference...
together for our children

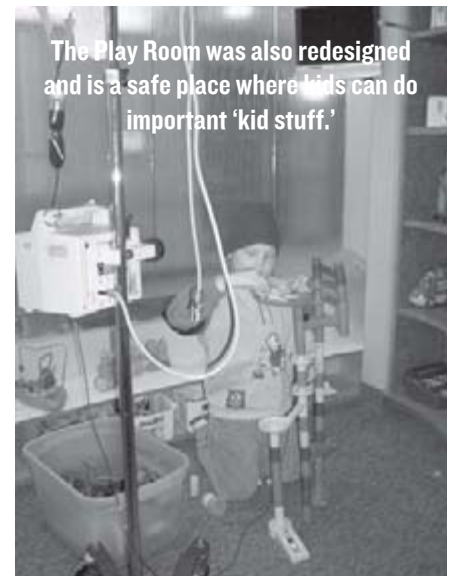
by making a dream come true.



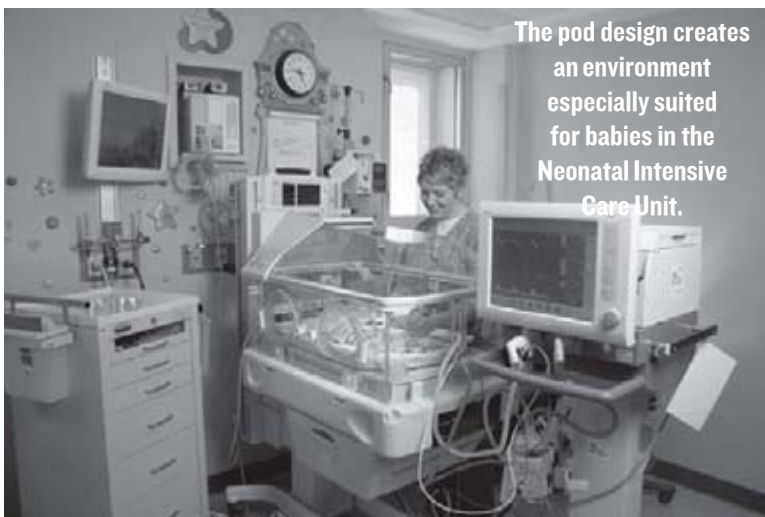
Pediatric Intensive Care Unit Rooms provide more privacy and space for families.



The Pediatric Unit Nurses's Station allows for whimsy while providing a functional space.



The Play Room was also redesigned and is a safe place where kids can do important 'kid stuff.'



The pod design creates an environment especially suited for babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Phase II, the Neonatal wing, opened on January 12, 2006

MeritCare Staff are delighted that the renovation is complete!

Our donors made it all possible!



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Tanya in July 2005

Tanya made incredible progress in less than a year. For overcoming great medical odds, Tanya has been named our 2006 Children's Miracle Network Champion.

The smile of a Champion

Tanya Holbrook has faced more medical challenges in her six years than many adults ever face.

On January 2nd of 2005 Tanya complained of a headache and was rushed to MeritCare Children's Hospital. A cluster of blood vessels had exploded in her brain. Tanya was rushed into emergency surgery where doctors placed a stent in her head to relieve the pressure from the excess blood.

The day after surgery Tanya's young heart gave out; she went into cardiac arrest and was not expected to live. After 2 weeks of hospitalization Tanya was able to move her legs a little bit, but unable to move her arms and was considered legally blind. With time her sight has improved and with lots of therapy her mobility has improved as well. Therapy continues but her progress is almost 100%.

After 3½ months of hospitalization Tanya was able to go home. Tanya still has many challenges to face but she has made remarkable progress. Tanya was not expected to live and was able to walk out of the Hospital on the day she was discharged.

Tanya is living proof that miracles do happen at MeritCare Children's Hospital!



Mark your calendars!

The 22nd Children's Miracle Network Television Celebration will be held June 3, 2006. 100% of money raised stays in this region, helping our own children become champions!



Tanya in March 2005