



# Children's Heroes

**NEWS AND STORIES ABOUT YOUR IMPACT ON OUR KIDS!**

## You Were D’Kaiden’s Last Hope Here’s how you helped save his life

**D**octors in their hometown offered no hope. “They said my baby would never survive,” Samantha says.

Her son D’Kaiden would be born with a serious blood disorder, plus life-threatening conditions affecting his kidneys and lungs. Samantha was told to prepare for the worst.

Then, one doctor gave her a spark of hope. He told her to take D’Kaiden to UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. That’s where you help power world-class pediatric care that saves kids’ lives.

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**“UPMC Children’s saved my son. He would not be here without them.”**

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Two days after D’Kaiden was born, he was transferred to UPMC Children’s Hospital for



*D’Kaiden wasn’t expected to survive. You made sure he got lifesaving care.*

surgery and lifesaving care. He came through the operation with flying colors.

“UPMC Children’s saved my son,” Samantha

**Continued on next page >>**



**INSIDE:** You were there for Rilyn, even during a pandemic ...

**Continued from cover >>**

says. “He would not be here without them.”

D’Kaiden returned for ongoing care, and two years later, he came back for a kidney transplant.

Today he’s a happy, loving 3-year-old who loves books and dancing. He gets stronger every day!

Never underestimate the essential role you play in D’Kaiden’s story, and so many others. Your gifts continue to break barriers and make new innovations possible. That means more critically ill

kids like D’Kaiden can survive — and thrive.

Samantha puts it best. “Kids don’t deserve to be sick. They deserve all the help they can get,” she says. “Thank you to anyone who donated. It helps change kids’ lives completely.”

Please don’t stop now. Use the enclosed envelope to give another boy or girl the same chance to thrive. Thank you for your compassion and generosity! ♥

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## You Made Sure Lifesaving Care Never Took a Break

In the spring of 2020, so many families found themselves navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s when Rilyn’s family discovered that their “new normal” would be anything but. Their 18-month-old baby was diagnosed with cancer.

“Our world was turned upside down,” Rilyn’s mom, Jamie, says.

Childhood illnesses don’t stop during a pandemic. During a time of so much worry, you stepped up to help families like Rilyn’s — through your support of lifesaving pediatric care at UPMC Children’s.

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**“Our world was turned upside down.”**

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Rilyn and her parents, Jamie and Cliff, spent over 100 nights in the hospital so Rilyn could undergo chemotherapy, immunotherapy, surgery, two stem cell transplants, and radiation. You powered the treatment that helped her battle illness, as well as activities that kept a smile on her face. Rilyn celebrated her second birthday in the hospital, complete with festivities that made her feel like a princess!



***When Rilyn’s world was turned upside down, you helped set it right again.***

Finally, her family got amazing news. Rilyn’s latest scans show no active disease! You helped make it possible, and Jamie couldn’t be more grateful.

“It’s tremendously difficult knowing that your child is sick,” she says. “However, receiving treatment at a top-notch hospital provides you with some peace of mind.”

Your generosity has been crucial to helping our experts stay ahead of our community’s urgent needs, and be a lifeline for families like Rilyn’s. Now more than ever, thank you for helping us deliver the best possible care to children and families. ♥



*Dr. Martin has been there for Vilija for the past 18 years. So have friends like you! (Photos taken prior to the pandemic.)*



## You're Helping Vilija Live Her Best Life

Vida smiles when she remembers the day her daughter Vilija was born.

“She was so beautiful,” Vida says. “She was perfect.”

But Vilija had a condition that brought many challenges and made it hard for her to eat. She had a cleft lip and palate, birth defects that occur when a baby’s lip and mouth don’t develop properly.

Vida wanted to make sure her daughter could have the best,

healthiest life possible. You helped her do just that by powering innovative care at UPMC Children’s. Over the next 18 years, Vilija had 10 surgeries to correct her lip and palate, and friends like you were with her every step of the way.

“The surgeries are scary, but if you have a cleft team like the one at UPMC Children’s, you don’t need to worry.” Vilija says.

She says her ninth surgery was the most difficult. That’s when surgeons used bone marrow from

her hip to correct her palate. But through it all, Vilija was grateful for her team, which includes Dr. Brian Martin, and generous donors like you.

“Dr. Martin has been a huge part of my life and my cleft journey,” she says. “The doctors here have compassion for the whole family!”

Today, Vilija is excelling in college, and finished her first semester with a 4.0 average. Thank you for giving her the chance to live her very best life! ♥

# Help Us Raise \$30,000 by Friday, May 14

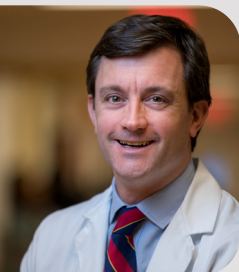
**GOAL AMOUNT** → **\$30,000**  
**DEADLINE** → **Friday, May 14**

*Please rush your gift to help power vital research and lifesaving care for sick and injured children.*

**Can you make a generous donation by Friday, May 14? Just use the enclosed envelope to send your gift today.**

*We need your help to meet our goal so we can provide care for every child in our region — regardless of their family’s ability to pay. Thank you for having a big heart for our patients.*

## You Are the Hero in These Stories



Dr. Brian Martin

Dear Friend,

Thank you for reading the enclosed stories. You are the hero in every single one of them.

I'm particularly pleased to share the story about Vilija, a brave patient I've worked with for the past 18 years. I've been fortunate to watch her grow up, and along the way, I've seen the incredible impact of your generosity.

You've helped power a team of dedicated specialists who make complicated conditions like Vilija's seem simple. And, you help make it possible for us to provide Child Life services and other creative therapies, like pet therapy, that helped her stay strong along the way.

As we continue to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, we count on your loyal support. Your gifts are behind the treatment, research, and compassionate care that help sick kids get better. Thank you.

Gratefully,

Brian Martin, DMD, MHCDS  
Vice President, Medical Affairs  
UPMC Children's Hospital  
of Pittsburgh

## BREAKTHROUGHS:

# You Help Fuel Research and Advance Care

Thank you for making new advances in pediatric care possible. Your generosity makes you part of our team, working alongside experts who dream of a healthier future for kids and families.

*Here are some of the latest programs and studies you're a part of:*



A research project resulted in new protocols that change the way young patients are cared for after an uncomplicated congenital heart surgery. The new protocol reduces the total duration of medications, which decreases potential side effects.



Another study examined young patients diagnosed with Kawasaki disease, an inflammatory disease that sometimes affects a child's heart. Researchers analyzed the impact of sedating a patient during an echocardiogram as a way to improve the standard of care.



A new program focuses on helping parents who have a child born with congenital heart disease. Families who participated in the pilot project received helpful resources and connected with mentor families.

Your continued generosity will help break barriers, push the limits of what's possible in healing, and help more families with sick children. Thank you! ♥

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## My Gift to Help Sick and Injured Kids

Please accept my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to provide lifesaving care for critically ill and injured children.

I have enclosed a check (payable to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation).

Please charge my credit card.

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