



Patient Success Stories – 2008  
(Excerpted from Shriners International Speakers Kit)

---

Many of us can remember a time when children with serious orthopaedic problems received limited treatment, children with catastrophic burn injuries did not survive, and youngsters with spinal cord injuries had shortened lives.

Today, the situation is very different. Thankfully, many of these children, despite having to learn to cope with long-term, serious difficulties, are far more likely to live lives of amazing success. Often, it is the efforts of Shriners Hospitals for Children that make the difference. Shriners Hospitals are renowned for patient successes and medical achievements.



In addition to providing pediatric specialty care at no charge to children with orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate, all 22 Shriners Hospitals maintain a nurturing, positive environment that encourages patients to pursue their dreams. Over and over again, Shriners Hospitals' patients achieve amazing things, despite the overwhelming odds and obstacles facing them.

When parents, seeking help for their children's serious medical problems, come to Shriners Hospitals, they receive much more than medical treatment. From the moment the families enter the comforting atmosphere of the reception area, they are treated like special guests. From the very

first consultation, each patient receives all the personal attention needed to help them recover and thrive. For the most part, when a child becomes a patient at a Shriners Hospital, he or she is eligible for all needed treatment until reaching adulthood. Often, the children see many of the same medical staff members throughout the course of their treatment. Being seen by the same caregivers provides continuity and comfort, builds confidence and creates a more supportive environment for the young patients.

When a child comes to Shriners Hospitals, whether it's for treatment of clubfoot, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, or any of a wide range of other orthopaedic conditions, or a burn or a spinal cord injury, the child and their family become a welcome new member of the Shriners family.

In addition to medical care, the staff of Shriners Hospitals provides encouragement and activities designed to help patients achieve all they can, even athletic skills. This has inspired many of our patients to pursue their love of sports.



Former Shriners Hospitals patient Chris Cameron is a great example. Now 18, Chris is a freshman at the University of Michigan and a rising star in the world of gymnastics. He received one of only 23 men's gymnastics scholarships offered. This is quite an honor, considering the university's gymnastics team is Division-One and in contention for the national title.

Chris grew up competing in gymnastics, despite having a congenital condition causing his right leg to be smaller than his left. His family wasn't sure what the best option for treatment would be, until they found the

Tampa Shriners Hospital. He and his family had to decide between lengthening his right leg, which would have taken a year, or surgically closing a growth plate in his longer leg to slow growth and allow the shorter leg to catch up.

They opted to close the growth plate when Chris was almost 13. He was competing again within months and became a junior member of the U.S. National Gymnastics team in 2006. He says that if it wasn't for the expert treatment available at Shriners Hospitals, he probably wouldn't be able to compete in gymnastics on such a high level. A difference in the size of his legs would mean that he couldn't hit the floor as one unit, and he would lose his competitive edge. Chris credits his surgery at the Shriners Hospital for helping him achieve his dreams.



Another young aspiring athlete is Cody Mace, a patient at the Spokane Shriners Hospital. He was selected for Team USA in the 2005 Australian Junior Games for the Disabled and brought home four gold medals. He has also participated in Paralympics training camps in Atlanta and Colorado Springs, and competed in road races across the nation.

Two more Shriners Hospitals patients who excel at sports are Amberlynn Weber and Susannah Scaroni.

Amberlynn Weber, who has a spinal cord injury, enjoys basketball, road racing, and track and field. She has won many silver and gold medals at major events, including the 2006 National Junior Disability Championships in Tampa, Florida. In recent years, Amberlynn has emerged as one of the top



wheelchair competitors in the nation, and hopes to compete in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London. Last year, she was one of 45 athletes invited to a Paralympic training session in Colorado, which could be the first step toward qualifying for the U.S. Paralympics team.



Susannah Scaroni is another outstanding athlete. She participates in track and field, road racing, basketball and weightlifting. In 2007, Susannah competed at the International Wheelchair Association of Sports track and field competition in Johannesburg, South Africa. She won gold

medals in all six racing events, plus silver medals in the shot put and discuss. She was also selected as a member of the U.S. team in the 2008 IWAS Junior World Wheelchair and Amputee Games, which will be held in New Jersey in July. Susannah's goals for the next couple of years include qualifying for the U.S. Paralympics team and competing in collegiate athletics in 2009.

Shriners Hospitals patients excel in many areas. Nineteen-year-old Jenna Buchanan, who was born with clubfoot, became a patient at the Shriners Hospital in Portland when she was a few weeks old. After many years of surgery, braces and casts, she now plays competitive golf on scholarship at

Fresno State in California. Jenna, like so many other Shriners Hospitals patients, has worked hard to achieve her goals and dreams, despite many setbacks. Her accomplishments include being featured in a story on the back of a Wheaties box, and playing with PGA TOUR players at the First Tee Open at Pebble Beach in 2005. "There are no words to describe the feeling of meeting Arnold Palmer for the first time," Jenna said. "Breathtaking is the best way to put it. Being given the chance to play with him was amazing. I would've never had the opportunity to walk, play golf or do any of these incredible things if it wasn't for the Shriners. They truly impacted my life."



Success stories like these can be found at each of the 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children. It's not at all unusual for patients to find ways to say "thank you" to Shriners Hospitals for the dramatic changes in their lives.



"I want to help out all kids," Leigh Dittman said. "Shriners Hospital has been there for me since I was born." Leigh has spent many hours at Shriners Hospital for Children — Tampa, receiving treatment for osteogenesis imperfecta, a genetic disorder caused by imperfectly formed bone collagen, causing the bones to break easily. To help fulfill their daughter's wish to raise money for Shriners

Hospitals, her parents have held Leigh's birthday party as a fundraiser since her fourth birthday. Last year's celebration of her seventh birthday

raised the grand total to 132 thousand dollars in donations to Shriners Hospitals.

MacKenzie Clare and Jessica Rogers are both receiving rehabilitative treatment for spinal cord injuries. They were both so appreciative and impressed by the care they received at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital; they decided to give something back.

With the help of her Girl Scout troop, MacKenzie and her family held a fundraiser and sold more than three thousand tie-dyed bracelets imprinted with the saying “Miracles May Come,” inspired by MacKenzie’s initials, M-M-C. MacKenzie donated a portion of the funds to Shriners Hospitals to help others who may need similar care, and to provide funds for spinal cord injury research.



Nineteen-year-old Jessica Rogers was paralyzed in March 2005 as the result of an automobile accident. Jessica can do many things today that were impossible a couple of years ago – from putting on her makeup to using a laptop computer. Jessica collected can tabs in her hometown of Trenton, New Jersey, and donated the recycling proceeds to the hospital. Jessica said, “You guys have helped me in more ways than one, and that’s why I am giving back.”

These are just a few examples of the overwhelming impact – far beyond medical care – Shriners Hospitals has on its young patients.

At Shriners Hospitals, patients have the opportunity to participate in activities that, while fun to do, are also serving important therapeutic purposes. The children can choose from many, many activities, including arts and crafts, adaptive sports, computer games, cooking, music, hand cycling, horseback riding, karate, ice skating or kayaking.

Some hospitals offer team sports.

Patient favorites include wheelchair tennis, wheelchair basketball, soccer and adaptive sled hockey. For Shriners Hospitals, the ultimate goal of encouraging patients to participate in appropriate sports activities is to help them prepare for life and become as independent as possible.



In July 2007, the Spokane Shriners Hospital hosted the annual National Junior Disability Championships. One-hundred-eighty-one athletes from 32 states and Canada participated in the week-long event, which included competitions in several sports, such as track and field, swimming, power lifting, archery, table tennis and wheelchair basketball.

One competitor was Bob Hunt, a 17-year-old patient at the Spokane Shriners Hospital. Bob was born with sacral agenesis, meaning his spinal column is not completely formed. He has been participating in adaptive sports since the age of 8, when he became involved with a wheelchair



basketball program. He started doing road racing when he was 9, and enjoys track and field and power lifting, as well. At the 2007 NJDC meet, Bob racked up the awards, with four silver medals and two gold medals. He will compete for the U.S. team at the 2008 IWAS Junior World Wheelchair and Amputee Games in July, and is working toward qualifying for the 2012

Paralympics Games in London. He hopes to receive a scholarship for wheelchair track and field from the University of Illinois next fall.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in competing, assisting or sponsoring the NJDC event, you can find more information on their Web site – [www.NJDC.net](http://www.NJDC.net).



Accomplishments and achievements are not limited to our orthopedic patients. The same positive approach and “can-do” attitude exists at the Shriners Hospitals that treat burns and spinal cord injuries. At the Shriners Hospitals specializing in burn care, patients receive the most advanced treatments available. One innovative program is music therapy, which helps very young burn-injury patients get much-needed exercise.

The staff also plays a major role in helping patients learn to cope mentally and emotionally with the changes to their physical appearance caused by burns. What is most important is that each child gains the reassurance needed to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

The Shriners Hospitals specializing in burns participate in the SOAR effort – Survivors Offering Assistance in Recovery – a nationally recognized peer support program for burn survivors and their families. Support from peers is proven to be a very effective form of encouragement for families adjusting to a chronic health condition.



Self-confidence can also be an issue for those with spinal cord injuries. An innovative program at the Chicago hospital addresses this problem, along with providing an especially wonderful opportunity. It is known as GLAHM – Good Life And Healthy Mind – Camp and is designed to inform and encourage girls ages 13 through 18 who have sustained spinal cord injuries by

putting them through a “beauty boot camp” for the body, mind and spirit.

GLAHM Camp encourages them to live balanced lives, and be confident about their futures. The program, created by Chicago hospital patient Jessica Greenfield, was nominated last year for the prestigious Chicago Innovation Awards.



Shriners Hospitals are generous places of hope, help — even achievement — for children with serious medical difficulties.



Certainly, it is the patients themselves — and their families — who know that Shriners Hospitals are more than just places for solving medical problems. Shriners Hospitals are places where children can discover how much they can achieve, despite significant

difficulties. As one parent said: “Shriners is a place where you feel safe, warm and protected. They go out of their way here to reassure you that everything will work out for the best. This is a feeling you just don’t get everywhere.”

If you know a child Shriners Hospitals might be able to help, please call in the U.S., 1-800-237-5055 or, in Canada, 1-800-361-7256. More information is also available on the Web site: [www.shrinershospitals.org](http://www.shrinershospitals.org).



Shriners Hospitals for Children depends on the generosity of Shriners and the general public, so if you’d like to support our mission, please call 1-800-241-GIFT for information on donor opportunities and programs.