

# DISCOVER



The Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department

January 2025

## Ring in the New Year with Tools for Wellness



Jacob Lieser and Archimedes Bibiano met at the KZTV Studio to talk about how the theme 'Patience Through the Storm' originated from Jacob's experience at the hospital.

The new year often brings with it resolutions for better health for the mind and body. For many, the focus for 2025 in achieving improved overall well-being will be on self-care.

In a hospital, patient and family well-being is the focus, but research shows that a healthcare provider's own health is closely linked to the quality of care they can offer. When healthcare workers prioritize their physical and mental health, they can provide more compassionate, high-quality care. Well-being practices take a holistic approach to maintaining health, encouraging individuals to care for themselves like they would a plant. "As a Mindfulness Meditation and Awareness Training Teacher, I have the privilege of supporting patients, families, and healthcare professionals through mindfulness-based interventions," stated Archimedes Bibiano, a member of the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy team.

Recently, Archimedes worked with a young patient, Jacob Lieser, who was unexpectedly hospitalized while traveling abroad. This caused significant stress and anxiety for him and his family, along with physical discomfort. Archimedes and Jacob practiced mindfulness techniques, like breath awareness and explored the connection between emotions, thoughts and bodily sensations. With time and practice, Jacob's health improved rapidly. Although he was initially disappointed by weight loss and muscle loss, he soon felt much better. Months later, Jacob shared that he won a school essay competition by writing about his journey from illness to health, and how mindfulness helped him regulate his emotions. He had regained his muscle mass and was excited to start college. Jacob also contributed as a guest editor for *Reflections*, the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department's teen literary magazine, sharing his experiences and inspiring others with the theme "Patience Through the Storm."

Jacob's mother, a former clinician, was so inspired by the positive impact mindfulness and meditation had on her son's physical, mental and emotional well-being that she decided to return to her own yoga practice. She had previously studied yoga and even earned her certification to teach. During a conversation with Jacob and his mother, Archimedes took a moment to jot down some helpful tips for encouraging healthcare workers to practice mindfulness in the workplace.

Self-care is something everyone can incorporate into their routine. Simple practices like getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, taking breaks, practicing mindfulness, staying connected with loved ones, managing stress, pursuing hobbies, seeking support when needed, eating well and making time for relaxation all contribute to overall well-being. For healthcare workers, prioritizing both mental and physical health is essential for preventing burnout and maintaining a healthy work-life balance in addition to improving quality of care to patients and families.

**Mindfulness-On-The-Go:** Here are some simple mindfulness practices that anyone can practice to stay grounded.

**Practice the PAUSE:** Take just 45 seconds to pause and reconnect with your body and mind. Research shows that this brief pause helps workers become more present in the moment and better able to manage stress. It's a great tool for when you're feeling overwhelmed or need a quick reset.

**Breathe intentionally:** Along with the pause, it's important to breathe mindfully. The 4-7-8 technique is one option: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 7 counts, and exhale for 8 counts. Box breathing is a similar method, but with equal counts for each breath cycle - 4 counts for inhale, hold, and exhale.

**Gentle stretches:** Stretching is a great way to reconnect with your body. Small, gentle stretches during any time of the day can help with stress.



Archimedes collaborates with staff system-wide to inform everyone about the benefits of mindfulness and the access to services in the hospital. Here, he is co-hosting a KZTV show with Chaplain Olive Loew from the Department of Spiritual Care and Education.

# Child Life Launches Certificate Program

Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital's Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department has partnered with Talent Development & Learning to create a Child-Centered Care Certificate Program. Leadership, clinicians and training specialists collaborated for months to curate a one-of-a-kind learning opportunity for Mount Sinai employees. Designed to provide professional development focused on working with children in the medical setting, the three main learning objectives for participants of the program are to:

1. Identify the principles of patient and family-centered care as it relates to their role and the mission, vision and values in the Mount Sinai Health System.
2. Recognize how each stage of development impacts the experience of a child during healthcare encounters.
3. Demonstrate an ability to incorporate communication strategies in this program into their work.

The certificate program is a three-part series, with the first two sessions focused on developmental theory, practical strategies and discussion-based critical thinking. The final session provides an opportunity for participants to present what they learned the first two sessions and share real-life examples of how they or their colleagues have applied the principles to their daily work.

The first rendition of the course was offered in September 2024 to staff from a variety of pediatric settings, including environmental services, administration, patient relations, language services, radiology and outpatient areas. "It was very insightful and gave me a closer look at the specific work that child life specialists do with patients," shared Sha Alexis, a Support Associate who works primarily in the Zone and on the pediatric units.

In the future, the Child-Centered Care Certificate Program will be offered to other areas within the Mount Sinai Health System, including staff working in adult settings who experience interactions with children. This will continue to support Mount Sinai's mission of providing family-centered care, even in non-pediatric settings.

## Child Life Expands to the IBD Clinic



*Sarah Griffiths bring child life services to the IBD clinic.*

Child life services have expanded to the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) service. Sarah Griffiths, Certified Child Life Specialist, supports pediatric patients with IBD and their families in the endoscopy center, infusion center, IBD clinic and inpatient. Inflammatory Bowel Diseases include Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis.

Sarah introduces play into these spaces that have never had the presence of child life services. Play is essential in allowing children to feel comfortable and confident in the often intimidating and overwhelming hospital environment. Further, Sarah has been providing developmentally appropriate procedural preparation and support. "Procedural preparation allows patients to have clear expectations and create a plan for how to cope with expectations. Procedural support provides patients with choice and autonomy during their procedures, encouraging positive coping skills during challenging interventions," she explained. Sarah has also been prioritizing providing a sense of continuity for families as they go from one area of care to another, allowing her to advocate for their needs throughout.

Sarah hopes to integrate further into the IBD clinic as she supports pediatric patients on their medical journey. This includes at the time of diagnosis, in the course of a change in their treatment plan, and throughout procedural support while in the clinic. Sarah hopes to create a community group in which families affected by IBD can meet one another and connect over shared experiences.

## Staff Accomplishments

**Abby Patch**, Child Life Specialist, celebrated her tenth year at Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital in November.

**Lauren Keyes**, Child Life Specialist, worked as a co-facilitator for PEM Base Camp, an interdisciplinary simulation conference for pediatric emergency medicine professionals.

**Kyla Ohayon**, Art Therapist, passed the art therapy board certification in December and is now a registered art therapist.

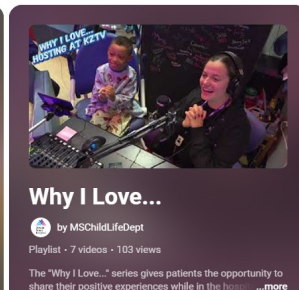
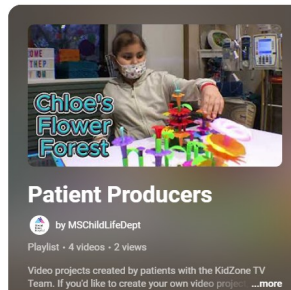
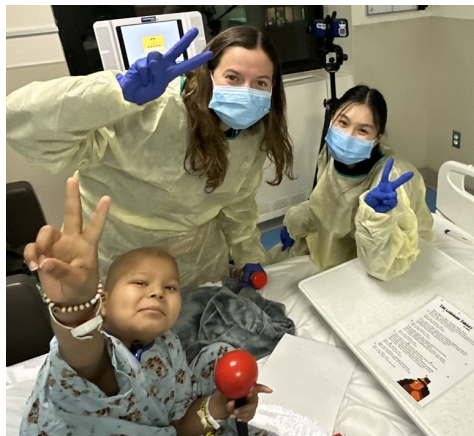
## Celebrating Caregivers

Intensive Care Unit Certified Child Life Specialists Katie Messina (NICU), Kaleigh Beiling (PCICU) and Abby Patch (PICU) lead the December Caregiver Creations group, which featured wine glass and mug decorating. Caregivers enjoyed candies and hot chocolate in his creative and relaxing experience.





# Patient Production with KidZone TV



Scan & watch the videos!



In the hospital, patients often feel their sense of autonomy diminish due to choices made on their behalf. At [KidZone TV](#), we aim to counteract this through projects that offer patients creative freedom. KZTV producers have developed two new series: [“Why I Love...”](#) and [“Patient Producers”](#) where patients can direct, edit, be in front or behind the camera. They are in the driver’s seat and can decide their role in each project. No matter how they choose to be involved, the creative process is centered around their personal journeys.

The [“Why I Love...”](#) series gives patients the opportunity to share their positive experiences while in the hospital. Patients can focus on services they have participated in such as music or art therapy, the creation of coping plans, or hosting a live show. They can reflect on the positive aspects of their interaction with Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department and how these have empowered them during their admission.

Exactly as its name suggests, the [“Patient Producers”](#) series allows patients to step into the role of a producer and strengthen their decision-making skills. Using their interests and hobbies as a launching pad, our producers support patients as they create a video highlighting their favorite things about something they love. A hospital environment is not the most conducive for practicing autonomy, but positioning patients as producers empowers them to go beyond ideating the concept of their project and make stylistic choices regarding motion graphics and background music, to name a few.

Whether capturing meaningful hospital experiences or turning patient ideas into reality, the KidZone TV producers strive to help patients achieve a sense of normalcy during their hospital admission through the freedom of choice and fun activities. If any of these options interest you, please reach out to your child life specialist or KidZone TV producer.

## Celebrating the Winter Holiday Season with Patients and Families

The Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department ushered in the 2024 winter holiday season with a myriad of fun and festive events for patients and families. As the temperature outside dropped, daily programming in the Child Life Zone featured art projects and activities celebrating the wonder of winter and the many holiday traditions observed at this special time of year. The December KidZone TV calendar showcased an array of special guests and holiday shows including [heartwarming musical performances](#), prize-filled [trivia](#) and Bingo games, seasonal cooking specials, and an interactive experience with former NFL player and author [Perry Williams](#). Back by popular demand, the Zone’s pop-up holiday shop, decked with shelves filled with donated gifts, opened its doors for caregivers to select items at no cost for their hospitalized children and their siblings. On two special afternoons, The Zone was filled with joy and good cheer as caregivers visited the shop before heading to colorful gift-wrapping stations and art making tables to create personalized cards and crafts while enjoying warm cocoa and refreshments. Capping off the season and to the delight of all, [Santa and his elves made bedside visits both in person and virtually from the North Pole](#). We are grateful for the opportunity to bring joy and hope to our patients and their families and want to thank our many donors for helping us make this holiday season so special.



Caregivers, Santa and his elves take part in the festivities at each of our many holiday caregiver events.



# Facility Dog, Moby, Bids Farewell to the Mount Sinai Health System

Moby, the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department's beloved animal assisted therapy dog, said goodbye to Mount Sinai on December 30, 2024, after six years of service. Moby has had the tremendous opportunity to provide facility dog programming throughout the Mount Sinai Health System, supporting over 20,000 team members of the system.

In 2024, "The Impact of Facility Dog Programming on Mood and Stress Among Healthcare Workers in Adult Inpatient Oncology Units" was published in the Practical Implementation of Nursing Science Journal. This journal article highlighted Moby's incredible work.

In addition to this publication, Moby has visited offsite campuses within Mount Sinai Hospital over 50 times; he has been featured on Anderson Cooper 360; and Moby was highlighted during the annual Crystal Ball for his impact on trainees and staff during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jaclyn Craig, Moby's dog mom and art therapist, will continue to love and take care of Moby at home. He will miss all his friends at Mount Sinai Kravis Children's Hospital, especially, Professor and Summer.



## Emotions Chart Helps Patient Cope During a Long Admission



This fall our clinicians, Kiara Mendez, Kyla Ohayon and Catherine Rodgers, collaborated to support an oncology patient in expressing her emotions. Using drama and art therapy practices, our clinicians created a feelings chart. This chart was used to help patient Chloe with emotional regulation and recognition, pain management and creative expression during her extended admission. With Kyla, Chloe selected six emotions that she experienced consistently throughout her admission. Chloe then proceeded to match each emotion with a color. Our drama therapist, Kiara, worked with

Chloe and our facility dog Professor to select photos of Professor that matched each emotion. Catherine, our child life specialist, used the feelings chart with Chloe during procedural support and in animal assisted therapy sessions. This intervention was a great way to show how drama therapy, art therapy, child life, and animal assisted therapy can collaborate to reach the needs of a patient.

## Music and Animal Assisted Therapy Work Together for a Patient

Patient, Lauren, 15, has benefitted from both music therapy and animal assisted therapy services during visits to the outpatient clinic for her infusions. Goals for Lauren during these infusion visits include distraction, emotional support, coping and procedural support. During her most recent infusion visit, Lauren spent time with music therapist, Bethany Plncus, who is also the primary handler for facility dog, Summer. Bethany can rely on Summer during her music therapy sessions to provide normalization of the environment and encourage positive coping for procedural support. Sometimes this looks like music relaxation with Summer sleeping on the bed, songwriting about Summer or singing songs about the summer.

At the visit pictured here, Lauren was able to sit with and pet Summer, which allowed for distraction from the pain from her IV. Summer also helped to alleviate some anxiety she was feeling about being in the clinic. While petting Summer, Lauren sang to preferred music, including Coldplay, while Bethany joined in singing and playing the guitar. With Summer also being present, Lauren requested to sing "Cruel Summer" by another one of her favorite artists, Taylor Swift. At the end of the session, Lauren shared that she felt more relaxed and less anxious by being able to use two of her favorite things during the session, music and petting dogs. This illustrated how the use of music therapy with a facility dog can be extremely beneficial and healing.

