

# Bradley Hospital Free the Future

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## Grateful Family Gives Back 61 Years Later

**I**n mid-1950s New Jersey, Hedwig and Victor Cipolla Sr. struggled to raise three little boys. While the younger sons were a typical handful, the couple was concerned about the behavior of their eldest, Vic Jr., pictured right, then and now.

Young Vic learned to read at age 3, but rarely spoke. He attended public school, but was unable to connect emotionally with anyone. As he got older, Vic's behavior became more challenging. Distracted and anxious, he lashed out, scratching his baby brothers. He chewed compulsively on his shirt collars and was an unusually fussy eater.

Concern turned to despair for the Cipollas. Their son's behavior had reached a tipping point. They consulted a local psychiatrist, who arrived at a then little-known diagnosis: autism. While there was nowhere in New Jersey that could help, 200 miles away was Bradley Hospital.

In 1956, Bradley Hospital had already gained national recognition for its pioneering psychiatric work with children and adolescents. Vic Jr. was 11 years old, and we were ready for him.

"It was difficult," recalls brother Richard Cipolla, now 67, who was 7 at the time and was the middle child. Wayne was the youngest. "Our parents were very concerned for Vic's well-being. There was hardly any information about autism available, let alone guidance on how to handle it. They were at their wits' end."

Sending their son to Bradley Hospital was hard, but the Cipollas wanted Vic to have a successful life. "They knew their son was different," says Richard, a psychoanalyst in private practice. "Mom and Dad wanted him to be happy and able to pursue his interests, which included science."



Vic remained at Bradley for four years, making steady progress in a structured environment as he learned how to manage his developmental disability. The family visited often, enjoying picnics on the hospital grounds. Eventually, Vic Jr. reintegrated into his home and community.

"Bradley Hospital was so helpful," Rich says. "Not just for Vic Jr. but for all of us. My brother's behavior was very different when he came home. He was better adjusted, less anxious, and eating healthily. He seemed calmer and better able to integrate with others."

Vic completed eighth grade in nearby Norwood, New Jersey. When the high school couldn't provide the needed support, he took part in various programs and activities while living at home with his devoted and loving parents.

*continued on page 2*



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*continued from page 1*

In the early 1990s, Vic moved into a group home nearby, where he lives happily today. He is 72 years old and a prolific reader, enjoying scientific books the most. He has a passion for electronics, repairing TVs and radios for fun. “He’s very intelligent,” says Rich, who visits and takes Vic out to dinner regularly. “You should see his room ... nothing but books!”

Through the years, the Cipollas never forgot Bradley Hospital, expressing their appreciation with small annual gifts. According to Rich, these contributions were to thank the hospital for both its life-changing care and the much needed financial support Bradley provided the family during Vic’s stay.

Wayne, a successful entrepreneur, predeceased his parents; Hedy passed away in 2008, and Victor Sr. in 2016, at the age of 95. The couple remained deeply committed to their eldest son’s care throughout their lives.

In a gift from the late Victor Sr., a generous donation from the family’s estate will support a renovation project to transform the front area of the hospital’s Laufer Building into a new Family Welcome Center. Prior to his death, Victor Sr. instructed Rich to make a gift to Bradley Hospital “in recognition of the life-long association the Cipolla family has had with the institution, and in grateful thanks for treatment received for his eldest son, Victor Jr.”

The renovation will improve the patient experience by creating a welcoming environment, right at the front door, for families like the Cipollas who come to Bradley Hospital during some of the most difficult times in their lives. “My parents would be so proud to be a part of this essential restoration to the entrance of the main building,” says Rich.

“And Bradley Hospital is proud to be a part of the Cipollas’ remarkable legacy of caring,” responds President Daniel Wall. “Their gift is profoundly touching on so many levels.”



Vic and Rich Cipolla



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# Helping Patients Regain Control of Their Emotions

**R**ecess is a fun time for kids to burn off energy and get a break during the school day, but for children like Cooper, recess caused great anxiety and stress. A simple exchange like, “I’m playing with Michael today,” left Cooper feeling profoundly hurt and excluded. His feelings got out of control, and highly charged emotional thoughts flooded his body.

“Cooper is very smart, articulate, and athletic, but he found normal social situations overwhelming to the point he didn’t know how to handle his feelings, and he’d act out – screaming, swearing, throwing things, fleeing,” explains Cooper’s mother, Dulce. “He would act out in the classroom and at home. Sometimes he became destructive, but it was always followed by embarrassment and remorse.”

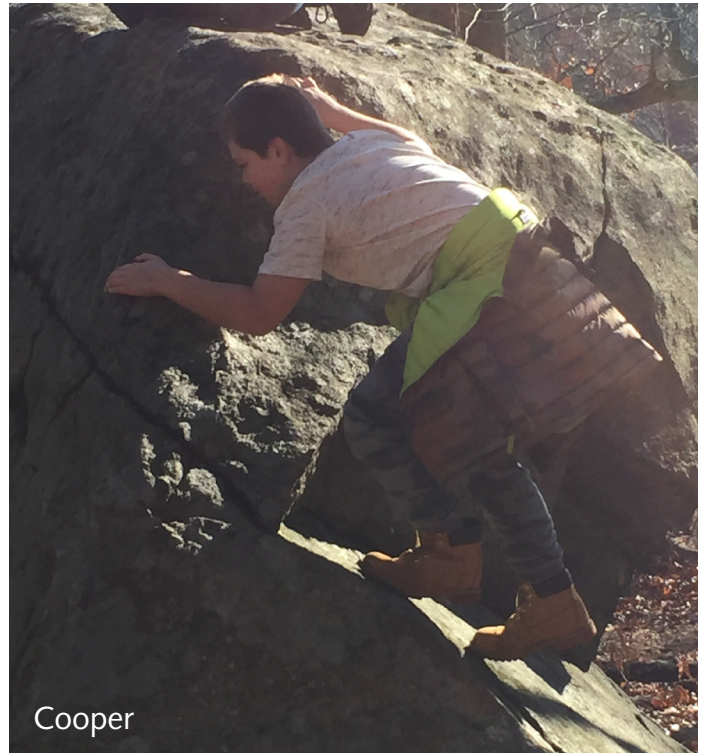
Cooper’s pediatrician referred him to Hasbro Children’s Hospital, and from there, Dulce learned about the Children’s Partial Hospital Program (CPHP) at Bradley Hospital.

CPHP is a specialized program that provides comprehensive evaluation and intensive treatment for children ages 7 through 12 and their families. The primary goal of the program is to help children safely live at home while offering the opportunity to work on emotional, social and behavioral difficulties Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The typical program length is three weeks.

Cooper’s first admission to CPHP came at the end of first grade. In addition to his diagnosis of depression, ADHD and severe anxiety, he learned skills to help deal with his anxiety and challenge his negative thinking. Medication was also introduced to help stabilize his behavior.

Dulce also learned a lot. Caregiver involvement is a primary focus of the program, requiring participation in a weekly group with other parents and twice weekly therapy sessions with the child.

“Bradley and the Children’s Partial Hospital team really helped me understand that Cooper has this lens that he views himself and the world through, and it’s hard for him to have a joyful moment,” explains Dulce. “I learned how to better anticipate things that would make him anxious and not feed his anxiety. My skills as a parent have improved as a result.”



Cooper

Children with undiagnosed autism spectrum disorder and those with post-traumatic stress disorder are also treated in the program.

“Children often come to the Partial Program as a means of preventing an inpatient admission or as a step down before going home full time after an inpatient admission,” explains Anne Walters, PhD, clinical director of the program. “Based on the nature of the challenges these children face, it is not unusual for some of our patients, like Cooper, to go through the program more than once.” Comprising a child psychiatrist, a psychologist, a social worker, a nurse, teachers, art therapists, an occupational therapist, and milieu staff, the team works closely with each child’s primary care physician as well as other providers. The goal is to create a comprehensive treatment plan that enhances the child’s strengths while increasing the family’s ability to effectively manage the child’s mental health needs and the promotion of healthy development.

Now 11 years old with a few admissions to CPHP under his belt, Cooper is gaining the confidence he needs to manage his anxiety and depression. “I truly don’t know where we’d be without Bradley Hospital and the Children’s Partial Hospital Program,” says Dulce.

## Research and Art Therapy Meet

**O**ur staff always strives to heal the hearts and minds of children and adolescents by using innovative ways to provide mental health care and services.

Toward that end, a collaboration between Daniel Dickstein, MD—director of Bradley Hospital’s Pediatric Mood, Imaging, and NeuroDevelopment (PediMIND) program—and Melissa Weaver, MA, LMHC, ATR—Bradley’s senior art therapist—has recently come to fruition.

The PediMIND program conducts cutting-edge brain imaging research to understand what goes on in the minds of children with psychiatric problems—such as bipolar disorder, suicide, and self-cutting—and how to use that information for better care.

Inspired by those brain images, Dr. Dickstein and Weaver collaborated to enable children and adolescents receiving



treatment at Bradley to express what was going on in their brains via an innovative art project.

“Weather of My Mind” consists of over 400 individual eight-by-eight-inch Masonite tiles, hand painted by children who have participated in Bradley Hospital’s inpatient and partial hospitalization programs over the past year and a half.

Each child was able to express his or her inner emotional weather, from happy, joyful, and excited to angry, sad, and bored.

The finished pieces are a testament to the strength and resilience that enables the children to weather their storms. Programs like this also inspire children and families to participate in research studies, helping to ensure breakthroughs in future mental health care and access.



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