

Revolutionary Surgical Technique Close to Home

When Erica and Stew Tibbetts' son Grayson was born in September 2016, they were overjoyed. Their family of five was now complete. But almost immediately, the pediatrician and the Tibbetts saw that Grayson didn't have a soft spot on the top of his head—something all babies should have at birth. Because the skull plates can sometimes shift during childbirth, watchful waiting ensued for the first few weeks. At Grayson's one-month checkup, his pediatrician determined there was still no soft spot and his head was becoming noticeably narrow and long. She suspected the baby had fused skull plates, known as sagittal craniosynostosis. If not corrected before a baby's brain starts to grow larger, the premature closure of skull plates can restrict the growth of the skullcap, putting dangerous pressure on the brain and causing skull deformity. It occurs in 1 out of 2,000 births.

Erica and Stew couldn't bear the thought of the traditional surgery described by Grayson's pediatrician, which included an ear-to-ear incision across the top of his head. The procedure would be followed by a week-long stay in the hospital, significant swelling, and possible blood loss.

"We were very frightened," Erica explains. She scoured the internet to find out all the possible options, and discovered a surgical one using a minimally invasive technique. "I told my husband, 'I don't know where yet, but we're going to have this treated endoscopically,'" she recalls.

The couple didn't have to go far. Their pediatrician made an appointment for Grayson to see the multidisciplinary



Grayson two days after surgery

craniofacial team at Hasbro Children's Hospital, led by plastic surgeon Albert Woo, MD, and neurosurgeon Petra Klinge, MD.

When Erica saw Dr. Woo's name on the referral, she was elated. "I was positive that he was the doctor I'd read about in St. Louis who was doing the procedure endoscopically," she says. In fact, prior to coming to Hasbro Children's Hospital, Dr. Woo performed the minimally invasive surgery more than 100 times.

A CT scan confirmed Grayson's diagnosis. To correct it endoscopically, two 1-inch incisions would be made at





Grayson today

the front and back of his skull and the team of specialists would remove a portion of Grayson’s skull, giving his brain the room it needed to grow. After surgery, he’d wear a helmet 23 hours a day. This was for protection as well as to reshape his head as his skull regenerated.

“When we found out that the minimally invasive procedure could be done right here at Hasbro Children’s Hospital, we were overjoyed,” says Stew. “Having had experiences with our older children there, we knew how great the hospital was.”

“Dr. Klinge was so warm and nurturing; I felt that I was putting Grayson in the gentlest hands,” says Erica. “And Dr. Woo made it all seem so manageable. We had such confidence in him from the moment we met him.”

On January 10, 2017, three-month-old Grayson had his surgery. “We know how terrifying it is for parents when their babies have to have surgery, especially on the skull, but we were able to reassure Erica and Stew that their son would be just fine,” says Dr. Woo. “This rare procedure is just one area of expertise we have here at Hasbro Children’s. Grayson’s surgery went like clockwork. We were finished within an hour.”

“It’s important to be able to tell parents that we can see their baby’s brain and skull relax right away while we’re operating,” says Dr. Klinge.

Ten minutes after Grayson woke up from anesthesia, Erica was able to hold and breastfeed her baby boy again. “He didn’t have head bandages or swollen eyes like with the traditional surgery. It was incredible,” Erica recalled. Grayson went home the very next day.

Physical and occupational therapy helped strengthen Grayson’s neck to support the weight of the helmet, and his head started to round out just a few weeks after the surgery. Erica said his forehead quickly started to recede to a normal shape as well.

As Grayson’s head grew, the inside of the helmet was adjusted. Six months after surgery, he was done with helmet therapy.

“To have Drs. Woo and Klinge here in Rhode Island was amazing. We would have traveled anywhere for what we found just a few miles from home.”

— Stew Tibbetts

“He has a perfectly shaped head now and his brain is fine,” says Erica. “You can barely see the scars just one year post-op.” Grayson, who turned one year old in September, is thriving and has met all his developmental milestones.

“To have Drs. Woo and Klinge here in Rhode Island was amazing,” says Stew. “We would have traveled anywhere for what we found just a few miles from home.”

“There is no way to adequately express our gratitude,” adds Erica.

Realty Firm Scores Hole-in-One for Hospital

For Jamie and Nathan Clark, owners of the real estate company Nathan Clark & Associates, giving back to Hasbro Children’s Hospital isn’t just something they’re passionate about—it’s become an integral part of their daily work.

After developing a referral program in 2012 in which they donate \$250 to Hasbro Children’s from the sale of homes referred to them by existing clients, the couple deepened their commitment by organizing a 2016 golf tournament that raised \$10,000. In 2017, the tournament, held at Triggs Memorial in Providence, was an even greater success, generating \$15,000.

“We really believe in giving back to the community, and children are a huge focus of that giving,” says Nathan.

While Jamie and Nathan have not needed the hospital for their four-year-old son Benjamin, the two have vivid memories of the exceptional care they received as children.

Nathan recalls the “extras,” such as activities in our playrooms that brought comfort when he was admitted overnight for severe asthma attacks. And Jamie, who had four congenital holes in her heart repaired in Boston at the age of 5, relied on our hospital for annual monitoring until she was 12. She also participated in a Hasbro Children’s Hospital cardiac research study.

“We are so fortunate to have a children’s hospital of this magnitude right in our backyard,” says Jamie.

“Our associates—all 26 of them—get really excited about supporting the hospital,” adds Nathan. “It’s a cause everyone wants to get behind.”

“We’ll always support Hasbro Children’s and would love to do more—why limit ourselves to just a golf tournament,” finishes Jamie.



Nathan Clark & Associates present 2017 check



Dear Hasbro Children's Hospital,
This summer my sisters and I wanted to do a lemonade stand. We decided to donate the money we made to the hospital. We made \$35 and my Mom and Dad put some money in too. We are donating \$100 altogether. Thank you for helping our community.
Sincerely,
Madelyn, Alexis, and Mackenzie
Blackstone, Massachusetts

Native Rhode Islanders, Alexis (7), Madelyn (7), and Mackenzie (5) knew they wanted to give back and help kids. Having all been recipients of Hasbro Children’s Hospital’s compassionate care at some point in their lives, the girls thought helping the kids at the hospital was a perfect match for the proceeds of their lemonade stand.

“Brave Gowns” Bring Joy to Hospitalized Children

Hasbro Children’s Hospital was bustling with superheroes on November 20, when our friends from Dunkin’ Donuts and their Joy in Childhood Foundation made a special visit to bring joy to hospitalized kids.

Joined by Governor Gina M. Raimondo and hospital leadership, Dunkin’ Donuts and its charitable foundation presented Starlight Brave Gowns to patients, putting smiles on the faces of young children and their families. By replacing traditional hospital garments with comfortable, brightly colored gowns, pediatric patients are transformed into astronauts, princesses, cowboys, and other characters. The end result is a little fun and laughter during an otherwise difficult time.

In addition to receiving Brave Gowns, patients were treated to a special doughnut-decorating activity by Rick Golden, Manager of Donut Excellence on the Dunkin’ Donuts national culinary team. Patients had a great time personalizing their own doughnuts with a variety of colorful toppings and Dunkin’ signature frostings in the Dunkin’ Donuts Family Room on the hospital’s sixth floor.

Dunkin’ Donuts and its local franchisees are long-time supporters of Hasbro Children’s Hospital. From Iced



Patient Paige Allston, 4, with Governor Raimondo

Coffee Day to the hospital’s annual Radiothon and many initiatives in between, their unwavering generosity to the area’s leading pediatric hospital totals nearly \$2 million dollars. This year, the Joy in Childhood Foundation will deliver 10,000 Brave Gowns to children’s hospitals nationwide.

Upcoming Events



March 3, 2018



April 5, 2018



July 23, 2018

Learn more about these and other events at giving.lifespan.org/HasbroChildrens.



Hasbro Children’s Hospital
The Pediatric Division of Rhode Island Hospital
Lifespan. Delivering health with care.®

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giving.lifespan.org/HasbroChildrens

