

# SECURING THE PROMISE

FALL 2025

**The  
Beat of  
Our  
Hearts**

Le Bonheur  
Children's Hospital

*Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., treats more than 500,000 children each year through community programs, regional clinics and 311 beds that feature state-of-the-art technology and family-friendly resources. Our medical staff of more than 240 physicians provide care in 45 subspecialties.*

## LE BONHEUR LEADERSHIP

James "Trey" Eubanks III, MD, FACS – *President*

Jason S. Frischer, MD – *Surgeon-in-Chief*

Harris Cohen, MD – *Radiologist-in-Chief*

Rush Waller, MD – *Chief Medical Officer*

Hella Ewing, RN, MSM – *Chief Nursing Officer*

Kevin Todd, MBA – *Chief Financial Officer*

Brandon Edgerson, MS, PharmD – *Chief Operating Officer*

Maureen O'Connor, MBA – *Vice President, Institutional Advancement*

Erin Pattee, RN, MHA – *Vice President, Regional Services and Planning*

Jonah Pullium, MHA – *Vice President, Executive Director of UT Le Bonheur Pediatric Specialists*

Jennilyn Utkov, BSN, MBA – *Vice President, Community Outreach*

Venessa Spearman, MPA – *Senior Director, Children's Foundation Research Institute*

ReNita Carr – *Director, Human Resources*

## DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS

Lisa Ellis, Michelle Rogers,  
Lindsey Sater, Cathy Wilson

*Securing the Promise* is a publication of Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, produced by Le Bonheur Institutional Advancement. If you have any questions or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please contact us at 901-287-6308 or [info@lebonheur.org](mailto:info@lebonheur.org).

**Senior Director, Marketing, Communications and Development**  
Nellann Mettee

**Editor**  
Sarah Newman

**Contributors**  
Katherine Baker, Emily Joyner, Haley Overcast

**Photography**  
Lisa Buser, Brandon Dill

**Design**  
Rachel Gabrielleschi

## In this issue:



### 2 THROUGH BOTH LENSES

*As clinicians and moms, two therapists see Le Bonheur from both sides*



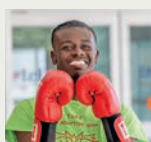
### 8 THE BEAT OF OUR HEARTS

*New Heart Institute leadership assumes helm at Le Bonheur*



### 12 COMING HOME TO HEAL

*Former patients find their calling as Le Bonheur caregivers*



### 15 THE BEST PLACE FOR KIDS, ESPECIALLY THEIR OWN

*Le Bonheur Associates entrust their children to hospital for care*



### 20 A HEART FOR SERVICE

*Three volunteer coordinators inspire family members to give back*



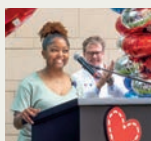
### 24 COMPASSION: GIFTED AND RECEIVED

*Children of Le Bonheur physicians experience expert care*



### 28 ALL IN THE FAMILY

*Three generations call Le Bonheur home*



### 30 COMING HOME

*An Associate's journey from patient to family advocate*

## Support Le Bonheur

For more information about ways to support Le Bonheur Children's by volunteering, attending events, developing partnerships and giving financially, please visit [www.lebonheur.org/ways-to-help](http://www.lebonheur.org/ways-to-help) or call 901-287-6308.

[www.lebonheur.org/secure](http://www.lebonheur.org/secure)



@lebonheurchild



/lebonheurchildrens



/lebonheurchildrens



/lebonheurchildrens



/lebonheur\_child



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear friends,

Our physicians and staff Associates join the Le Bonheur Children's Hospital family for a myriad of reasons. Some feel called to care for kids, others are inspired by their own children who are patients, and in some instances, they are former patients themselves.

Regardless of their "why," none of what we do for kids would be possible without our Associates and physicians — they are the beat of the red heart on top of our building.

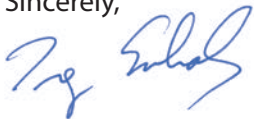
In this issue, you will read about Associates and physicians with a dual perspective as providers caring for patients and families, and as parents navigating their own children's care. You will also read about former patients now serving as Le Bonheur caregivers, connecting with patients through a shared understanding of spending time in the hospital.

I hope you are as inspired as I am by the stories in this issue. While our reasons for working here vary, a deep and abiding love for, and commitment to, Le Bonheur runs through the heart of our hospital and every person who calls this place home.

As a father and grandfather, I have experienced firsthand the world-class care provided at Le Bonheur, and I am honored to work alongside this devoted team of health care professionals.

Because of your support, children will receive the expert care they need to thrive for generations to come. Thank you for helping us be the best place for kids, always.

Sincerely,



Trey Eubanks, MD, FACS

President

Le Bonheur Children's Hospital



# Through Both Lenses

*As clinicians and moms, two therapists see Le Bonheur from both sides*



Rachel Greer

NaTasha Davis

**For most people entering the halls of Le Bonheur Children's, the hospital is a place to either give or receive care — but for Rachel Greer and NaTasha Davis, Le Bonheur is both.**

As therapists on the hospital's Rehabilitation Services team and mothers to daughters with special needs, Rachel and NaTasha understand Le Bonheur from two angles: as providers caring for patients and families, and as parents navigating their own children's care. That dual perspective

has imbued both women with a renewed appreciation for the breadth of services Le Bonheur provides — as well as a deepened capacity to connect with the kids and families who come to Le Bonheur in search of healing and hope.

## **Rachel and Marley: Bridging the Gap**

When Rachel Greer, OTR/L, began working as an occupational therapist at Le Bonheur in 2012, she thought she understood what it meant to walk alongside families as they navigated life with a medically complex child.



What she didn't know then was how personal that journey would become.

Three years into her career, Rachel and her husband, Josh, welcomed their first child, Marley. The pregnancy was uneventful, but at birth, the Greers were surprised by Marley's diagnosis of Down syndrome.

"I needed time to process and adapt to the news," Rachel remembers. "I credit Le Bonheur's early intervention team with helping me through Marley's first year of life. The inclusion support and early intervention teams were the



*Marley Greer, age 2*

net that caught me when I was free falling. They gave me hope. They became our family."

That early safety net set the tone for Marley's childhood. From birth to age 3, she worked with therapists in speech, occupational and physical therapy through Le Bonheur's inclusion support program and early intervention services. Rachel describes that support as pivotal not just for Marley, but for her as a new mom.

"The inclusion support team even helped bridge the gap so I could return to work while Marley went to daycare," Rachel says. "They met with directors and teachers, created goals and came onsite to



*Marley Greer, age 10, has received specialized support and therapeutic services from Le Bonheur since birth. Today, Marley is an outgoing third-grader who participates in dance, gymnastics, Girl Scouts and special needs T-ball.*

guide staff. It was a huge resource that many people don't even know exists."

Today, Marley is 10 years old and thriving. An outgoing third-grader, she spends part of her day in a general classroom and part in specialized instruction. Marley also keeps a social calendar as full as any child her age — from Girl Scouts and dance to gymnastics and special needs T-ball.

"Marley has been treated like a typical kid from the beginning, and that's because of Le Bonheur," Rachel said. "Because of that, Marley sees herself as a typical kid. She does all the things her peers do."

Her care team at Le Bonheur helps make that possible. Marley sees specialists in endocrinology, cardiology, ENT and ophthalmology annually, in addition to the therapeutic interventions she received as a young child. Along the way, Rachel says her daughter's providers have always gone out of their way to connect directly with Marley, making sure she is included in her own care.



*Rachel Greer credits her experiences as Marley's mom, coupled with the constant support her family has received from Le Bonheur, with deepening her empathy as a therapist.*

***"The inclusion support and early intervention teams were the net that caught me when I was free falling. They gave me hope. They became our family."***

Rachel Greer, OTR/L,  
Le Bonheur occupational therapist

"We have this great hospital, but it's the people inside the hospital who make it great," she says.

Her experiences with patient- and family-centered care have shaped Rachel as a therapist. Now part of the occupational therapy team at Le Bonheur Outpatient Center East, she works with children from infancy to young adulthood, helping them build skills for feeding, fine motor tasks, gross motor skills and greater independence.

Sometimes she meets families for just a few months; other times she works with them for years. In every case, Rachel brings a unique empathy to the role.

"I joke sometimes that I'm living a double life," she says with a smile. "I can see through both lenses now. I know what it's like to be a

provider, but also what it's like to be a parent in this hospital. Families feel comforted when I share my story. I think it helps to know I truly understand the extra stressors that come when you have a child with special needs."

That perspective also allows her to point families to community resources they might otherwise be unaware of, such as adaptive sports, inclusive programs and supportive networks across Memphis. Rachel knows how vital those connections are for caregivers — places they can go to feel supported so they, in turn, can better support their children.

Rachel views Le Bonheur as one such place, and credits



her colleagues throughout the hospital community for standing by her side, both personally and professionally.

“I love the people at Le Bonheur,” she says. “The team I work with has been there for me through all the seasons of life — through Marley’s birth and the challenges that have come with that. I couldn’t do this without them.”

## NaTasha and Phoenix: Celebrating Every Win

For Speech Language Pathologist NaTasha Davis, MS, MCD, CCC-SLP, that same dual perspective comes alive in her daughter’s story — and every time she walks into a patient’s room at Le Bonheur. Beyond her role as a therapist, NaTasha carries the lived experience of a mother whose child has spent long days in hospital rooms, undergone multiple open-heart surgeries and defied the odds with every milestone.

NaTasha’s daughter, Phoenix, is 4 years old. Phoenix is outgoing, curious and quick to charm her care team, but her journey to this point has been anything but smooth. Born with Down syndrome and a complex congenital heart defect, Phoenix faced serious challenges immediately after she was born.



At 3 months old, Phoenix Davis had open-heart surgery to repair multiple congenital heart defects, followed by a multi-week inpatient stay at Le Bonheur.

NaTasha remembers the moment the gravity of her daughter’s condition came into focus during a conversation

with Phoenix’s cardiologist at Le Bonheur. “Dr. Joshi sat with me and drew a picture of a typical heart, then drew what Phoenix was missing. He explained every step, and he made sure I felt heard,” she recalls. “That compassion mattered as much as the information.”

At 3 months old, Phoenix underwent her first open-heart surgery to repair an AV canal defect and Tetralogy of Fallot — a combination of four congenital heart defects affecting the flow of blood

*“Phoenix amplified my voice and made me more compassionate. She gave me the ability to connect with families in a way I couldn’t have before.”*

NaTasha Davis, MS, MCD, CCC-SLP,  
Le Bonheur speech language pathologist



In 2024, Phoenix Davis underwent her second heart surgery at Le Bonheur. Above, she and her mom, NaTasha, explore the hospital’s new CVICU courtyard during Phoenix’s post-operative recovery stay.



*NaTasha Davis' own experiences as a Le Bonheur mom inspire her to help parents celebrate each new skill and every small step forward as a meaningful victory for their children.*

between her heart and lungs. Phoenix stayed in Le Bonheur's Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU) and then the pulmonary floor for nearly two weeks. "The staff included me in rounds, answered my questions and treated me like a partner in my daughter's care," NaTasha says. "That made a huge difference."

Phoenix's resilience carried her through a difficult recovery, but her story didn't end there. During the summer

of 2024, she underwent a second surgery to address severe subaortic stenosis. This time, the Davis family experienced the hospital's newly renovated CVICU.

"The new rooms and waiting areas were beautiful, and it was nice having a courtyard where we could step outside and get fresh air," NaTasha says. "It may sound small, but when you're living in the hospital with your child, those things matter."

Today, Phoenix returns to Le Bonheur for regular follow-ups with cardiology, ENT, ophthalmology and endocrinology. She is thriving in therapies, growing into her own independent personality, and, according to her mother, "loves coming to Le Bonheur."

For NaTasha, her experiences as a Le Bonheur mom have permanently shaped the way she practices. Every swallow exercise, every session helping a child find their words, is infused with a perspective that blends professional skill with lived empathy.

"Having a patient here has made me more compassionate and in tune with what families need," she explains. "I know how overwhelming it can feel. That's why I tell parents: celebrate every victory. Every new skill, every tiny step forward — it all matters."

That encouragement has become one of NaTasha's hallmarks as a therapist. Parents feel comforted when she shares her own journey, knowing she has stood where they are standing. "Phoenix amplified my voice and made me



more compassionate,” NaTasha says. “She gave me the ability to connect with families in a way I couldn’t have before.”

Through Phoenix’s story, NaTasha has discovered that care is never just procedures or therapies. It’s the people who walk alongside you — the doctors who take time to draw a picture, the nurses who invite you into rounds and the therapists who celebrate small wins.

Beyond her clinical work and Phoenix’s care, NaTasha is using her voice as a strong advocate for children with Down

***“Having a patient here has made me more compassionate and in tune with what families need. I know how overwhelming it can feel. That’s why I tell parents: celebrate every victory. Every new skill, every tiny step forward — it all matters.”***

NaTasha Davis, MS, MCD, CCC-SLP,  
Le Bonheur speech language pathologist

first place — and why she continues to bring her whole heart to it.

“Every family deserves to feel heard and supported,” she says. “That’s what Le Bonheur gave me, and it’s what I want to give to others.”

syndrome. She participates in boards and community groups, lending her perspective to amplify the needs of families across the region.

Still, the path always leads back to Phoenix. Her daughter’s courage and joy are daily reminders of why NaTasha chose this work in the

## A Chance for Connection

For Rachel and NaTasha, Le Bonheur has become more than a workplace; it’s a safe haven where their professional and personal lives intersect in the most profound ways. As therapists who’ve seen the relief in a fellow parent’s eyes, celebrated a child’s first word, and navigated quiet moments of uncertainty alongside families who are learning to hope again, their own daughters’ journeys have given them a lens of empathy few can claim.

And in every therapy session, every conversation with a child or parent, and every milestone reached, their maternal perspective shines through: a reminder that care is not just a clinical service, but a chance for connection — and sometimes, the truest connection comes from walking in both shoes at once. ❤️



Phoenix Davis, age 4, underwent multiple heart surgeries at Le Bonheur in her first years of life. For mom NaTasha, the staff’s efforts to include her in rounds and treat her like a partner in Phoenix’s care made a huge difference in their care experience.







# THE BEAT OF OUR HEARTS

## *New Heart Institute leadership assumes helm at Le Bonheur*

**A**fter years of caring for kids as the executive co-directors of Le Bonheur's Heart Institute, Jeffrey A. Towbin, MD, and Christopher Knott-Craig, MD, have retired from their leadership positions. During their tenure, Le Bonheur's Heart Institute grew in national reputation and was recognized multiple times as a top cardiac program by *U.S. News & World Report*. Thanks to the dedication and expertise of Dr. Towbin and Dr. Knott-Craig, countless kids' lives were saved and changed for the better.

### **A Visionary with Heart**

Le Bonheur need not look far for one of its new leaders. Jason Johnson, MD, MHS, was named Le Bonheur's chief of Pediatric Cardiology and executive co-director of the Heart Institute — an appointment that feels less like a new beginning and more like the next natural step in a journey more than a decade in the making.

Johnson joined the Le Bonheur Heart Institute in 2013 following residency and fellowship training at Duke University, bringing with him a clinical passion for advanced cardiovascular imaging and a sense of purpose grounded in his personal experience. While he initially studied animal sciences in school, cardiology beckoned.

"My brother was born with severe congenital heart defects and only lived 11 months. I was 5 years old when he died," shared Johnson. "I think that experience is why I was drawn to this field; it felt like part of who I was."

When Johnson joined Le Bonheur, he was the 13th cardiologist on staff. Johnson saw the tremendous opportunity for growth and specialty expertise and the chance to help shape something with enormous potential, right from the ground floor.

Today, there are 34 cardiologists on staff in a recently expanded facility with more beds and advanced technology, including a state-of-the-art hybrid cardiac catheterization and MRI suite, one of just eight in the country and the first of its kind in Tennessee. The cutting-edge facility allows clinicians to perform MRI-guided heart catheterizations while avoiding the harmful effects of radiation for patients.

"The hybrid lab is a game-changing advancement in pediatric care," said Johnson. "Our partnership and collaboration with national leaders in technology is leading to new diagnostic and interventional procedures for children living with heart disease."

The result of an eight-year vision and four years of active work, the MRI-guided cardiac cath lab could easily be viewed as the primary feather in Johnson's professional cap. Asked about his greatest career achievement, however, Johnson stated without hesitation that his proudest accomplishment is "the connections I've built with my families."

*"New technologies are incredible, and it's inspiring to see the progress in our field over the last few decades. But the core of our work will always be those relationships with families — helping them feel seen, heard and cared for. That's what keeps me coming back. You're at Le Bonheur long enough and you build meaningful relationships — and that's why we're here, is to take care of our patients."*

Jason Johnson, MD, MHS, chief of Cardiology and executive co-director of the Heart Institute

*Jason Johnson, MD, MHS, was named Le Bonheur's chief of Pediatric Cardiology and executive co-director of the Heart Institute earlier this year.*

"New technologies are incredible, and it's inspiring to see the progress in our field over the last few decades," he said. "But the core of our work will always be those relationships with families — helping them feel seen, heard and cared for. That's what keeps me coming back. You're at Le Bonheur long enough and you build meaningful relationships — and that's why we're here, is to take care of our patients."

## Pursuit of Perfection

While Johnson leads the way in cardiology, Bret Mettler, MD, serves as the chief of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and executive co-director of Le Bonheur's Heart Institute. Mettler's future vision is to build on the Heart Institute's current successes and expertise to advance patient care at Le Bonheur and the entire field of cardiac surgery for the sake of kids.

"I have an internal desire to always be

*"Le Bonheur has a great regional reputation with excellent patient care, strong culture and a sense of collaboration. The resources that have already been put into the Heart Institute with the recent state-of-the-art expansion means the structural pieces are in place to allow us to grow the inpatient programs."*

Bret Mettler, MD, chief of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and executive co-director of the Heart Institute

tested, to always do the best at everything, even at what seems like it's the hardest," said Mettler.

It's this mindset that led him directly into medicine and drove him to push the boundaries of his field. The first in his family to go to college, Mettler wanted to emulate a family friend who was a family practice physician.

"Medicine and pediatric hearts were a natural fit for me," said Mettler. "In pediatrics,

every patient is different, and you can make a difference in a whole family's life and a child's entire lifespan."

Mettler says he was drawn to work at Le Bonheur because it is a freestanding children's hospital that has proven successes, expertise and resources that could take the field of pediatric cardiac surgery to the next level.

"Le Bonheur has a great regional reputation with excellent patient care, strong culture and a sense of collaboration," said Mettler. "The resources that have already been put into the Heart Institute with the recent state-of-the-art expansion means the structural pieces are in place to allow us to grow the inpatient programs."

Mettler's vision for pediatric cardiac surgery at Le Bonheur centers around two goals — advancing patient care to prolong and improve the lives of people with congenital heart disease, and creating a

Bret Mettler, MD, serves as the chief of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery and executive co-director of the Heart Institute.





center for biomedical innovation.

In order to build on Le Bonheur's excellence and take patient care to the next level, Mettler aims to develop various destination centers for specific congenital heart diseases and conditions where he sees opportunity to fill needs in the region surrounding Le Bonheur.

## Innovative Discoveries

Mettler also wants to move his field forward so that children are better cared for even when they aren't in the hospital or at a clinic appointment. Memphis is one of the best places in the country for medical device innovation, according to Mettler, and his vision for a center for biomedical innovation includes developing cardiac monitoring devices to improve the life and care of kids when they are at home.

Mettler will pursue this vision alongside pediatric cardiac surgeon Danielle Gottlieb Sen, MD, MPH, MS, who joined the Heart Institute earlier this year. Gottlieb Sen has long been committed to helping mitigate health disparities in underserved communities and ensure every child has access to the care they need.

Her world-class research has led her to pioneer a groundbreaking device called "Little Lifeline" — a wearable device for single ventricle heart patients. The device attaches to a patient's diaper to monitor vital signs and identify life-threatening events from the comfort of a patient's home.

"Currently single ventricle patients typically undergo three surgeries in five years. Between surgeries, in the interstage monitoring phase, patients without access to consistent care at home must stay in the hospital for monitoring," said Gottlieb Sen. "With 'Little Lifeline,' these patients could be discharged home for real-time monitoring until it is time for their next surgery."

Patients and families could spend less time in the hospital while still being closely followed by Le Bonheur cardiac experts.

"These monitoring devices for children would be able to take accurate level vital



*Pediatric cardiac surgeon Danielle Gottlieb Sen, MD, MPH, MS, joined Le Bonheur's Heart Institute earlier this year.*

signs and have an early warning system while at home," said Mettler. "It's another way to improve the life and care of kids — preventing missed cardiac events, morbidity or mortality."


"Little Lifeline" would have a tangible impact on patients like 2-year-old Lawson Nichols, who was diagnosed with four congenital heart defects, including hypoplastic left heart syndrome.

After Lawson's first surgery, the Nichols family drove two hours from their Mississippi home to Le Bonheur every other week so Lawson could be monitored at the high-risk cardiac clinic and undergo an

echocardiogram. In between appointments, Lawson's parents, Emily and Martin Nichols, checked in daily with Lawson's care team via an app to submit his oxygen levels, which they monitored at home with a pulse oximeter, and his weight. Lawson's care team monitored this data closely to help determine when his next cardiac surgery was needed.

"Having constant at-home monitoring would have made a huge difference for our family. When we were between surgeries, we monitored Lawson's weight and oxygen twice a day and then uploaded the data to an app for review by his care team," Emily said. "A device that provides constant monitoring for heart patients would save lives because when you are sent home, it can be scary, and this would provide comfort and peace of mind to families like ours. It would also help decrease the number of trips to the hospital."

"Little Lifeline" is the first of hopefully many devices that surgeon innovator Gottlieb Sen plans to pioneer for pediatric cardiac patients.

"I want to make an impact beyond helping just one child at a time, and creating new wearable devices for heart patients will make a big difference for kids," Gottlieb Sen said. 



*Emily and Martin Nichols brought their son, Lawson, for care at Le Bonheur's Heart Institute. Lawson underwent surgeries and treatment for his four congenital heart defects.*

# Coming Home to Heal

*Former patients find their calling as Le Bonheur caregivers*

When Matthew Darling, CCRN, steps onto the sixth floor of Le Bonheur Children's Hospital, there's a feeling he can't quite shake — like muscle memory from another lifetime.

Two decades ago, Matthew was a chronically ill child facing frequent appointments and lengthy hospital stays. Now, more than 25 years after receiving a kidney from his father in a Le Bonheur operating room, he's a nurse in the hospital's Intermediate Care Unit (IMCU), caring for children who are facing the same fears he once knew.

## **MATTHEW'S STORY: THE PLACE I GREW UP**

Matthew's Le Bonheur journey began in 1997, when, at just 3 years old, he was diagnosed with end-stage renal disease. A routine check-up led to a series of urgent tests that revealed his kidney function

had plummeted to just one percent.

Matthew would need a transplant.

"I went from being a normal kid to being on dialysis within days," Matthew said.

"Le Bonheur became the place I grew up."

The following March, Matthew received a life-saving kidney transplant from his father — one of many

surgeries that marked his childhood. In 2007, he returned for another major operation, this time to remove two lobes of his lung. Through every hospitalization, Le Bonheur's



*Matthew Darling was diagnosed with end-stage renal failure at 3 years old, resulting in a life-saving kidney transplant and numerous subsequent surgeries at Le Bonheur Children's.*



*As a child, Matthew Darling spent countless hours as a patient at Le Bonheur Children's. Today, he serves as a nurse on the hospital's Intermediate Care Unit, drawing on his own experiences to better connect with, and care for, kids and families with chronic conditions.*

team became a second family to the Darlings.

"They weren't just caring for me; they cared for my parents, too," Matthew said. "They showed up for my life outside the hospital, even coming to Mississippi to see me in school plays. That kind of care stays with you."

His early experiences at Le Bonheur shaped the man Matthew would become. After initially working as a middle school teacher, he felt a persistent pull toward nursing. Matthew enrolled at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, completing his clinicals at Le Bonheur. "It



felt like coming home,” he said.

Today, Matthew works night shifts in Le Bonheur’s IMCU, where his personal experience fosters a rare kind of empathy.

“Sometimes it’s hard to understand the emotions that come with a transplant, but I’ve been there,” Matthew said. “Families are often surprised to hear my story, and it helps them know I’m on their side.”

That empathy has become one of his greatest tools as a caregiver.

“The most important part of being a nurse is being a patient advocate,” Matthew said. “If families can relate to me as a person, it allows for better care and understanding. They know I’m here 100 percent for their child.”

A lifelong learner, Matthew is eager to deepen his clinical skillset. He’s Pediatric Intensive Care Unit-trained and working toward critical care certification, with a long-term goal of becoming a transplant coordinator — a role inspired by one of his earliest champions, retired Le Bonheur Transplant Coordinator Sandy Childress.

Childress, who served at Le Bonheur for 41 years, cared for Matthew as a child and still keeps in touch with him and his family. “I was so happy when Matthew was hired at Le Bonheur because I knew this was the reason he became a nurse,” she said. “Matthew has lived the life of a transplant patient, and can relate to kids and families in a way few people can.”

Even as he continues to see his nephrologist for routine checkups three times a year, Matthew approaches each day with a sense of gratitude and purpose. He volunteers at summer camps for children with kidney disease, shares his story at fundraising events and offers encouragement to young patients facing long hospital stays.

“There’s a lot of beauty in being a person with a transplant,” Matthew said. “One of the most selfless loves a person can receive is an organ donation. It changes how

you see the world — in new colors you might not have seen otherwise.”

## DIXIE’S STORY: FULL CIRCLE IN THE OR

Like Matthew, Dixie Volner knows what it means to walk through Le Bonheur’s doors as a child in pain and come back years later as a caregiver.

During fall break of 2007, 13-year-old Dixie woke up with severe abdominal pain. Doctors at urgent care ran tests but couldn’t determine the cause. Symptoms were chalked up to Dixie’s weight, and physicians urged diet and exercise. Still, her pain and distended stomach persisted.



*Dixie Volner works as a surgical technologist at Le Bonheur, where she was a surgical patient as a child.*

Finally, a trip to Le Bonheur’s Emergency Department provided answers: a massive choledochal cyst.

Within days, she was in surgery. Pediatric surgeon (and now Le Bonheur President) Trey Eubanks, MD, FACS, spent eight hours removing the cyst, which weighed 8.5 pounds — nearly the size of a basketball.

“The next day, it was like I deflated,” Dixie said. “I woke up with no pain, and I’d lost 20 pounds overnight. I felt like myself again.”

The two-week hospital stay that followed planted a seed: Dixie knew one day, she wanted to be part of a surgical team helping kids like her.

“Everyone took such great care of me,” she said. “They didn’t just make me better — they made me feel safe.”

Dixie enrolled in surgical technology school and set her sights on the single goal of working at Le Bonheur. In

***“The most important part of being a nurse is being a patient advocate. If families can relate to me as a person, it allows for better care and understanding. They know I’m here 100 percent for their child.”***

**Matthew Darling, CCRN, Le Bonheur IMCU nurse**



At age 13, Dixie Volner, right, underwent a lifechanging surgery at Le Bonheur performed by the hospital's President Trey Eubanks, MD, FACS. Today, Volner holds her dream job as a surgical technologist in Le Bonheur's OR, providing comfort and care to children in need of surgical intervention.

January 2024, that dream became a reality when she joined the hospital as a surgical technologist.

Her first day was overwhelming. "It's a big place," she said. "I kept getting lost and wondered how I'd ever find my way around." But on her first day in the operating room, something extraordinary happened: she was assigned to work alongside Dr. Eubanks, who still practices clinically — the same surgeon who had successfully operated on her years earlier.

"It felt like God was telling me I was in the right place," Dixie said.

Now, Dixie spends her days where she feels most at home: behind the surgical table, anticipating needs before they arise and ensuring every procedure runs smoothly.

"I like to be behind the scenes, but I know I'm

making an impact," Dixie said. "To be part of a patient's story is very rewarding. I know what it's like to be that patient."

Her favorite moments are when she gets to comfort nervous children before surgery — explaining what to expect, assuring them they are safe and

offering the same sense of security she once needed herself.

"It's tougher to work on children, but it's also more rewarding," she said. "I think about how the work we do changes

their futures and it's incredible to be part of that."

For Dixie, every day at Le Bonheur feels like coming full circle: a chance to give back to the hospital that gave her a new lease on life.

"Anything that's needed of me is what I want to do," she said. "Helping kids is why I'm here." ❤️

***"It's tougher to work on children, but it's also more rewarding. I think about how the work we do changes their futures and it's incredible to be part of that."***

**Dixie Volner, Le Bonheur surgical technologist**



# The Best Place for Kids, Especially Their Own

## *Le Bonheur Associates entrust their children to hospital for care*

Each year, more than 500,000 children come to Le Bonheur for care. Included in those numbers are hundreds of kids whose parents work at Le Bonheur. These Associates know firsthand that Le Bonheur is the best place for kids and entrust their children's lives and health to their Le Bonheur colleagues.

### Helping Kids Like His Son

Terrence Hamilton, Jr. was diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC), a genetic disorder that causes noncancerous tumors to grow in organs throughout the body, at 3 days old. He had more tumors on his brain than the doctors at a local hospital near his Louisiana home could count, three inoperable tumors in his heart and polycystic kidney disease causing multiple tumors on both kidneys.

Terrence Jr. was also diagnosed with a complex form of epilepsy. During his first few years of life, his seizures grew worse, to the point where he had 20-30 seizures per day.



*Terrence Hamilton, Jr. was diagnosed with tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC), a genetic disorder that causes noncancerous tumors to grow in organs throughout the body, at 3 days old. He also has complex epilepsy that requires treatment and monitoring at Le Bonheur Children's Neuroscience Institute.*



*Terrence Hamilton, Sr. moved his family from Louisiana to Memphis, Tenn., so his son, Terrence Jr., could receive expert care at Le Bonheur. Terrence Sr. was inspired by the care his son had received and became a senior radiology tech at Le Bonheur.*

Through a fundraiser for TSC, the Hamilton family found Le Bonheur and its Tuberous Sclerosis Center of Excellence. As a specialist in medical imaging, Terrence Hamilton, Sr. witnessed firsthand the expert care his son was receiving at Le Bonheur.

The Hamiltons traveled back and forth to Memphis several times a month from their Louisiana home until Terrence Jr.'s seizures worsened. In 2018, the Hamilton family dropped everything and moved their lives to Memphis so Terrence Jr. could be closer to the expert care he needed at Le Bonheur. Terrence Sr. was inspired by the care his son had received and became a senior radiology tech at Le Bonheur.

Terrence Sr. is greatly involved in assisting his son and other children when facing anxiety related to imaging procedures.

"I got into radiology so I could be closely aware



*Eighteen-year-old Terrence Hamilton, Jr. underwent laser ablation surgery earlier this year to remove a tumor in his brain causing severe seizures. Wearing his boxing shorts and boxing gloves, Terrence entered the operating room with "Eye of the Tiger" playing, ready to knock out surgery.*

of my son's health while helping other kids just like him," said Terrence Sr. "Because of the experience I have had with my son, the children that come to the hospital are all like my children. Le Bonheur is a special place and working here does not feel like a job but a calling."

Eighteen-year-old Terrence Jr. loves all things boxing and reenacts the Rocky movies every day. He embodied Rocky's fighting spirit earlier this year when he underwent laser ablation surgery to remove a tumor in his brain that was causing severe seizures. Wearing his boxing shorts and boxing gloves, Terrence Jr. entered the operating room with "Eye of the Tiger" playing, ready to knock out surgery.

Thanks to the option for laser ablation to remove the tumor, Terrence's recovery process was much shorter and smoother than an open brain surgery,

and he was able to return home the day after the operation.

"I tell anybody, coming to Le Bonheur was the best decision we ever made. To see him thrive even with all he's dealing with has been a huge blessing," said Latrice Hamilton, Terrence Jr.'s mom.

The family now waits, filled with hope that the surgery provided Terrence Jr. with some relief from seizures. In a few months, if the results are positive, Terrence Jr. would return to the operating room to remove additional tumors, also via laser ablation.

Now, Terrence Jr. is getting back in the ring — literally and figuratively. He recently held a boxing event to raise money for a seizure alert dog, of course, named Rocky. The Hamilton family also volunteers their time to help others with TSC, epilepsy and autism.

## Caring for Kids with Compassion

In 2007, Nicole Wright and her husband, Kirk, were overjoyed to welcome their daughter, Hallie. Excitement soon turned to fear when Hallie was diagnosed with a life-threatening condition as her esophagus was not properly connected to her stomach. When Hallie was 4 days old, Trey Eubanks, MD, FACS, who currently serves as Le Bonheur's president, performed life-saving surgery.

The surgery was a success and Hallie spent time recovering in Le Bonheur's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). During Hallie's NICU



*When Hallie Wright was 4 days old, Trey Eubanks, MD, FACS, who currently serves as Le Bonheur's President, performed life-saving surgery.*



stay, Nicole was inspired and shared with Kirk her desire to become a nurse so she could help patients and families like theirs.

Nicole enrolled in nursing school and in 2011, fulfilled her dream of becoming a nurse at Le Bonheur. That same year, Hallie swallowed a dime and underwent surgery at Le Bonheur to have it removed from her esophagus.

Yet an X-Ray showed something more concerning than a dime: Hallie had a curved spine and was diagnosed with scoliosis. Hallie was monitored for the condition and in 2019, Derek Kelly, MD, performed a successful spinal fusion surgery that led to an admission at Le Bonheur. Once again, Hallie received expert care and Nicole knew her daughter was in the best hands.



*Nicole Wright was inspired to go to nursing school following her daughter Hallie's stay in Le Bonheur's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Today, Nicole serves as the clinic manager of Le Bonheur's Urology Clinic.*

"Having a child as a patient has made me a more compassionate nurse," Nicole said. "I believe that my experience as a parent taught me to not only communicate with words but with presence and reassurance during a difficult time in the patient and family's lives. When you are caring for a child, you're

not only caring for them but for the entire family."

Today, Nicole serves as the manager of Le Bonheur's Urology Clinic. During her 14 years at Le Bonheur, Nicole has achieved many milestones along the way, including receiving a Daisy Award as the result of a nomination from a patient family for the

***"Having a child as a patient has made me a more compassionate nurse. I believe that my experience as a parent taught me to not only communicate with words but with presence and reassurance during a difficult time in the patient and family's lives. When you are caring for a child, you're not only caring for them but for the entire family."***

Nicole Wright,  
Le Bonheur Urology Clinic manager



*Hallie Wright underwent spinal fusion surgery in 2019 to treat her scoliosis.*



*Earlier this year, Nurse Nicole Wright celebrated 14 years with Le Bonheur and has achieved many milestones along the way.*

outstanding nursing care she provided.

“My daughter Hallie inspires me the most,” Nicole said. “She has faced so many obstacles in her life and never let any of them stop her from accomplishing her goals.”

First, Hallie inspired her mom to become a nurse; now, Hallie plans to follow in her mom’s health care footsteps and attend medical school.

This past summer, Hallie took the first step in that journey and shadowed Dr. Kelly so she can help more kids like herself in the future.

## **A Family-Based Approach**

Courtney and Webb Smith were over the moon to be expecting their first child. Midway through the pregnancy, the excitement turned to shock and concern when they learned their son would be born with spina bifida.

Luckily, Le Bonheur’s top-ranked Neuroscience Institute was there. After Carter was born, he was transferred to Le Bonheur’s NICU.

Carter underwent multiple surgeries and clinical

visits, and along the way the Smiths built strong relationships with Le Bonheur specialists and nurses, creating a true partnership and team approach to Carter’s care.

During Carter’s first few years of life, Webb decided to pursue his PhD in Kinesiology and Exercise



*After Carter Smith was born, he was transferred to Le Bonheur’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for treatment.*

Science

at the

University of Mississippi. During that time, the Smiths welcomed their second son, Cohen, now 11 years old.

Inspired by Carter, Webb joined Le Bonheur’s Healthy Lifestyles Clinic as a clinical exercise physiologist in 2014.

“I love the family approach at Le Bonheur,” Webb said. “We have been involved in Carter’s care



*Webb Smith was inspired by his son Carter, a Le Bonheur patient, to pursue his PhD in Kinesiology and Exercise Science. Webb joined Le Bonheur’s Healthy Lifestyles Clinic as a clinical exercise physiologist in 2014.*



every step of the way and have been part of the decision-making process.”

Working at Le Bonheur has been a chance for Webb to not only pursue his passion for combating childhood obesity in Memphis, but to be a part of the hospital that has helped Carter through his journey.

Webb’s influence extends beyond his role as a clinical exercise physiologist. Patient families often seek Webb’s guidance and ask questions about his experience as a parent.

“I have an appreciation of some of the barriers and challenges that exist for patients and their families and I have a unique perspective on how to solve them,” Webb said. “I’m happy to draw upon my own experiences and serve as a mentor to families at Le Bonheur.”

While Webb was initially focused solely on caring for obesity patients, he now works with Heart Institute and endocrinology patients, too. Webb helps kids get healthy not only for upcoming surgeries, but for the rest of their lives as he works to advance physical exercise as part of clinical treatment plans.



*Carter Smith, pictured at left with his brother Cohen, has undergone more than 30 surgeries at Le Bonheur.*



*Courtney and Webb Smith learned midway through her pregnancy that Carter would be born with spina bifida. Carter, also pictured with his brother Cohen, has been a Le Bonheur patient since he was a newborn and returns to Le Bonheur annually for appointments.*

“I have opportunities at Le Bonheur to do things that have pushed some of what we know about kids in the exercise environment,” Webb said. “Other centers are curious about how we are able to solve these problems because we have helped change how people view physical conditioning in the medical environment.”

While Webb continues to make a difference in the lives of kids and their families at Le Bonheur, his biggest Le Bonheur inspiration continues to excel. Today, 16-year-old Carter is a thriving high school student who has undergone more than 30 surgeries and comes to Le Bonheur annually for appointments. ❤️

# A Heart for Service

## THREE VOLUNTEER COORDINATORS INSPIRE FAMILY MEMBERS TO GIVE BACK



*Three Associates on Le Bonheur's Volunteer & Family Support team have inspired family members to join the hospital's corps of volunteers. From left to right, mother-and-daughter pairs Grace and Jill Hilliard, Leah and Allison Smith, and Paula Walter and Hannah Rafeetary are carrying forward Le Bonheur's legacy of service for future generations.*

Le Bonheur's story has always been one of service.

When the hospital first opened its doors in 1952, it did so with a simple promise: to provide care for every child who needed it, regardless of their family's ability to pay. That mission was made

possible by volunteers — the women of Le Bonheur Club who raised funds to build the hospital, welcomed kids and families, and tended to the smallest details of care.

Seventy years later, a legacy of volunteerism is still at the hospital's heart.

It shows up in the hundreds of helpers who bring cheer to patients, stock the family food pantries, deliver toiletries, decorate the hospital for holidays and greet families with kindness every day.

And for three members of Le Bonheur's Volunteer & Family Support



team — Allison Smith, MPA, Jill Hilliard, and Hannah Rafieetary — that legacy extends even further. Each has inspired a family member to volunteer alongside them, carrying forward a spirit of service that proves compassion is often contagious.

## WHY LE BONHEUR

Ask Allison, Jill and Hannah why they chose to work at Le Bonheur, and their answers reflect an earnest mix of practicality and passion.

“My mom always worked in nonprofits, and growing up I spent my summers volunteering wherever she was,” said Allison, who coordinates the hospital’s group, corporate and special events volunteers and recently celebrated 11 years at Le Bonheur. “When it came time to choose a career, I knew I wanted to work somewhere that also felt like giving back. I wanted to build a career out of volunteering.”

For Jill, the draw was working directly with families as liaison to the hospital’s Family Partners Council (FPC) — a group of about 50 Le Bonheur parents who volunteer their time and insights to promote a culture of patient- and family-centered care.

“FPC members volunteer on hospital committees, share their stories, serve as care coaches and provide the perspective of what it’s like to be a family member whose child is admitted here,” said Jill. “Le Bonheur does truly life-saving work,



*Le Bonheur Community Engagement Specialist Allison Smith, MPA, left, spent childhood summers volunteering in the nonprofits where her mom, Leah, worked as a nurse. Today, Leah is putting her caregiving instincts to work volunteering at holiday parties and other special events hosted for kids and families at Le Bonheur.*

***“I knew I wanted to work somewhere that also felt like giving back. I wanted to build a career out of volunteering.”***

Allison Smith,  
Le Bonheur community engagement specialist

and I love getting to hear these incredible stories and plug them in wherever they can do the most good.”

And for Hannah, the allure of Le Bonheur centers on meaningful connection and interpersonal relationships. Hannah oversees about 110 weekly volunteers and has cultivated a relationship with each one.

“I love the people who donate time to Le Bonheur,” Hannah said. “Our volunteers genuinely care about the patients and families. Getting to help them care in this way is a gift.”

It’s clear listening to them talk about their work that these colleagues are more than coordinators: they

are advocates, connectors, champions and cheerleaders, embodying the mission of service themselves.

## THE RIPPLE EFFECT

That devotion hasn’t gone unnoticed by their family members, several of whom are now regular volunteers at Le Bonheur.

Hannah’s mother, Paula

Walter, moved to Memphis after her husband passed away,

leaning into volunteering to get better acclimated to her new city while giving back. Through Hannah’s encouragement, Paula completed Le Bonheur’s volunteer onboarding, and today, she serves as a baby hugger — one of the specially-trained volunteers who spend hours rocking, cuddling and soothing infants in intensive care units.

“It’s rewarding to know I can offer hugs and human interaction to babies in need of comfort and also be of



*Le Bonheur Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Rafieetary, right, encouraged her mom, Paula, to become a Le Bonheur Baby Hugger when Paula relocated to Memphis. Paula now spends hours each week rocking, cuddling and soothing infants in the hospital’s intensive care units.*

## VOLUNTEER TURNED ASSOCIATE: GRAZI'S STORY

For Grazi Gonzales, RN, BSN, the path to becoming a Le Bonheur nurse began years before her first day in scrubs. In 2016, while finishing her undergraduate degree, Grazi spent most of her leisure time volunteering at the hospital — often pushing the activity cart from room to room to brighten a child's day with games or crafts.

"I chose to volunteer at Le Bonheur because of its reputation for compassionate care and community involvement," Grazi said. "I wanted to gain hands-on experience while supporting patients, families and staff."

It was during those shifts that Grazi began to see just how much of an impact a nurse can make, offering comfort to patients in difficult times and advocating for their needs. One moment in particular stood out: watching a nurse gently calm a patient in pain.

"That's when I realized nursing isn't just about medical care," said Grazi. "It's about being present for others in their most vulnerable times."

That realization solidified her decision to pursue nursing as a career. Grazi began that career at Le Bonheur as a medical/surgical nurse in 2019, caring for children with complex needs on the Medical Specialties Unit. Two years later, she transitioned into her current role as a dialysis nurse, supporting pediatric patients living with kidney disease.

Looking back, Grazi credits her volunteer experience with giving her many of the skills she relies on today: communicating effectively, staying organized under pressure, listening actively and responding with empathy and professionalism.

"Volunteering also helped me build strong teamwork skills," she said. "I often had to coordinate with others, adapt to changing situations, and step up when extra help was needed — all qualities that are essential in my role as a nurse."

For anyone considering volunteering, and especially those considering a career in health care, Grazi is quick to recommend Le Bonheur.

"It's a meaningful way to make a real difference in people's lives, and there are a variety of roles that allow you to find where you fit best," said Grazi. "Most importantly, the time you spend at Le Bonheur matters. You leave each shift knowing you've helped someone — and that feeling stays with you."



Grazi Gonzales, RN, BSN

assistance to the nurses, who are very appreciative of our help," said Paula. "Beyond that, it's fun to see Hannah in her work setting and to volunteer with her at special events; I'm very proud of what she and her coworkers do daily."

Jill's daughter, Grace Hilliard, was so similarly inspired by her mom's work that she became a unit buddy as soon as she turned 18. Grace spends her shifts cleaning playrooms, tidying up toys, helping out with special events like International Pirate Day and, most importantly, sitting with patients who need company.

***"It's rewarding to know I can offer hugs and human interaction to babies in need of comfort and also be of assistance to the nurses, who are very appreciative of our help."***

Paula Walter, Le Bonheur baby hugger

"Being in the hospital can obviously be scary and a sensitive time for children," Grace said. "If I can make someone's stay even a little better, it's worth it. I love seeing how even little things can make a huge difference."

For Allison's mom, Leah Smith, NP — a retired nurse practitioner — she enjoys employing her caregiver instincts to brighten holiday parties and special events. Among other





*Le Bonheur Volunteer Coordinator Jill Hilliard, left, brought home so many joyful job stories after joining Le Bonheur's Volunteer & Family Support team that her daughter, Grace, applied to become a Le Bonheur Unit Buddy as soon as she turned 18. Now, Grace donates time each week cleaning hospital playrooms and sitting with patients who need company.*

things, she's lent a helping hand at Halloween and Easter parties, helped "fluff" Christmas trees for decorating and passed out treats and toys to kids standing in line to see Santa.

"I know the hospital couldn't pay staff to do all of these little things that brighten a child's day, so volunteers fill that gap," said Leah. "It makes me happy to help the kids have these joyful experiences."

While each story is different, together they illustrate the ripple effect of community service, showing how one person's calling becomes another's invitation.

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Ultimately, Leah, Grace and Paula represent just a small sliver of the hospital's broader volunteer force.

Hundreds of individual and group volunteers collectively give tens of thousands of hours to Le Bonheur annually, filling roles that range from staffing comfort carts and stocking food pantries to reading books at the bedside, organizing meals and helping make nearly 90 special events possible each year. From wacky-tacky proms to holiday festivals, each celebration requires dozens of helping hands. And still, the need for volunteers continues.

"Before COVID, we had closer to 200 individual weekly volunteers," Hannah said. "We're steadily rebuilding, but we'd love to grow back to that number and expand popular programs like therapy dogs."

***"If I can make someone's stay even a little better, it's worth it. I love seeing how even small things can make a huge difference."***

Grace Hilliard, Le Bonheur unit buddy

The impact, though, is already tangible. Nurses celebrate when baby huggers return to their unit. Parents cherish the break a comfort cart provides. Many volunteers call their shifts "the best part of my week," and some even circle back years later, sharing that their service at Le Bonheur inspired them to

enter medical school or other helping professions.

## AN ENDURING SPIRIT

When asked what keeps them going, both volunteers and coordinators point to the same source: joy. Joy in the eyes of a child meeting the Easter Bunny. Joy in the calm of a baby soothed to sleep. Joy in a teenager finding friendship during a long hospital stay.

For Leah, Paula and Grace, that joy is deepened by sharing it with family.

"Allison is so passionate about her job, and the joy she shows when planning events is contagious," said Leah. Paula expressed a similar sentiment, noting that "Hannah and her coworkers are my cheerleaders. They are so loving and supportive of my efforts, which makes volunteering such a rewarding experience." As for Grace, she sums it up neatly: "My mom absolutely loves her job, so of course I had to see what Le Bonheur was all about!"

More than 70 years after volunteers first gave Le Bonheur its foundation, the hospital's legacy of service is alive and well. It's visible in the small gestures and big events, in the staff who dedicate their careers to organizing it and in the families who, working side by side, carry that spirit of service forward for future generations.

### Want to lend a helping hand?

Visit [lebonheur.org/volunteer](https://lebonheur.org/volunteer) to learn how you can serve. ❤️

# Compassion: Gifted and Received

## *Children of Le Bonheur physicians experience expert care*

When it comes to pediatric health care, nobody knows kids better than Le Bonheur. For some Le Bonheur physicians, the care they provide their patients is filled with extra compassion because as parents of Le Bonheur patients, they have walked in the same shoes as the families they are caring for.

### Hometown Hero

"I work at Le Bonheur because of the mission. We care for every kid who walks through our doors and we do whatever it takes to get them better."

Cynthia Cross, MD, who serves as medical chief of Le Bonheur Community Health and Regional Services, lives by those words daily. There are few people you will meet at Le Bonheur who don't have a special story about Dr. Cross and

*Camille Cross was diagnosed with a seizure disorder at age 3. She received expert care throughout childhood at Le Bonheur, where her mom, Cynthia Cross, MD, is a physician.*





the compassionate care she provides. During the course of her decades-long career, she has touched thousands of lives and made an indelible impact on children and their families.

As a former nurse and parent of a lifelong Le Bonheur patient, Cross brings a unique perspective to the care she provides. A native Memphian, Cross worked her first shift as a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Methodist University Hospital in 1976. Cross loved caring for babies, yet two doctors there encouraged her to go to medical school to become a pediatrician.

***“Having gone through this journey with Camille, it has taught me true compassion for families. It is so agonizing for most parents to have their child admitted to the hospital with testing, procedures and all that comes with a hospitalization. Being Camille’s mom has made me want to make the hospital experience as painless as possible for families.”***

Cynthia Cross, MD,  
Chief of Le Bonheur Community Health and Regional Services

After attending medical school and completing her residency at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital, Cross worked for several years in private practice before joining Le Bonheur and becoming the inaugural chief of hospital medicine in 2008.



*Camille Cross returned to Le Bonheur each year for routine follow-up appointments and monitoring to ensure her seizures were under control. Her mom, Cynthia Cross, MD, serves as medical chief of Le Bonheur Community Health and Regional Services.*

Prior to becoming a Le Bonheur physician, Cross’ experience with the hospital was through the role of parent. Cross’ daughter Camille experienced febrile seizures as a toddler. A few weeks prior to her third birthday, Camille had seizures, but this time she had no fever. Cross took Camille to the emergency department where she was admitted to Le Bonheur for further testing. Brain scans showed that Camille was experiencing seizures that would require medications to manage.

After a few months of medications, Camille’s seizures were under control and she experienced her last seizure at age 8, returning to Le Bonheur each year for routine follow-up appointments and monitoring.

“Le Bonheur is home, everyone made me feel taken care of when Camille was at the hospital,” Cross said. “Le Bonheur is my family, and it was so comforting to me to see how much people care about not just my child but every child who comes to Le Bonheur.”

Camille, now in her early 30s, lovingly refers to Le Bonheur as “mom’s hospital.” In the 25 years since she



*Cynthia Cross, MD, said having experienced Le Bonheur as a parent while her daughter received care, has made her a more compassionate physician.*

was declared seizure free, Camille has experienced a seizure only once — at age 31, brought on by a virus — and made a full recovery. She has currently been seizure free for more than two years.

“Having gone through this journey with Camille, it has taught me true compassion for families. It is so agonizing for most parents to have their child admitted to the hospital with testing, procedures and all that comes with a hospitalization,” Cross said. “Being Camille’s mom has made me want to make the hospital experience as painless as possible for families.”

## A Beacon of Hope

From newborns with respiratory viruses to teenagers with broken bones, Brad Schneider, MD, is prepared for whatever comes through the doors of Le Bonheur’s emergency department. For more than nine years, Schneider has cared for kids when they need it most, helping families find answers to illnesses or provide emergent care following an accident.

Schneider brings a unique perspective to his role of emergency department physician as his 15-year-old son, Cooper, is a Le Bonheur patient. Cooper was born with a chromosomal abnormality and has a seizure disorder that causes him to be unable to walk or talk, relying on his parents, Brad and Crady Schneider, for care.

Cooper sees specialists at Le Bonheur and has had several overnight stays at the hospital for everything from severe dehydration to seizure management. Not only has Cooper received expert care but the Schneider family has received the support they need to help Cooper thrive.

“Cooper’s journey has provided me a unique insight into what our families experience at the hospital. My education as a pediatrician has been greatly informed by my experiences with him,” Schneider said. “Cooper is easily the single most important puzzle piece for the doctor I am today and has provided me with great empathy for what our patients and families endure on a daily



*Brad Schneider, MD, has worked at Le Bonheur in the emergency department for nearly a decade.*



*The Schneider family calls Le Bonheur home. Cooper receives medical care at Le Bonheur and Brad Schneider, MD, works in the emergency department.*



basis. I feel as though I'm much more empathetic than I otherwise would have been as a doctor and human because of Cooper."

*"Cooper's journey has provided me a unique insight into what our families experience at the hospital. My education as a pediatrician has been greatly informed by my experiences with him. Cooper is easily the single most important puzzle piece for the doctor I am today and has provided me with great empathy for what our patients and families endure on a daily basis. I feel as though I'm much more empathetic than I otherwise would have been as a doctor and human because of Cooper."*

Brad Schneider, MD,  
Le Bonheur emergency department physician

While Schneider has personal experience as a parent at Le Bonheur, he is proud to work at the hospital because of the population served and the high level of care provided. He is grateful to be part of a team that gives the best care to those in the community who need it most.

"Le Bonheur is special because of what it does and can do for the community at large," Schneider said. "Memphis is grossly underserved for pediatric care, and Le Bonheur is often the only medical resource that some of these families have. This hospital serves as a beacon of hope for patients and families."

Cooper has also inspired his dad to always be kind to those who seek help, serving as a reminder that while we have no idea what others may be going through, it is important to

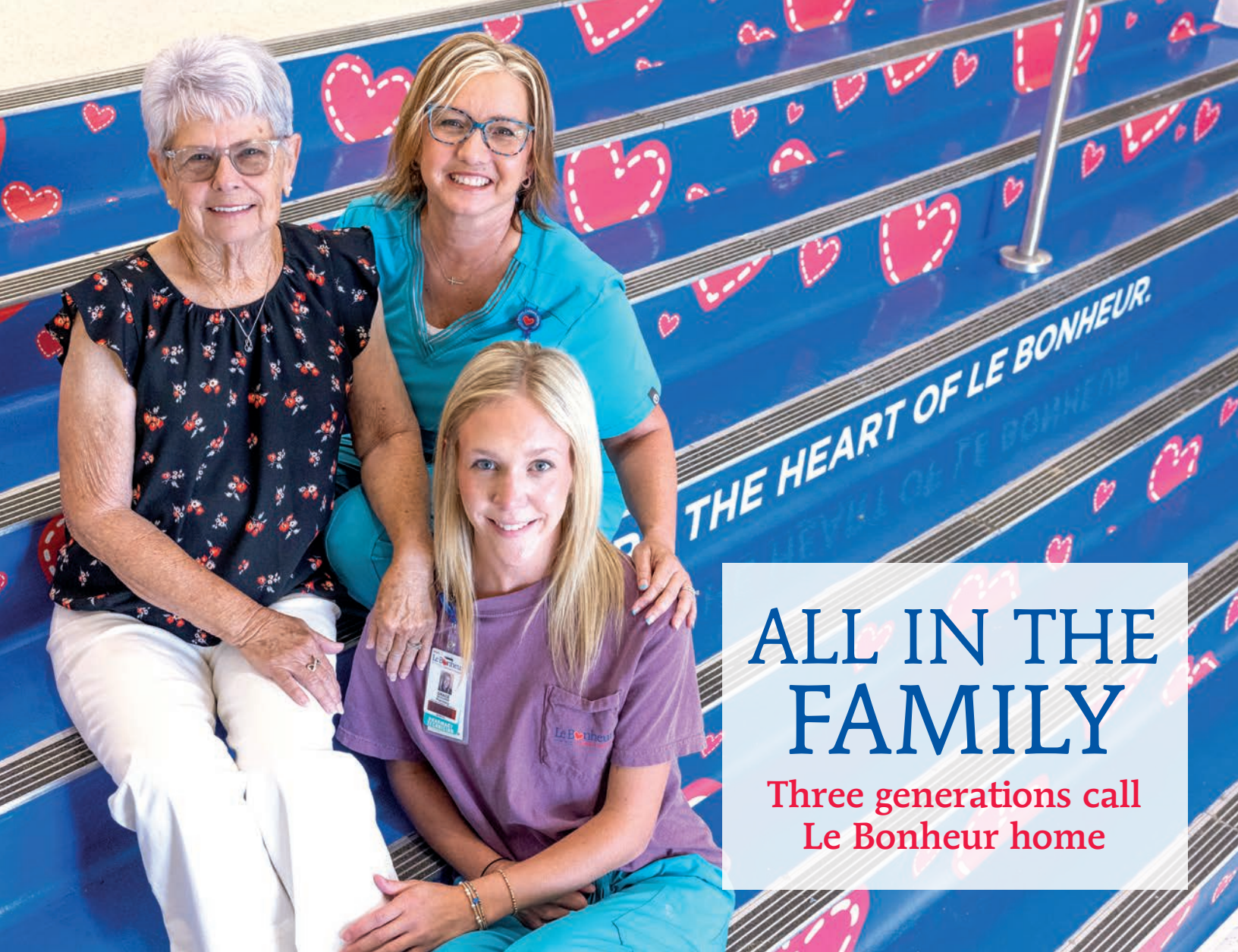


Cooper Schneider was born with a chromosomal abnormality. Cooper has a seizure disorder and has had several overnight stays at Le Bonheur for everything from severe dehydration to seizure management.

lend an ear and listen. Schneider often cares for patients and families during times of unspeakable tragedy or a traumatic medical emergency, and sometimes the most important part of Schneider's interaction with a family is making sure they are heard and understood.

Schneider credits Crady for being Cooper's biggest champion along the way and encourages others to advocate for their own kids to ensure they receive the care and support they need. The Schneiders also advocate for others at Le Bonheur by serving on the Family Partners Council, a group of Le Bonheur patient families who work to improve processes within the hospital. ❤️





# ALL IN THE FAMILY

Three generations call  
Le Bonheur home

*Linda Floyd, left, worked at Le Bonheur for more than 12 years. Her daughter, Robin Scoggins, and granddaughter, Grace Scoggins, followed in her footsteps and currently work at Le Bonheur.*

**"We are all family!" is a common refrain heard among Le Bonheur Associates. For the Floyd and Scoggins families, that phrase has extra meaning.**

When Linda Floyd walked through the doors of Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in 2002 to start her job as a utility aide, she had no idea she had begun a new family tradition. In the years to come, Linda's daughter, Robin Scoggins, and granddaughter,

Grace Scoggins, would follow in her footsteps to join the Le Bonheur team as Associates.

For more than 12 years, Linda worked at Le Bonheur, most notably serving as a utility aide for 10 years, including when the hospital transitioned to the current building in 2010. Linda played an integral role in ensuring supplies and materials were efficiently organized in the new building to guarantee seamless patient care.

"Le Bonheur is such a special place,"

***"I'm proud to know that Robin and Grace are carrying on the family tradition of loving staff and patients at Le Bonheur like family."***

*Linda Floyd, former Le Bonheur Associate*

Linda said. "The staff help families through difficult times and are there for patients without family support."

After witnessing Linda's positive experience at Le Bonheur and visiting kids at the hospital in her capacity as a children's pastor, Robin decided to apply for a secretary position.



Robin was hired and quickly learned her mom was right: Le Bonheur is so special because everyone is family.

When Robin started at Le Bonheur, Linda was working as a utility aide and Robin was able to order the items her mom needed to restock the units.

For 23 years, Robin has worked at Le Bonheur in various roles, but one thing has remained constant: her love for Le Bonheur.

"I'm proud to work at Le Bonheur knowing we are providing the best care possible for children and their families," Robin said. "I feel comfortable sending my friends and family here knowing they will receive the treatment they deserve."

Being able to learn new skills and help with various activities in the hospital like pitching in at FedExFamilyHouse, serving on the Cereal Drive Team, helping with Pumpkin Run and fundraising campaigns has helped Robin grow professionally. In 2022, Robin's dedication to Le Bonheur was formally recognized when she received the Power of One Award, a quarterly award given to Associates who emulate Le Bonheur's belief in the power one person's actions can make in the lives of the children and families the hospital serves.

When Robin's daughter, Grace Scoggins, completed pharmacy technician training, she knew just where she wanted to work.

"This hospital is where I grew

***"I'm proud to work at Le Bonheur knowing we are providing the best care possible for children and their families. I feel comfortable sending my friends and family here knowing they will receive the treatment they deserve."***

Robin Scoggins, Le Bonheur Associate

up and it seemed like a great fit to get paid to work at a place I love," Grace said. "Knowing I can work in a department that helps patients heal with the correct medications makes me proud to work at Le Bonheur."

Fellow Associates have been welcoming to Grace, who is often treated to stories about her family as their praises are sung by past and present colleagues.

Not only have Linda, Robin and Grace gotten to make a difference through their work at Le Bonheur, but they have also gotten to spend quality time together.

"I have been able to eat lunch with both my mom and my daughter and ride to and from work together," Robin said. "It has been so special to have that family time."

Linda is proud of the impact her family has made at the hospital she loves and the Floyd legacy of love for Le Bonheur that her daughter and granddaughter continue today.

"I'm proud to know that Robin and Grace are carrying on the family tradition of loving staff and patients at Le Bonheur like family," Linda said. ❤️



Robin Scoggins (center left) often participates in hospital-wide events, including the Cereal Drive to help feed kids in the community.



Linda Floyd (pictured in maroon scrubs) worked at Le Bonheur for more than 12 years. She is proud of her family Le Bonheur legacy with her daughter and granddaughter becoming Associates at the hospital, too.



Robin Scoggins (pictured right) has worked at Le Bonheur for 23 years following in the footsteps of her mom, Linda Floyd. Last year, Robin's daughter, Grace Scoggins, began working at Le Bonheur.

# Coming Home



*An Associate's journey from patient to family advocate*

**Tierney Wilks' job as the FedExFamilyHouse volunteer and marketing coordinator holds an extra special place in her heart. She understands the emotional roller coaster patients and their families are experiencing, because she was in their shoes as a teenager.**

"Le Bonheur means everything to me," said Tierney. "I got to see firsthand how they save lives because they saved my own."

In 2013, just a few months after her 16th birthday, Tierney was at home on President's Day relaxing and enjoying the day off from school, when she got a funny feeling in her chest. As a track and step team athlete, her body was extremely conditioned. Tierney was accustomed to being out of breath after a workout or run, but not while sitting on the couch.

Tierney, an asthmatic, called her mom to ask where the inhaler was because she "felt like a stack of books were on her chest." Immediately, alarm bells went off in her mom's mind, so she left work and went straight home. Soon after, Tierney and her mom were with their pediatrician, who sent them straight to the Le Bonheur emergency department.

A battery of tests and doctors' consultations led to the diagnosis of a congenital heart defect — an anomalous right coronary artery (RCA), a rare heart condition

where the RCA originates from a different location than normal.

Once doctors determined a diagnosis, plans for surgery and treatment moved swiftly. Tierney was scheduled to have open heart surgery the following month on Good Friday 2013.

The surgery was a success, and with proper management and

care, she lives a normal, healthy life with visits to her cardiologist every two years. Not only was the experience a medical success, but Tierney and her family also felt an incredible wave of gratitude for how the Le Bonheur medical team and staff cared for them.

"My Le Bonheur care team treated each and every one of us like we were important and valuable," said Tierney.

"They answered every question I had, and it's so special to work here now so I can be that voice for people when they're worried or concerned."

The summer after her surgery, Tierney participated in the "volunteer" program at Le Bonheur, which inspired her to consider a career in nursing. In college, she changed her major from nursing to business, which she never dreamed could take her back to Le Bonheur. Then, in her junior year of college, Tierney did a service project at FedExFamilyHouse, and her eyes were opened to an entirely new way she could make Le Bonheur her career.

At FedExFamilyHouse, families have



*Tierney Wilks underwent open heart surgery at Le Bonheur in 2013. Today, Tierney works as the FedExFamilyHouse volunteer and marketing coordinator, helping families traveling for care have access to free lodging.*



*Patients and their families find comfort in Tierney Wilks' personal Le Bonheur patient story.*





*Le Bonheur Associate Tierney Wilks, who is also a former Le Bonheur Heart Institute patient, spoke at the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit expansion ribbon cutting in May 2024.*

private, comfortable accommodations free of charge where they can find respite during hospital stays. In addition to a place to rest and recharge, the House includes snacks, games, stocked kitchens and a play area.

In her role at FedExFamilyHouse, Tierney is able to plan fun, exciting things for the kids to give them a break from the heaviness that can be felt along their health journey. She understands how fears and exhaustion can take a toll on the patients and their families.

"I get to say, 'look at me now,' which brings comfort to the people who are here," said Tierney, "Everyone says I'm a big kid, and I love interacting with the patients and making them forget they're in the hospital, even if it's just for a few hours."

The family-centered care and support Tierney experienced as a Le Bonheur patient led to a lifetime of gratitude that she's now passing on to others.



We were saddened by the passing of Frederick W. Smith, a Memphis icon. Without his leadership, FedExFamilyHouse would not exist today. He co-founded the effort to get FedExFamilyHouse built, and it has been a tremendous gift to the kids and their families at Le Bonheur. We are grateful for his far-reaching love and passion for this community. We send our love and support to his family.



*Frederick W. Smith*

FedExFamilyHouse and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital are honored to reflect Mr. Smith's deep commitment to the community and the world.



## Recent Events



### FedExFamilyHouse Gala

The 2025 FedExFamilyHouse Gala was a major success, raising \$1.2 million thanks to our generous sponsors, volunteers and guests! The annual FedExFamilyHouse Gala is one of the Mid-South's most prestigious events and strives to raise more than half of the FedExFamilyHouse operational funds, advancing the mission of providing free lodging to families who travel from around the world to Memphis, Tenn., for treatment at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. Be sure to save the date for next year's gala on April 18, 2026!

### West Tennessee GenerosiTEA Party

The 8th Annual West Tennessee GenerosiTEA Party was held on April 13 at the Eader House in Brownsville, Tenn. More than 200 guests gathered to enjoy an afternoon of crafts, photos, shopping and of course, tea! During the last 15 years, GenerosiTEA parties in both Memphis and West Tennessee have raised more than \$360,000 for Le Bonheur. GenerosiTea Party is planned and coordinated by the Le Bonheur League of Jackson — a group dedicated to giving back to Le Bonheur through fundraising events. To learn more about Le Bonheur League of Jackson, please contact Alicia Russell at 731-780-1650.



## Upcoming Event

### Gurus of Golf

The 17th annual Gurus of Golf raised \$361,855, bringing the 17-year event total to more than \$4.5 million. The event brought the best teaching pros in the world to spend a day working with players as they raised money to support Le Bonheur.

Le Bonheur dad Dustin Tatum shared his son Austin's inspiring Le Bonheur story with golfers. Thanks to Le Bonheur, 15-year-old Austin is able to receive the coordinated care he needs in one place!



### Enchanted Forest

The Enchanted Forest Festival of Trees begins each year with a stroll through the magical Festival of Trees that fills Memphis' Pink Palace Mezzanine with beautifully decorated trees. Once inside the exhibit, children of all ages are charmed by the animated characters set in the magical snowy setting of The Enchanted Forest. In 2024, the event raised \$232,391 for Le Bonheur Children's! Join us for this year's Enchanted Forest Festival of Trees from now through Dec. 28. Visit [lebonheur.org/enchantedforest](https://lebonheur.org/enchantedforest) for more details. A perfect holiday tradition for the whole family to enjoy!





# From Patient Family to Fundraiser



Robert and Cathy Wilson's Le Bonheur journey began in 2005, when their infant daughter, Ann, received surgery to repair a soft cleft palate.

A year and a half later when Cathy was 20 weeks pregnant with their second child, Mary Quay, they learned she had spina bifida, a neural tube defect that left a hole in the middle of her back, exposing her spinal cord. The Wilsons once again returned to Le Bonheur to receive the care Mary Quay needed. She was transferred to Le Bonheur within hours of her birth and underwent surgery to repair that spinal defect when she was less than 48 hours old. The Wilsons spent the next two and a half weeks at Le Bonheur while Mary Quay recovered.

It was during that experience that the Wilsons grew to love Le Bonheur.

"We really got a strong dose of what patient- and family-centered care is all about," said Robert. "Once we were at Le Bonheur, we could stay with our daughter in her room, instead of just 'visiting,' and the clinicians were very good about explaining to us what was happening, what we could expect and helping guide us through the decisions that had to be made in our daughter's care. Child Life also took time to help Ann understand what was going on with her sister."

The Wilsons knew they wanted to give back to the hospital that meant so much to their family. Cathy joined the Le Bonheur Club and they both began serving on Le Bonheur's Family Partners Council, an advisory group that works with hospital leaders. In addition to volunteering, Cathy and Robert also decided to support Le Bonheur through financial contributions and a gift in their estate plan.

Since her initial Neonatal Intensive Care Unit stay, Mary Quay has continued to need the expert care of Le Bonheur, from multiple neurological and orthopedic surgeries, to regular physical and occupational therapy and pediatrician visits.

In 2018, Cathy became the director of Planned Giving at Le Bonheur so she could help others make gifts to the hospital and make a difference for kids for generations to come.

"I'm so happy to be a part of Le Bonheur's fundraising team because I want to make sure that all children have access to the expert care that our daughters received at Le Bonheur," Cathy said. "Today both our girls are thriving and Mary Quay has accomplished things we thought were impossible when she was first diagnosed. Le Bonheur gave our family hope and the care that all children and their families deserve."

Want to learn more about how you can support Le Bonheur Children's Hospital with a gift in your estate plan? Contact Cathy Wilson, J.D., CFRE, CAP® at **901-287-5575** or **cathy.wilson2@lebonheur.org**.



**Le Bonheur**  
Children's Hospital



We are so thankful to donors like you who give from the heart. Thanks to you, we are always here when children and families need us most.

**Scan the QR code to see a list of all the donors who made a difference for kids this year. Don't be left out! Give today and add your name to next year's list.**



Address Service Requested

## Because of you, we have been the “BEST” for 15 straight years and counting!

Le Bonheur is proud to be recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the nation’s “Best Children’s Hospitals” for 15 years in a row.

This is an honor reserved for only the country’s BEST children’s hospitals. The *U.S. News & World Report* badge reminds parents that we are the best place for kids. We’re proud to display the badge because we know that kids will receive better care because of it.

Because of you,  
we are always  
there when  
kids and their  
families need  
us most.

