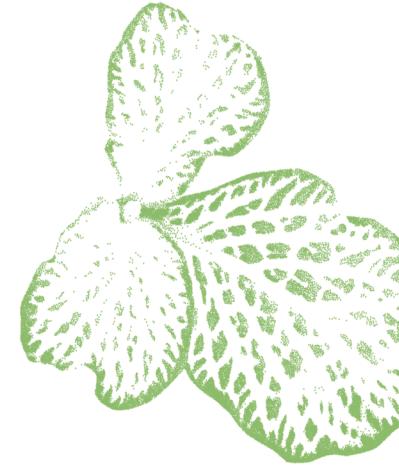




CHOC
Dear Hospital

In partnership with Dear World



Program Overview

The Dear Hospital program is an innovative storytelling initiative designed to foster empathy, understanding, and connection among healthcare professionals. Participants share personal stories and create 'brain tattoos,' which are short, meaningful messages written on their skin that visually represent their experiences. These portraits capture the depth and humanity of our caregivers, reinforcing our core values and strengthening bonds within our organization.

In celebration of **Nurses Week**, this Pop-Up exclusively features CHOC nurses, honoring their dedication, resilience, and the impact they have on our patients, families, and each other.

When and Where Can I Participate?

- **2 Hour Sessions** - Led by trained staff, these guided storytelling experiences can be reserved for team meetings, retreats, and special events
- **Clinical Orientation** - New clinical staff engage in an abbreviated Dear Hospital session, fostering connection from day one.

Everyone has a story to tell, and our stories are our strength.
Through Dear Hospital, we are shaping a culture of connection, understanding, and shared humanity.

To schedule a session for your team or learn more, contact
DearHospital@choc.org



**Melissa, Cathy,
Barbara, Shelli & Aries**

Charge Nurses & Nurse Manager
Medical Unit





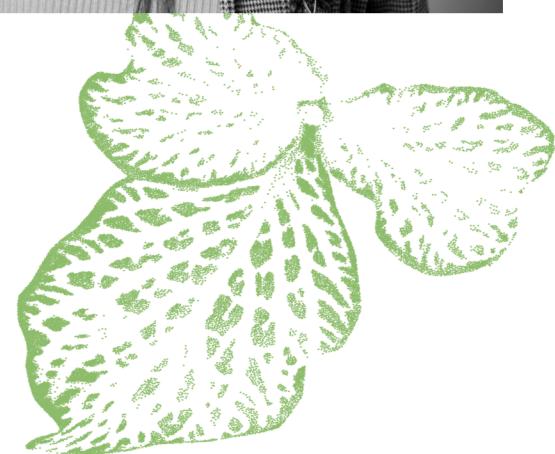
Cindy

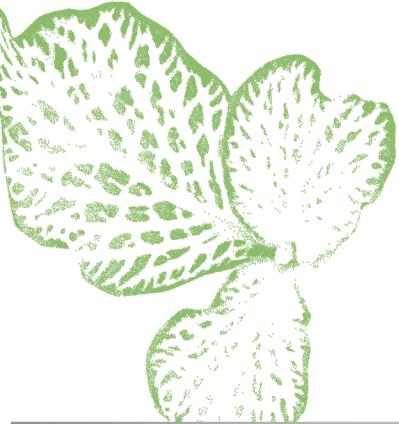
Clinical Nurse
Lactation Consultant



Crystal

Nurse Care Manager
Care Coordination





Katie

Charge Nurse
Emergency Department



Sara

Director
Specialty Care Services





David

Charge Nurse
Pediatric Intensive Care Unit



Olivia

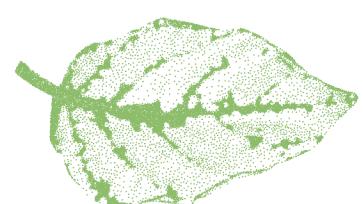
Clinical Nurse
Oncology Unit





Jennie

Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer
CHOC at Mission



Colleen

Nurse Manager
Therapeutic Apheresis





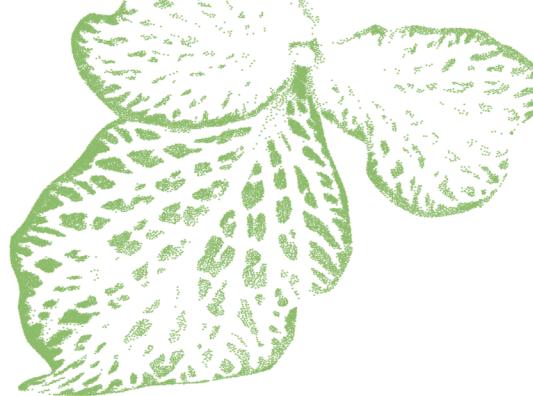
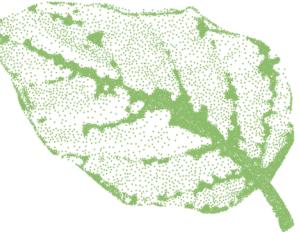
Lauren

Nurse Practitioner
Pediatric Surgery



Jennifer

Charge Nurse
Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit



Zach

Charge Nurse
Multispecialty Unit



Tas

Director
Clinical Services



Michael

Clinical Nurse
Small Baby Unit



JoAnn

Clinical Nurse
Surgical Unit





Liz

Clinical Nurse Specialist
CHOC at Mission, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

DEAR
World

Dear Hospital,

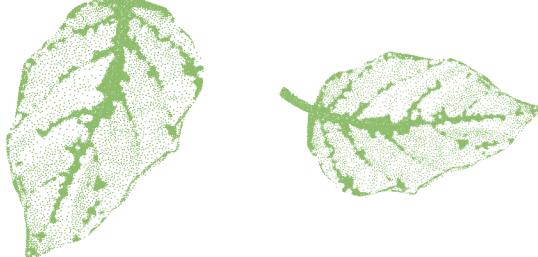
"Being invisible can help you see better"

I grew up in a very cultural family. That culture can run deep. We've heard the adage, "Children should be seen and not heard." Sometimes we were never even seen. That environment teaches you a lot. You learn to observe, listen and read body language. It can be peaceful at times, but when you are a child and neither seen nor heard...You feel invisible! The first chance I got, I moved across the country to explore what a life could look like. It's interesting how life happens. I went to nursing school here in California. I have to laugh...Nursing school...a profession where you need to learn how to observe signs & symptoms, listen to your patient and ready body language when your patient can't tell you what they feel. I graduated nursing school and applied to CHOC in 1982 and was hired to work in the PICU. On orientation day, they asked someone to move to the NICU. I said yes... and 43 years later I'm still in the NICU. All that time feeling invisible taught me the greatest need in the NICU. Learning the language of premature and sick infants. Observing how they move, listening to and learning their unique body language. That's how they speak to us. Life comes full circle. Feeling invisible as a child has helped me in the most wonderful profession...being a NICU Nurse.

Babies in the NICU...I see you!!!

With gratitude,

INVISIBLE, I SEE YOU



Dear Hospital,

Have you ever dreamt of the day with uncontainable excitement about the moment you get to hold your newborn, walk your daughter down the aisle, or go on adventures with your son?

As an Emergency Transport RN, I had to transport an extremely critical newborn back to CHOC. The parents, both devastated, heart-broken and helpless as they watch their newborn quickly deteriorating. They were first-time parents. I don't believe they got to hold their baby in their arms yet as the baby was taken to the warmer soon after birth. The patient's father came along with us on the ambulance ride, and I found a moment, a tug on my heart, to ask him something: "Dad, do you want to hold your baby's hand?" You should've seen the way Dad's eyes lit up as he wiped the tears from his face and stuck his hand through the small isolette door. His big index finger gently holding on as the baby's little fingers wrapped perfectly around it...

14 years ago, I felt a calling to become a RN. I have seen many traumatic and unfortunate events in my Pediatric ICU and Emergency Transport years; yet I get a glimpse of beauty in the darkest of times. I get to find those moments to uplift, empower, advocate, encourage and help the patients/families who are going through their worst days. I will never forget the way that father thanked me as the CHOC Neonatal ICU team started end-of-life care on the baby that night. That finger hold meant more than words can ever express.

With love,

THE POWER OF A FINGER HOLD



Emily

Clinical Nurse
Emergency Transport Services





Lily

Charge Nurse
CHOC at Mission, Pediatrics

Dear Hospital,

I didn't know then, but now I know.

Motherhood hit me HARD. Despite 13 years as a pediatric nurse, nothing prepared me for this profound life change. I'd always dreamed of having a baby, but the timing never seemed right. When I finally got pregnant, instead of pure joy, worry and anxiety overwhelmed me. No one told me perinatal anxiety was a thing. After my son was born, the transition rocked my world. Instead of the immense joy I had envisioned, the sadness, tears, and worry remained. Was it normal to feel this way? Why wasn't I happier? Having no family nearby and difficulty breastfeeding did not help. For months I struggled with painful feedings, meticulously weighed my son before and after nursing sessions, and grappled with relentless concerns about his development. Sleep deprivation only intensified my exhaustion, and the accompanying guilt was paralyzing.

I am not inclined to ask for help and reaching out was daunting. However, talking to a friend who is a mother of four opened my eyes to an important realization: parenthood is arduous, and finding your village is essential. Even without family nearby, I was surprised by how many were willing to help. I took advice to heart and was deeply moved by the outpouring of support. I received time, assistance, and nourishing meals from friends and guidance from professionals like my doula, lactation consultant, and my son's pediatrician. As my son underwent various treatments, therapies and eventually surgery, I started to see a glimmer of hope. It became clear to me then: while it takes a village to raise a child, it equally takes a village to support a mother. I didn't know then, but now I know.

Returning to work postpartum was another challenge but, motherhood has deepened my compassion and empathy as a caregiver. Recently, we admitted a six-week-old diagnosed with failure to thrive. Despite diligently breastfeeding, the mother discovered he was dehydrated and not transferring milk effectively. I noticed her struggle to hold back tears upon hearing the news. I reassured her, "You are exactly where you need to be. He is safe, and we've got you." She broke down, and in that moment, I felt her pain, fear, and overwhelming sense of helplessness. This experience reinforced my commitment to nursing - not just as a profession, but as a calling to stand beside my patients and their families, offering unwavering support. It truly takes a community, and I'm honored to be a part of that village.

With love,

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Dear Hospital,

It's OK to Be Different

Growing up with two happy hippies, our home always smelled of home-cooked meals, with a dog curled up on the couch and Joni Mitchel playing in the background. Love, art, and acceptance filled every corner of our lives. My parents encouraged us to embrace the world with open hearts, always reminding us, "Be a friend to the friendless. Everyone needs someone to talk to." My dad taught us to listen - really listen - to people's stories.

When I became a parent, I passed these values on to my own children. As a young mother, my daughter accompanied me to a program I ran for disabled children. She would sit beside them, painting bright, messy pictures, or run across the court, laughing as she played basketball. She never saw their disabilities - only new friends to create and play with. It melted my heart to see that.

When my son was a toddler, we frequently read a book called It's OK to Be Different by Todd Parr. Its message - that everyone is important and special, regardless of their differences - became my mantra. Such a simple yet profound idea.

Now, as I approach nearly 20 years as a pediatric nurse, I reflect on the hundreds of incredible stories I have listened to - so many struggles, so many successes. I am proud of my compassion and empathy. I have lived my life sharing my smile, my ear, or my time with whoever needs it. My father always said, "Everyone needs someone to talk to." Now, I find myself living those words every day - listening to fears, comforting struggles, celebrating victories. And always reminding my patients: It's OK to be different. I am here for you.

With gratitude,

IT'S OK TO BE DIFFERENT



Amy

Clinical Nurse

Pre-Operative/Post Anesthesia Care Unit





Beth

Education Coordinator
Clinical Education & Professional Development



Dear Hospital,

"Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping - Fred Rogers

While working at Disneyland, I had a co-worker who had one of the most cheerful and energetic personalities I've ever met. One day, it was pouring rain and stormy outside, and when I saw her arrive for work, she looked so sad, deflated, and defeated. I realized this was not at all normal for her, so I went up and asked if everything was ok. She said, "Yes, I just stepped in a big puddle on my way in, and it soaked my shoes and then my socks, and now my feet are wet...and I hate that."

I replied, "Oh gosh, I'm so sorry!" and she brushed it all aside and said she was going to be fine - but she still looked so down. So, knowing that the park has vending machines stocked with costume necessities, I grabbed five bucks and bought her a pair of clean, dry socks. I waited until one of her show sets was done and gave them to her, and she totally lit up. She held them close to her chest and gave me a big hug, smiling ear-to-ear.

Years later, as I was considering a new career path, nursing came to mind. I figured I was great at being there for people, making magic in the park on one of the best days of their lives, but that I could really be there for people in their worst moments in life. I knew I couldn't solve all my co-workers' problems that day (and yes, there were a lot more problems happening in her life!), but at least...

I CAN HELP WITH THE SOCKS



DEAR
WORLD



Dear Hospital,

“What’s the point?” “Why me?” “Why can’t I just be like everyone else?” These are the questions I used to ask myself as a teenage girl when I was diagnosed with epilepsy.

When I was diagnosed with epilepsy, I felt completely helpless and out of control. I wasn’t in control of my body or what was going on around me. Fortunately, I had an amazing team of doctors who were able to diagnose and treat my seizures. Their support was crucial in my journey. Today, I am 13 years seizure-free and have been able to live a very full life. I wanted to take my experience and help other patients the same way my team helped me. I believe I finally got my question answered. What’s the point? The point is to be able to use our experiences to help others. I have dedicated my career to serving our pediatric patients and families and letting them know where is always hope.

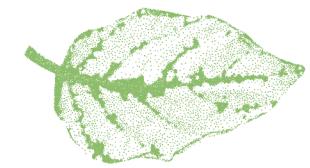
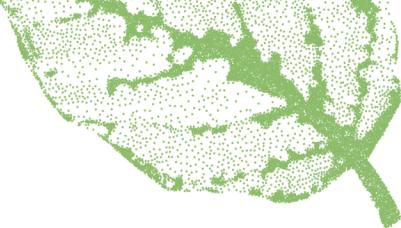
With sincerity,

HERE TO SERVE



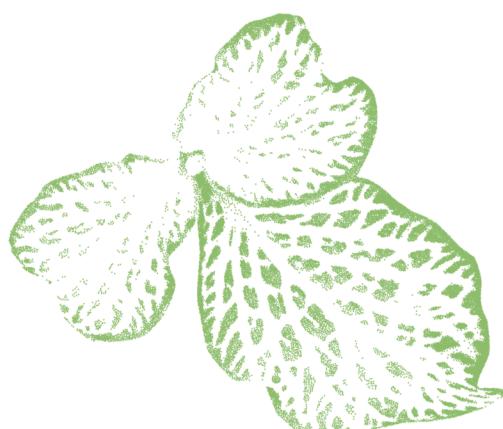
Kelsey

Clinical Nurse
Recovery Room



Katelyn

Clinical Nurse
Medical Unit



Dear Hospital,

There's no such thing as a small act of kindness. Every act creates a ripple with no logical end.

It was 2020, we were in the beginning of the pandemic. It was the first time I was on the medical surgical unit as a nursing student. We were all terrified, not knowing what really to expect. My patient had COVID and had been on the unit for a week at this point and most likely would not be leaving for a while due to her worsening condition. She was really missing her husband. I brought in an iPad so she could talk with her family. I remember her husband telling her that he missed her, and she needed to come home now. She told him not to worry and she would be home soon, fully believing she would be home in a few days.

A doctor came in to notify her that she would be staying for at least another 1-2 weeks, she was devastated. He didn't stay to comfort her, he immediately left the room, leaving just myself with the patient.

I didn't know what else to do except to offer to wash her hair. She quickly agreed and told me she hadn't washed her hair since she had been admitted. I gave her a hair wash, a bed bath, and helped her get more comfortable in her bed.

It was a simple offer, but I can see how much it helped comfort her when she got such devastating news. I still remember her, and that moment and she deeply impacted my care for patients.

A simple offer that can make a huge difference.

I CAN WASH YOUR HAIR

Dear Hospital,

The inspiration behind my brain tattoo is my grandmother, the woman who helped raise me by changing my diapers, feeding me, and nurturing me into the person I am today. Now, as she approaches the end of her life, the roles have reversed. It is my turn to change her diapers, to feed her, to care for her with the same tenderness and love she once showed me.

In my family, no one else is in the medical field, so simple nursing interventions like propping up legs to prevent pressure sores on heels, are not second nature. But for me, I do this every day as a nurse. It is my honor, if you will, to be able to give back to not only my grandmother, but my immediate family in such a profound yet simple way.

My brain tattoo represents the honor of caregiving, the beauty of the cycle of life, and the deep gratitude I feel for being able to serve my grandmother in this way. It is a reminder that the knowledge and compassion we carry as nurses extend far beyond the hospital walls - they touch the very fabric of our families and communities.

With gratitude,

MY HONOR



Allison

Clinical Nurse
Main Operating Room