



Your Link to Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

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Children's Leader Profile: Brett Lee

This summer, Brett Lee joined Children's as our new Senior Vice President of Clinical Operations. Before moving to Atlanta, Brett built an impressive career in pediatric healthcare administration, from Cook Children's Hospital in Dallas-Ft. Worth, to Dallas Children's Medical Center, and most recently, Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis. In 2011, Brett was named the national Young Executive of the Year by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), and in 2009 published the book *Growing Leaders in Healthcare: Lessons from the Corporate World*.



Now that he's settled in to his new role at Children's, we sat down with him to find out a little more about our newest member of the senior leadership team.

What inspired you to look to healthcare as a career?

I grew up in hospitals. Both of my parents were practicing clinicians in McAlester, Okla., where I grew up. McAlester was a small town where we had only three stoplights. There were two major employers: the hospital and the Oklahoma state penitentiary. My first job, at the age of 12, was working as a volunteer in the hospital, and I saw at an early age the impact hospitals can have have on people and transforming lives.

You started your career as a clinician, trained in physical therapy. Why did you move into healthcare administration?

Initially, it happened by accident. I was working as a physical therapist and was recruited at an American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) event to start a Sports Medicine program at Cook Children's Hospital. What I realized once I got there was that I had a passion for pediatrics. I loved working with the teenage athlete population.

When I later became Manager of the Rehab Program in Ft. Worth, I realized that while I enjoyed making a difference one child at a time, by taking on a leadership role, I could have more impact on a greater number of children to really improve care in the overall population. I felt that I owed it to those who were working with and for me to obtain some formal management training before embarking on a leadership career, so I decided to complete my graduate degree in health finance and management at Johns Hopkins University. While I do miss the daily patient contact, I've had an incredibly rewarding career thus far, and I have never regretted my decision to become a healthcare leader.

Your work history almost looks like you were in training just to come to Children's at some point, because so much of what you've achieved touches on key issues we face here. Tell us about the journey that brought you from Dallas to Indianapolis to Atlanta.

Well, Cook was predominantly a community-based pediatric hospital. While there, I had the opportunity to work with members of the community, private practice pediatricians and the hospital-based Emergency department to address overutilization of the EDs for primary care issues. This is a common concern for many hospitals, including Children's.

Congratulations to our Strong4Life Scavenger Hunt Winners

Congratulations to the winners of part I of the Strong4Life Scavenger Hunt! Get ready for part II and another chance to win! [View Full Story >](#)

Children's Recognizes November Catch Me at My Best Winners

Congratulations to the following employees for winning this month's [Catch Me at My Best](#) drawing for a Children's duffle bag. [View Full Story >](#)

Three Children's Nurses Win Nurse of the Year Awards

Congratulations to Children's nurses Nancy Wagner, Angela Hawthorne and Thomas Flynn. They were each honored by the March of Dimes at the second annual Nurse of the Year Awards Nov. 19. Children's had a total of 29 nominees. [View Full Story >](#)

Congratulations to the Top 25 Teams in the Fit4Fall Buddy Challenge

Congratulations to our first 25 teams to make it to Plymouth Rock, AL! You all did a fantastic job in your creative and fun team names and the Fit4Fall Buddy Challenge! [View Full Story >](#)

New Careforce Connection Will Help You Find Your Way

Children's is launching a new and improved Careforce Connection Intranet site on **Monday, Dec. 12**. You've shared that it's not always easy to find what you are looking for on the site, so we're making some key changes. [View Full Story >](#)

Learn How to Prevent, Recognize and React Responsibly to Child Sex Abuse with Stewards of Children Training

Are you outraged by the Penn State case? Find out what YOU can do to protect children! [View Full Story >](#)

All the Small Things: Help Children's Celebrate Holiday Happenings

When I went on to Dallas Children's, it was to gain an understanding of the academic medical center environment. There, we were able to establish some exciting new clinical service lines, build a new facility and implement the Epic electronic health records system.

I eventually got a call from the CEO at Riley needing someone to establish and rollout pediatric service lines throughout the 18-hospital Indiana University Health system, which I think provided me with a unique background and perspective of our service line structure here at Children's.

What do you see as your role as a leader?

When I returned to Cook for my administrative fellowship, the former CEO, Russell Tolman, really became a mentor for me and still remains a close friend to this day. He came from a family of educators and had a very hands-on approach, and I have adopted that management style. Russell was incredibly humble and very visible in the organization. He believed that you had to get to know the people who work on the frontlines and that strategy is only as good as the execution—you have to be present and provide the appropriate resources for people to be successful.

What do you see for the future of pediatrics?

I think we will see wellness and population management as key drivers for pediatrics in the future. The current model of acute care is not sustainable when you look at utilization and public health trends. We are faced with a society where the current generation of children is not as healthy as previous generations, and we as healthcare leaders have to take an active role in changing that disturbing fact. If we do not use our collective knowledge and infrastructure to truly make a difference, then we are not doing all we can to earn the sacred trust that has been placed in us by the communities that we serve.

Population health management takes a different approach, mindset and resources, but is necessary to transform the future for our children. Children's current campaign to stem the pediatric obesity epidemic in the state of Georgia is a wonderful example of this type of public health initiative.

If you hadn't gone into healthcare, what would you have wanted to be?

I would love to have been a major league baseball player. I played in college and high school and am still a huge fan.

When you're not at work, what do you like to do for fun?

I really like to write. I've published one book in 2009 about what we can learn as a healthcare industry from corporate America around the topic of leadership development, and I just published a second book called Managing Clinically, outlining concepts from the medical profession and how those principles can be applied to enhance the practice and ethics of business management.

Finally, tell us one thing most people don't know about you.

When I was in Las Vegas on a sports medicine internship, I was the physical therapist for Sinbad, the comedian.

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From now until Dec. 23, please keep your ears and eyes open for those special happenings with patients and staff. We'd love to share them with the community if possible and appropriate.

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Children's Share Campaign Will Send Messages of Hope to Patients During Holidays

We're hoping to gather more than 1, 280 messages for the children that will spend the holidays at our hospitals. Visit

[ShareWithChildrens.org](#) to learn more about this new campaign.

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Strong4Life Fall into Fitness Individual Steps Competition Starts is Under Way

The Strong4Life Fall into Fitness Individual Steps Competition is a four-week wellness competition for all employees. The goal of the competition is to encourage you to increase your physical activity before the holidays.

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Nominate a Children's Nurse for the ajcjobs Nursing Excellence Awards

Our Children's nurses go above and beyond each day. Let's recognize them for it. [Nominate](#) one (or several) of our amazing caregivers for the 7th annual ajcjobs Nursing Excellence Awards.

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It's Not Too Late to Update Your Biometrics and HRA by Dec. 31

Did you miss a wellness fair this year? If so, it's not too late to submit your biometrics to Atlanta Health Systems and complete your HRA before Dec. 31.

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Strong4Life Announces Participation in the Peachtree City Triathlon

Strong4Life is excited to announce our participation in the Peachtree City Triathlon on May 19.

Benefitting Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, this triathlon offers two options: a sprint distance for the beginner and a longer international distance for the more experienced triathlete.