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## From Chaplaincy Intern to Patient Family Member to Occupational Therapy Student—All at Children's at Scottish Rite

She started out with an internship in the chaplaincy, then became a patient family member, and is now an occupational therapy student: Shannon Casola has certainly seen Children's at Scottish Rite from a number of angles.



In her days working as an intern in the Chaplaincy, Brenda Green, Pastoral Care Coordinator, noted how enthusiastic Shannon was about Children's. "You never know what people will do with their experiences here," she says. "Shannon realized here that pediatrics was her calling instead of being a pastor. We helped someone realize their calling, but it came in a completely different direction, and I don't know if that's ever happened before."

However, Shannon always knew she wanted to do something involving children.

"My husband and I had done a lot with camps, drama and mentoring, and we always had great respect for Children's," she says. "I saw that the chaplaincy had an internship available, and even though I was the only intern not in seminary, I just wanted to do something for kids and families."

In 2005, she started her internship. "Chaplains are called in for difficult situations," she says. "Although it was so unbelievably rewarding, it was obviously difficult and challenging. You have to go in when parents are finding out their child has a brain tumor, or their illness is terminal – even if the child is about to die. At the same time, in becoming a chaplaincy intern, I realized I was capable of so much more than I had ever given myself credit for."

She never could have known at the time, but her experience with the chaplaincy helped give her strength when a terrible accident occurred in 2006.

At a McDonald's in Covington, Ga., Shannon's brother's family, including his wife, three children and sister-in-law, were purposefully hit by a driver while walking through the parking lot. Her nephews, ages 4 and 3, and niece, 2, were transported to Children's at Scottish Rite, while the women were transported to Grady.

"I was the only other family member in the state at the time, so when my brother called me, I asked, 'Where do you need me to be?'" she says. "He asked me to go to Children's at Scottish Rite to be with his kids."

"Everyone at Scottish Rite handled it so well," she recalls. "There was a reporter waiting for a family member to arrive, and Frank, a chaplain who I had worked with, saved me."

Frank, who is now retired, was an occupational therapist who had become a chaplain. "He walked us through everything and facilitated the family through the entire situation," she says. "I cannot say enough good things about the

### Children's Employees Contribute to National Infection Prevention Campaign

We all know that infection prevention is of the utmost importance while working in clinical care, as well as any other kind of work environment. Several children's employees have contributed immeasurably to a national campaign that will work to address infection prevention.

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### Hear What All the Hype is About—Attend a Careforce Forum

Children's is passionate about the health of Georgia's children, and we are tackling the state's childhood obesity crisis head-on with a comprehensive statewide campaign. Be sure to attend an upcoming Careforce Forum to get a sneak preview from CEO Donna Hyland and members of the Executive Team.

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### Careforce Connection Checks In with Ami Klin, PhD, Director of the Marcus Autism Center

After being in Atlanta for only five months, Marcus Autism Center Director Dr. Ami Klin is already wholeheartedly donning a number of hats, all of which benefit the lives of children with autism and their families.

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### Erika Is Losing It Because She Just Met the Man of Her Dreams

Erika, a Writer and Editor in Marketing, describes her undying teenage passion for a

chaplains and how unbelievable they are. They walk in and bring stability and a quite strength in the middle of people's lives that are becoming just chaos."

Inspired by the care that her family received, Shannon knew she wanted to continue working in pediatrics, but she had long been hard on herself for not finishing her college degree. "It was my one regret in life," she says.

However, with the confidence boost from her time with the chaplaincy program, and her decision galvanized after the traumatic incident, she decided to go back to school. Shannon investigated a number of career paths before deciding on occupational therapy, in which therapists help a child learn, or re-learn, how to effectively perform daily physical or social activities (occupations).

Shannon tearfully remembers the joy that attending university brought her, especially as the first person in her family to graduate from college. "Even as a non-traditional student with a husband and a child, I graduated with a 4.0 and won the Graduate Student of the Year Award. Had it not been for my journey, both as a chaplain intern and when my brother's children were in the PICU, I never would have been able to do that."

Currently, Shannon is an Occupation Therapy Student at Children's at Scottish Rite, but will soon finish her 12 week training and sit for her national board exam in September. Shannon says she has enjoyed coming in at the end of a child's time in treatment, and knows that occupational therapy makes a huge difference in his functioning when he returns home after an injury or illness.

She works in patient rehab with a clinical instructor, and they care for children with a number of diagnoses, such as spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury or stroke.

"We meet with families, and teach children how to regain independence in their world, because many are in situations where they've become debilitated," she explains.

The occupational therapists teach patients to get dressed, shower, brush their teeth, brush their hair and feed themselves, as well as activities like throwing a ball. They also work with other teams, such as rehabilitation therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy.

It's clear in Shannon's voice that she has a true passion in working with kids. "I love it, love it, love it," she says. "To see the parents as they watch their children regain what they lost is huge. You can just see the hope restored because some are facing pretty tough situations. I'm so thankful that the Atlanta area has this available to our children. I feel very blessed, very lucky."

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member of the New Kids on the Block, and how meeting him at The Voice gave her insight into her "step by step" journey.

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#### **Environmental Committee at Children's at Scottish Rite Promotes "GROWing" Recycling Efforts**

Stephanie Goetter, Staff Nurse, started the G.R.O.W. (Greening and Reducing Operational Waste) Committee in the Operating Room Department at Children's at Scottish Rite in April 2009. Check out some easy ways that you can go green in your own department.

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#### **Hyundai Hope on Wheels Supports Aflac Cancer Center with \$50,000**

On Friday, June 24, Greater Atlanta Hyundai Dealers joined Hyundai Motor America in support of childhood cancer research by presenting a \$50,000 Hyundai Scholar grant to the Aflac Cancer Center at Children's at Egleston as part of the 2011 Hope on Wheels program.

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#### **Children's Recognizes School at Work Graduates**

The Children's School at Work (SAW) Program graduation ceremony for the class of 2011 was held Friday, June 24.

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#### **New Child Passenger Safety Restraint Law Becomes Effective in Georgia July 1**

Effective July 1, 2011, all children under 8 years old must be properly secured in an approved car seat or booster seat while riding in a car, van, SUV or pickup truck.

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#### **Matt Ryan Golf Tournament Raises Money for Children's**

Atlanta Falcons Pro Bowl quarterback Matt Ryan hosted his inaugural Celebrity-Am Classic golf tournament at TPC Sugarloaf in Duluth, Ga. More than 125 golfers participated in this sold-out event to benefit Children's and The Matt Ryan Foundation.

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#### **Children's Fairy Godmother Celebrates 90th Birthday**

A little magic goes a long way for the patients of Children's at Egleston when it's coupled with a beaming smile, a big hug and a cooing voice with a British lilt saying, "Oh, well don't you just look wonderful today!"