

## Holidays Bring Abundance of Joy and Laughter



The weather was cold and snow was blowing outside, but you'd never know it from the smiles and laughter coming from Shriners Hospitals for Children - Cincinnati over the holidays.

Hospital staff planned several special events to help spread the holiday spirit amongst patients and families.

The holidays started in November when parents gathered around to decorate a gingerbread house for the 3rd annual Houses of Hope Gingerbread House Contest and Display. "The families have a blast at this activity," said Donna McCartney, a care coordinator at the hospital and coordinator of the parent activity groups. "This is always our longest session because the families won't leave until the house is perfect!"

The families and patients enjoyed helping out with the hospital decorations, too. The Hiles family from Foster, KY, donated Christmas ornaments. Our families then spent an evening decorating special ornaments with their child's name for our lobby tree.

The ladies of the board of governors gathered together on board day and spent the morning preparing gifts for the parents of our patients and decorating the family care units with Christmas trees and Santas. They worked hard to bring some cheer and happiness to those who might not have been able to be home for the holidays. While here, the ladies also had the opportunity to listen to guest speaker Jim Myers as he told the story of his burn injury several years ago. Jim is a former patient of our hospital and was injured when he was just nine years old. Now a father of two teenage children, Jim welcomed the chance to finally be able to give back to the people and hospital who mean so much to him by sharing his journey with others.

For the 16th year, employees from General Electric (GE) Aviation and Santa Claus (pictured above with Alexis) made their annual trek to the hospital to deliver hundreds of toys and a cash donation as part of their annual toy drive for the pediatric burn hospital. "We always look forward to the GE toy donation," said Kathy Washam, supervisor in child life. "It means Christmas is near and we know the kids will be really happy!" The toy drive is part of the GE Volunteers "Holiday Hope" project at GE Aviation sites in Greater Cincinnati, where GE employees contribute toys, clothing, food, and cash to local non-profit organizations during the holidays. "It's a privilege to participate in this wonderful event," said Jim Hoffman, GE Aviation engineering manager who leads the toy collection for GE.

Christmas Eve brought a pizza party celebration for the patients and families thanks to the Ishtar Temple #54, Daughters of the Nile Clown Unit.

Thanks to hundreds of donors our toy closets are FULL. Because of the generosity of SO many groups, we do **not** need: baby dolls, beanie babies, wood carved toys, books for young children, stuffed animals, play-doh, magic doodlers, match box cars, trucks, Barbie dolls, wagons, or knitted items.

Our biggest need remains items for teenagers. Nearly 400 teens are admitted to the hospital yearly. They particularly enjoy: diaries, stationery, teen chapter books, word puzzle books and Sudoku, hand-held electronic games, baseball caps, MP3 players, car model glue sets, Uno, Skip Bo card games, small photo albums, and regular playing cards.

