

**August 28, 2025**

# The Shrine Vine

Shriners Children's Erie

## September Birthdays

**Ozgur Dede, MD** - September 1  
**Dianna D'Amico** - September 3  
**Holly LaFuria** - September 3  
**Kristie Gunn** - September 5  
**Stephen Mendelson, MD** - September 7  
**Kim Chiesa** - September 11  
**Matthew Eimers** - September 13  
**Sara Watkins** - September 24  
**Kerry Armet, MD** - September 30

## Celebrations and Special Dates

**Baby Safety Month**  
**Labor Day** - Sept. 1  
**Eat an Extra Dessert Day** - Sept. 4  
**Environmental Services Week** –  
Sept. 14-20  
**National Rehab Week** – Sept. 15-21

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## Upcoming Holidays and Hospital Convenience Days

### Labor Day

- Friday, August 29 – “hospital” convenience day
- Monday, September 1 – Closed/holiday

### Thanksgiving

- Thursday, November 27 – Closed/holiday
- Friday, November 28 – Black Friday, “hospital” convenience day

### Christmas

- Wednesday, December 24 – Closing early at 2:30pm for “hospital” convenience
- Thursday, December 25 – Closed/holiday
- Friday, December 26 – “hospital” convenience day



## New Years

- Wednesday, December 31 – Closing early at 2:30pm for “hospital” convenience
- Thursday, January 1 – Closed/holiday
- Friday, January 2– TBD (More to follow)



## Stay Connected with the Shrine Vine

The Shrine Vine is the primary source for important news, upcoming events and critical updates from Shriners Children’s Erie. It is essential that all staff take time to read each edition to stay informed about what’s happening across our facility and within the Shriners Children’s community.

Each issue includes valuable information, patient highlights, staff spotlights, special events and important reminders, that directly support our shared work and mission. Staying connected ensures we are all working together with the same knowledge and goals.

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## Extraordinary Erie Gives Day

Our community came together with the help of the Erie Community Foundation in an incredible way on Erie Gives Day, raising **\$185,694** to support children receiving care at Shriners Children’s Erie!

Because of this generosity, more children will continue to receive the *Most Amazing Care Anywhere*, that helps them heal, grow and thrive.

A special thank you to David Schumacher and Nicole Vommaro for their outstanding support in philanthropy, ensuring our donor relationships remain strong and impactful.

We’d also like to extend our congratulations to the winners of our Erie Gives fundraising page contest for Shriners Children’s Erie: Samantha Fields, Penny Lindey and David Schumacher. Each winner has earned a well-deserved flex

day for their hard work!

Thank you to everyone who participated in Erie Gives Day this year.



**GRAND  
OPENING!**

**Shriners Market**  
**Tuesday, September 2nd**  
**11am- 2pm**

**MARKET TWENTY 4 SEVEN FAVORITES**

- Deli-Style Sandwiches
- Wholesome Entrées
- Homemade Baked Goods
- Premium Beverages, Snacks & Treats



 **ANY QUESTIONS?**  
CALL/TEXT 1-855-443-1689

## Grand Opening of the New Food Kiosk

We're excited to announce that the new food kiosk at Shriners Children's Erie will officially open on Tuesday, September 2!

Join us for the grand opening celebration from 11:00a.m.–2:00 p.m., where representatives from Continental Market will be on site with prizes and giveaways. The market will remain open for the rest of the workday.

After much planning and anticipation, we're thrilled to introduce this new feature to better serve our Shriners Children's Erie community.

## Onsite Car Seat Technicians

Car seat safety is an important part of protecting our patients and their families. Here at Shriners Children's Erie, we are fortunate to have two certified car seat technicians on site, **Ryan Berndt** and **Kristie Gunn**. Both are trained to correctly install car seats and ensure they are being used properly.

If a Shriner driver, parent, or guardian has questions or concerns about a car seat, please direct them to Ryan or Kristie for assistance.



Contact information:

**Ryan Berndt:**

rberndt@shrinenet.org or x8845

**Kristie Gunn:**

kgunn@shrinenet.org or x8844

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## Welcome New Employees!

We're excited to welcome back **Holly LaFuria, MS, OTR/L**, to the Shriners Children's Erie team! Holly is a compassionate and goal-driven occupational therapist with 14 years of experience providing client-centered care across pediatric, adult and geriatric populations in inpatient, outpatient and community settings.

Her background includes work in rehabilitation, early intervention, acute care and home health, with expertise in functional assessments, adaptive equipment training, splinting, complex feeding and sensory-based intervention. Holly is passionate about helping patients achieve the greatest level of independence in their daily lives through evidence-based practices.

Many of you may remember Holly from her previous time at Shriners Children's Erie (2012–2017) and we are thrilled to have her talents and expertise back on our team!







Please join us in welcoming **David O'Day**, our new first-shift security guard contracted through Allied Universal Security, to Shriners Children's Erie. David brings valuable experience in safety and security and is committed to providing a welcoming and secure environment for our patients, families and staff. We're excited to have him on the team. Be sure to say hello when you see him around the facility.

Please help us welcome **Shawn Higgins** to Shriners Children's Erie! Shawn joins us as a second-shift security guard through Allied Universal Security. With a strong commitment to safety and teamwork, Shawn is looking forward to supporting our mission by helping provide a secure and friendly environment for everyone who comes through our doors. We're excited to have him on the team. Be sure to say hello when you see him around the facility.



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## FedEx Ground Shipping Reminder

If you have FedEx Ground shipments that need to be sent out, please coordinate with **Darren Mackowski**. Darren has the programming to electronically complete the shipping information, ensuring all packages are processed and sent out correctly.

Darren can be reached at:  
814-874-8851  
or [dmackowski@shrinenet.org](mailto:dmackowski@shrinenet.org)



Thank you for helping us keep  
shipments accurate and efficient!

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## **Volunteers Needed for Community Safety Event**

Volunteers are needed to help with the upcoming Community Safety Event on Saturday, September 27, held in the front parking lot of Shriners Children's Erie.

Formerly known as the Car Seat Safety Event, this annual event has grown over the past two years to include a variety of community health and safety partners who share valuable resources with attendees.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact **Kristie Gunn** at [kgunn@shrinenet.org](mailto:kgunn@shrinenet.org) or x8844.

Your support helps us make this event a success for our patients, families and the community.

# Is Your Child In The Right Car Seat?

Shriners Children's Erie is hosting a **FREE** car seat safety event, where certified personnel will inspect your car seats to ensure proper installation and usage. Several community partners and organizations will offer valuable resources and tips for child safety.

No registration is required. Just bring your car seat instructions and vehicle owner's manual. It's best to have your child with you for a proper fit check.



September 27, 2025



9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.



1645 W 8<sup>th</sup> St Erie PA, 16509

**Contact:** Kristie Gunn at  
(814) 875-8844 or  
[Kgunn@shrinenet.org](mailto:Kgunn@shrinenet.org)

Free Lead Testing

Fire Safety Education

and other valuable  
family resources

Lots of  
Giveaways

## Community Partners & Resources

- Erie County Department of Health
- Voices for Independence
- Highmark Caring Place
- Community Health Net
- Erie Family Center  
plus more!



**Shriners  
Children's™**  
Erie



**Save the Date – Trunk or Treat at Shriners Children's Erie!**



Mark your calendars! Our annual Trunk or Treat event will be held on Tuesday, October 14. We're looking for volunteers to help make this year's event a spectacular success! We need:

**Trunk decorators** – Get creative and design a fun, festive trunk display!

**Event helpers** – Assist with setup, activities and welcoming families.

Candy will be supplied for distribution; all you need to bring is your Halloween spirit!

If you're interested in volunteering or designing a trunk, please contact **Izzy Spires** at X8761 or [ispires@shrinenet.org](mailto:ispires@shrinenet.org).



## Spirit of Children Coupon

🎃 Only 64 days until Halloween... but who's counting? 🧛‍♀️

Use this coupon at any local Spirit Halloween stores and save 10%! When you use this coupon, Spirit of Children donates 10% of your Spirit Halloween purchase total to support local child life programs, including Shriners Children's Erie! Use promo code **Caring25** when ordering online.



The coupon is a purple rectangular card with a yellow wavy border at the bottom. On the left, there is a yellow circle containing the 'SPIRIT OF CHILDREN' logo and the tagline 'Making hospitals less scary for kids and their families'. To the right of the circle, the text 'SAVE 10% OFF YOUR ENTIRE ORDER' is written in large yellow letters, followed by 'SPIRIT GIVES 10% TO YOUR LOCAL PARTNER HOSPITAL' in smaller yellow letters. Below this, it says 'Present coupon in any Spirit Halloween or enter promo code **CARING25** at checkout when shopping on SpiritHalloween.com'. At the bottom left, there is a smaller 'SPIRIT OF CHILDREN' logo with the text 'For a store near you visit SpiritHalloween.com'. In the center bottom, there is a barcode with the number '234761' below it. On the bottom right, there is a small block of fine print.

**SAVE 10% OFF**  
YOUR ENTIRE ORDER  
**SPIRIT GIVES 10%**  
TO YOUR LOCAL PARTNER HOSPITAL

Present coupon in any Spirit Halloween or enter promo code **CARING25** at checkout when shopping on SpiritHalloween.com

**SPIRIT OF CHILDREN**  
Making hospitals less scary for kids and their families

**SPIRIT OF CHILDREN**  
For a store near you visit SpiritHalloween.com

234761

Offer valid through 10/31/2025 at Spirit Halloween and SpiritHalloween.com. Coupons that are forged or altered in any way will not be accepted. Not valid on prior purchases, associate discount or taxes. If merchandise is returned, coupon discount will be deducted from items prior to refund/credit. Limit one per customer. Shipping offers cannot be combined with other discounts at store kiosks or online. No cash value. Spirit Halloween may cancel promotion at any time. Exclusions may apply. ©2025 Spirit Halloween Superstores, LLC.

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## Champions Pullin' for Children

We're excited to share that this year marks the 8th annual Champions Pullin' for Children fundraiser in support of Shriners Children's Erie! Over the past seven years, this event has raised an outstanding \$144,700 to benefit our mission.

We are grateful to the Champions Pullin' for Children team and everyone who participates for their continued commitment to our mission. Their generosity and hard work make a lasting difference in the lives of the kids and families we serve.



# Champions PULLIN' FOR CHILDREN

**SEPTEMBER 6**

**4:00 PM START TIME**

**GENERAL ADMISSION: \$20**

**KIDS 10 & UNDER: FREE**



**Shriners  
Children's<sup>™</sup>**  
Erie



***SATURDAY CLASSES:***

**UNLIMITED STREET DIESEL TRUCKS - \$800**

**3.0 LIMITED PRO DIESEL TRUCKS - \$4000**

**CLASSIC SUPER STOCK TRACTORS - \$3500**

**LIMITED PRO TRACTORS - \$3500**

**PRO STREET SEMI - \$1200**

**SUPER SEMI - \$8000**

**PRO MODIFIED TRUCKS - \$4000**

**650 IN.<sup>2</sup> MODIFIED TRUCKS - \$5000**

**410 SUPER STOCK TRUCKS - \$3500**

**PRO STOCK TRUCKS - \$2500**



**PINE LAKE RACEWAY**

**3796 MAPLE RD. JEFFERSON, OH 44047**

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## **Baby Sprinkle for Jon and Stephanie**

We're excited to celebrate Jon and Stephanie as they prepare to welcome their second child this October!

Please join us for a Baby Sprinkle on:



Wednesday, September 24



11:30 AM – 1:00 PM



Cafeteria

Stephanie, Jon and Big Brother Evan will all be present and we'd love for everyone to stop by and share in the celebration. Food and treats (cupcakes, pizza and drinks) will be provided.

Since the baby's gender will be a surprise, diapers and wipes are always a thoughtful gift idea. Individuals can choose to give on their own or departments may plan something together.

We hope you'll join us to celebrate and shower Jon and Stephanie with love and support as they grow their family!

If you have any questions, please reach out to **Debbie Miller** at [damiller@shrinenet.org](mailto:damiller@shrinenet.org) or x8714.





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## September Food Truck Schedule

This month marks the final run for the food trucks. A big thank you to Emily Madder for coordinating these tasty treats all season long.

**SUMMER**

# FOOD TRUCK

**SCHEDULE**

## SEPTEMBER

**3**

Wednesday

**E-DOGG'S**

11:30am - 1:30pm

**9**

Tuesday

**THE CLUCK TRUCK**

11:00am - 1:30pm

**15**

Monday

**SMILEY'S ICE CREAM**

11:30am - 1:00pm

**18**

Thursday

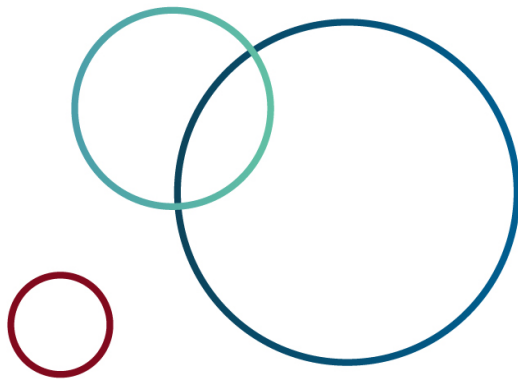
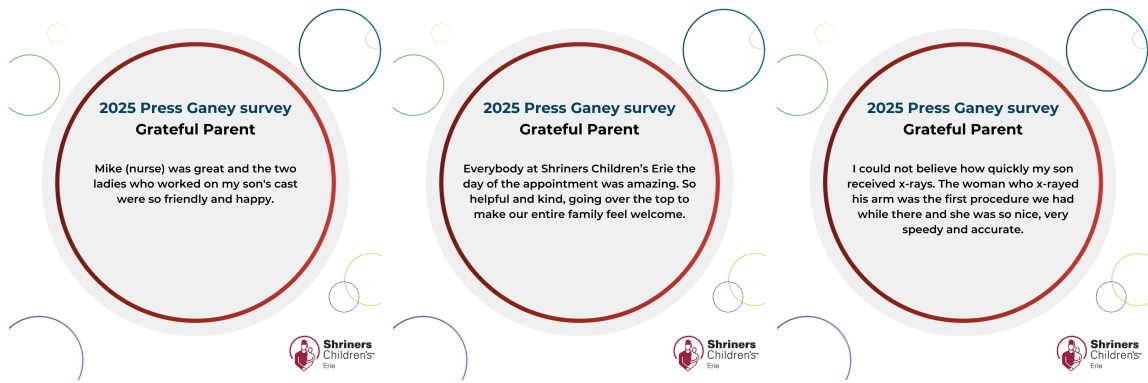
**BRADY'S CHUCKWAGON**

11:30am - 1:30pm



### Positive Press Ganey Comments

See what patients and families have to say about Shriners Children's Erie.



## Open Positions

Maintenance Tech - Per Diem  
Nurse Practitioner - 1.0 FTE  
Physician Assistant - 1.0 FTE

## Staff Shout Outs

Please take a moment to recognize a coworker who helped you or someone who went above and beyond in their day.

"Shout out to Matthew Eimers for a very successful security audit. Great job on keeping our facility secure."

**- Lorrie Baney**

"Shout out to Emily Madder, Izzy Spires and Micheal Widrig on putting together the badge buddies and the emergency code/bomb threat sheet together."

**- Lorrie Baney**

"Shout out to Amanda Rouse for the popcorn at the townhall. We appreciate all you do!"

**- Lorrie Baney, Izzy Spires and Alex Jakubowski**

"A big thank you to Amanda for all of her hard work and for wearing so many hats. She goes above and beyond in all that she does and her efforts are truly appreciated!"

**- Izzy Spires**

"Shout out to Alley Coleman. Your help was truly appreciated; I honestly couldn't have managed without you. Your assistance with the family in need of the car seat came at the perfect time when I was feeling overwhelmed. Your support made a real difference and I am so grateful for your kindness and willingness to step in when it was needed most. Thank you so much."

**- Kristie Gunn**

"Shout out to the clinic staff, Kelsie Pytlarz, Ryan Berndt, Mike Mentley, Gail Carrier and Shelly Gleichsner and child life Kristin Maguire and Michelle DeRooy for all they do every day to make sure our patient and family's needs are met and they have a great visit at Shriners Children's Erie."

**- Debbie Miller**

"Shout out to Darren Mackowski for accepting and helping with in-kind donations, specifically the recent painting that was donated."

**-David Schumacher**

"Shout out to Gail Carrier for exhibiting excellent nursing skills while assisting a post-op patient while I fit her with a compression garment."

**- Hannah Clark**

"Shout out to Dianna D'Amico, Kristie Gunn, Penny Lindey, Rhonda Massa, Tammy Muller and Sara Watkins. The care management team was very helpful in stepping up to support the clinic this Monday, Tuesday and

Wednesday when several clinic staff were off and having an increased number of patients on a few days. Tammy and Sara were there to support the clinic with casting (especially on Wednesday). I'm so appreciative of all the help that was provided this week to make our clinics successful. "

**- Debbie Miller**



## Mission Minute

Shriners Children's Erie patient ambassador Sarah has made it her mission to teach kindness, inclusion and understanding by sharing her journey of being born without a leg. What started as a classroom visit to her mom's first-grade class in 2020 and has grown into a heartfelt campaign that's touched the lives of students across multiple schools and caught the attention of the media throughout the county.

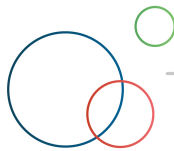
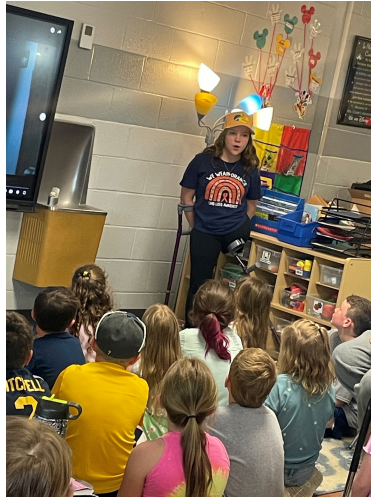
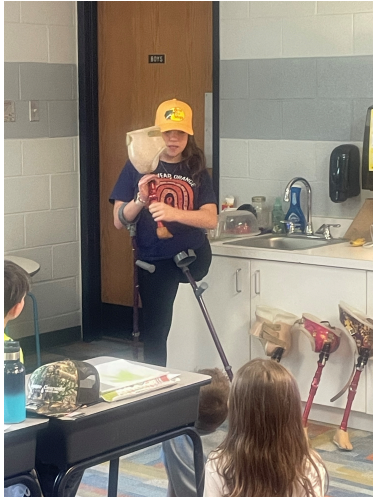
Now in her fifth year of school visits, Sarah uses story time, open Q&A and hands-on learning to encourage young students to embrace differences. She helps them understand that physical differences don't define a person or what they can do. "I read them a book and talk about being kind to others who may look different," Sarah shared. "Then we do activities like building assistive devices. The students are so kind and curious." Her visits often coincide with school Spirit Days, where students help raise money for both their Special Olympics programs and Shriners Children's Erie.

As someone who has overcome adversity and hurtful comments in her own life, Sarah is determined to show that limb differences don't limit possibilities. "People like me can do just as much as anyone else," she says. "I just want other kids to know that they're not alone and that being kind matters."

Whether she's giving a talk, golfing, cheering for football, or trying new things like flying in cheer, Sarah is unstoppable — and her confidence continues to grow with every story she tells. "It's gotten a lot easier to talk about my journey," she said. "Especially when I get to share all the cool things I've done."

Recently, a professor at a regional university reached out to Sarah's mom, Jocelyn, expressing interest in incorporating Sarah's powerful message of kindness and inclusion into her collegiate curriculum. This exciting development will help expand Sarah's impact to inspire not only young children but also future educators and leaders.

When asked what advice she would give to other kids who feel different, Sarah simply said, "Keep your head up. Don't let mean people bring you down. You're amazing just the way you are." Her mom shared the pride her and her husband feel watching Sarah grow, not only in confidence but in the reach of her message. "As she's grown, her message has grown too — it's no longer just about her story, but about spreading kindness, inclusivity and equality. And that's something the world really needs."



Facebook



Instagram