



Shriners
Children's™
Erie

Temple Newsletter

An update for our
Temple Affiliates



Dear Temple Affiliates,

We are thrilled to connect with you and share exciting updates from Shriners Children's Erie! Our dedicated team has been hard at work and we have many wonderful stories and developments to share with you. Thank you, for your continued support and dedication to changing the lives of children. Let's dive into the latest news!

If you plan to feature any of our content and need adjusted files, please contact **Izzy Spires** at ispires@shrinenet.org or (814) 875-8761.

Shriners Children's Erie Had a Scary Good Trunk or Treat

Shriners Children's Erie hosted its annual Trunk or Treat event on October 14 and it was a fantastic success!

With more than 30 decorated trunks, this year's event was the biggest and best yet. Thanks to the incredible creativity of our staff, volunteers and community partners, families enjoyed an evening filled with festive fun and Halloween spirit. Each trunk featured a unique theme and children delighted in a parade of treats, surprises and festive trinkets. Patients also received Halloween costumes and goodies from Spirit of Children, adding extra excitement to the celebration.

One of the evening's biggest hits came courtesy of community partners and friends at Chick-fil-A, who brought along two live cows for guests to meet and pet!

A huge thank-you to all amazing staff, volunteers and community partners for making this spooktacular event possible. The creativity of all brought smiles to so many faces and made the night truly unforgettable.



Shriners Children's Erie Representation at Orthomerica Star Summit

In early October, Alex Betancourt, MS, MBA, CPO, represented Shriners Children's Erie at the Orthomerica Star Summit, held October 1–3 in Orlando, Florida. The conference brought together attendees from around the world and Betancourt spoke on cranial remolding orthoses compliance and shared insights from the plagiocephaly/torticollis clinic at Shriners Children's Erie, highlighting how a multidisciplinary approach supports better patient outcomes in line with Shriners Children's mission.

Betancourt also had the opportunity to meet with Shriners Children's Pediatric Orthotic and Prosthetic Services (POPS) team members from Springfield and Twin Cities, as other Shriners Children's locations plan to expand their cranial remolding programs.

Additionally, Betancourt was recognized by Orthomerica as one of their "All Star Cranial Clinicians," a well-deserved honor celebrating his expertise and dedication to cranial care.



Shriners Children's Erie Provider Traveled to Ecuador to Provide Care

Right after presenting at the Orthomerica Star Summit, Alex Betancourt, MS, MBA, CPO, traveled to Ecuador for 8 days as part of the Project Perfect World initiative, providing orthotic and prosthetic care to children. During his visit, Betancourt saw 80 children, fitting them with donated orthoses and prostheses, which are repurposed and adjusted to fit other children, ensuring the maximum benefit for as many patients as possible.

This marked Betancourt's sixth trip to Ecuador, where he has built a strong community and enjoys watching the children he treats grow and thrive. During this trip, he even met with a young boy who had previously received HKAFOS from Shriners Children's Mexico!



Shriners Children's Erie Mighty Otters Sled Hockey has Begun!

The Mighty Otters sled hockey season started Tuesday, October 7 and has 21 kids on the roster this year. Practices will take place from 6-7 PM at the Erie Insurance Arena.

Sled hockey is an adaptive version of traditional hockey. Players sit in small sleds and use two modified sticks. One end with traditional hockey blades and the other with picks to propel themselves across the ice. Some participants also receive assistance from volunteers who help them move while they focus on handling the puck. The sport offers numerous therapeutic benefits, such as improved coordination, flexibility, endurance, fitness, confidence and, of course, fun!

If you want to join in on the fun, cheerleaders are always welcome to cheer on the Mighty Otters team.

2025-2026 Schedule

- Tuesday, 10/7/25 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 10/21/25 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 11/4/25 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 11/18/25 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 12/16/25 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 1/6/26 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 1/20/26 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 2/3/26 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 2/17/26 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Tuesday, 3/3/26 from 5:30-7 at the Erie Insurance Arena
- Saturday, 3/14/26 from 1-4 at the Erie Insurance Arena (end of the season game and party), more details to follow regarding this day





Exciting news for the Shriners Jammers!

Shriners Children's Erie is preparing for the next year's Shriners Jammers Wheelchair Basketball season with five brand-new basketball sport chairs. As the team continues to grow, additional chairs in a variety of sizes are needed to ensure every athlete has the perfect fit. These new additions will help next year's players feel more comfortable and confident in the sport they love. Plans are already underway to add even more chairs to meet the needs of the expanding team.

Shriners Children's Erie Representation at Chicago Sports Consortium

Recently, Rebecca Bowman, PT, DPT, manager of therapy services at Shriners Children's Erie, attended the Sports Consortium, held at Shriners Children's Chicago. This yearly meeting brought together sports medicine and orthopedic specialists from multiple Shriners Children's locations. The discussions covered a range of topics, including active research projects, sports patient-reported outcomes, the motion analysis center, rehabilitation and education.



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

2025 Press Ganey survey

Everybody at Shriners Children's Erie the day of the appointment was amazing. So helpful and kind, going over the top to make our entire family feel welcome.

-Grateful Parent

POPS Patient Satisfaction Survey

"Dr. Hannah has been wonderful to both my kids. She is very kind and listens to our concerns and advises accordingly."

-Grateful Parent

Patient Ambassador Program "Gives Patients a Voice"

I share this with you because I want to say thank you! I want to make sure the Shriners team realizes that every time they select a young patient ambassador they are allowing these young people who face challenges differently than most of us an opportunity to embrace who they are and gives them a path to be exceptional.

At the age of eight, when Ava's biggest concern was that her friends would make fun of her for wearing her brace and that regardless of what she did she would still require the surgery Dr. Dede described in detail every time we had an appointment you gave her a voice, you gave her an outlet to own a piece of her story and turn into something amazing and I hope you both and the rest of the team always remember this on the days that feels super challenging.

-Patient ambassador Ava's mom, Amy

A grateful mother recently reached out to staff at Shriners Children's Erie to share her appreciation for the care her child, a longtime patient ambassador, has received over the years.

Through the patient ambassador program, patients are given a voice and the opportunity to share their stories, helping them build confidence and pride in their journey. As this ambassador prepares to begin a new chapter and head to college next year, it's clear that the ambassador program has played an important role in her growth and journey.



Stronger Every Step: Cameron's Story of Perseverance

Cameron, 26, from Oil City, Pennsylvania, first became a patient at Shriners Children's Erie when he was 4 years old after a minor bump in preschool led to unexpected leg pain.

A visit to his pediatrician revealed a diagnosis of Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, a condition that occurs when blood flow to the hip bone is disrupted, causing the bone to break down and lose its rounded shape. Though the diagnosis was confusing at first for both Cameron and his family, they quickly embraced his care journey.

Throughout his childhood, Cameron wore orthoses to manage his condition, yet he never let that hold him back. He stayed active in flag football, baseball and basketball through high school, proving that his diagnosis would never stand in the way of doing what he loved. Supporting him every step of the way, through countless appointments and surgeries, were his family and his medical team at Shriners Children's Erie. He fondly remembers the care of Joao Tavares, M.D. and the nursing staff. "I never had a bad experience; they always made me feel safe and cared for," said Cameron.

Cameron's time at Shriners Children's Erie was filled with memorable moments. He remembers completing gait analysis tests in the vibrant, aquatic-themed hallways while staff cheered him on and he recalls the nurses' laughter during lighthearted moments after surgery. After each procedure, patients were allowed to choose a toy. One gift that left a lasting impression on him was a Lord of the Rings trilogy book set that he still proudly keeps on his bookshelf today.

While challenges like managing pain and overcoming the fear of surgeries were part of his journey, these experiences helped him develop confidence and a positive outlook. He learned that while his condition would always be a part of him, it didn't define what he could achieve. One milestone he cherishes is the moment Dr. Tavares enthusiastically told him, "You're in the clear," making him feel incredibly fortunate and empowered.

Today, Cameron applies the lessons from his experiences to his professional and personal life. He holds degrees in sports management and runs youth sports leagues through the YMCA, ensuring children have access to equipment and opportunities to enjoy sports. He credits his Shriners Children's journey with teaching him not to take anything for granted and inspiring him to live fully, exploring new places, trying new foods and pursuing new experiences.

Looking back, Cameron is deeply grateful, "Thank you so much for everything. You have no idea the impact you've had on my quality of life." To current young patients at Shriners Children's Erie, he offers this advice: "These people are here to help you. You can trust them. It may seem scary but it will all work out in the end."



Shriners Children's Erie
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