



**Shriners
Children's™
Erie**

Temple Newsletter

An update for our
Temple Affiliates



Dear Temple Affiliates,

As spring brings a season of renewal and new beginnings, we're pleased to share uplifting updates and meaningful news from Shriners Children's Erie. This year, our dedicated team has continued to grow, care and inspire, providing exceptional treatment while spreading hope and joy to the children and families we serve.

Thank you for your continued support. With brighter days ahead, we look forward to another season of making a positive impact together and helping even more children thrive. 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 Celebrates 99th Annual Shriners Day

On Sunday, June 7, Shriners Children's Erie proudly celebrated its 99th Annual Shriners Day, an event filled with joy, gratitude and community spirit. Thank you to everyone who made the day so special. In particular, sincere appreciation goes out to Shriners International, Daughters of the Nile and the inspiring patient ambassadors whose presence and continued support embody the heart of the Shriners Children's mission

Shriners Children's Erie was honored to welcome Past Imperial Potentate and Joint Board Liaison Kenny Craven and Lady Jennifer, along with Vice President of the Boards of Directors for Shriners International and Shriners Children's and a member of the Board of Trustees for Shriners Children's, Mark Hartz who took part in the day's events and joined in celebrating the organization's commitment to providing high-quality care to children.

A special thank-you is extended to the 14 affiliate temples represented at this year's celebration. Their dedication and participation helped make the event memorable for patients, families and staff alike. Gratitude is also due to the many staff members and volunteers whose efforts brought the day to life.

From guiding guests to coordinating behind-the-scenes logistics, their hard work ensured a smooth and meaningful experience for all in attendance.

Now in its 99th year, Shriners Day remains a powerful reminder of the dedication and commitment to the children Shriners Children's Erie serves and of the incredible community that stands behind them every step of the way.

As the organization looks ahead, it eagerly anticipates a truly spectacular milestone: the 100th anniversary of Shriners Children's Erie. This centennial celebration will honor a century of compassionate care, life-changing impact and unwavering dedication to children and families. It will also recognize the generations of caregivers, donors, volunteers and community partners who have shaped its legacy.



Missed out on Shriners Children's Erie Merch?

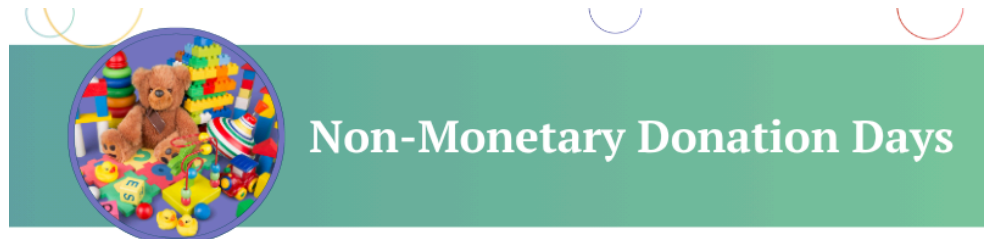
If you didn't get a chance to grab your Shriners Children's Erie gear during Shriners Day, don't worry—there's still time! Thanks to Faith, Hope & Images, you can now shop online for event merchandise. The online apparel store is open now through June 30, so be sure to place your order before it closes! Scan the QR code on the right to visit the store and order your merch today. Show your Shriners Children's Erie pride while supporting a great cause!



In-Kind Donation Days at Shriners Children's Erie

Shriners Children's Erie will now have dedicated days to accept non-monetary donations. These days will be the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.

If you have something you wish to donate but need to confirm whether it can be accepted, please contact Associate Director of Philanthropy, Nicole Vommaro, at nvommaro@shrinenet.org or 814-875-8746.



We gladly accept donation drop offs of new unwrapped toys, books, arts and craft supplies and gift cards on the Second and Fourth Wednesday of each month at Shriners Children's Erie.

If you are unsure if your donation is something we can accept, please reach out prior to dropping it off. If you have any additional questions regarding non-monetary donations, please contact:

**Nicole Vommaro
nvommaro@shrinenet.org
814-875-8746**

Your generosity goes further with Erie Gives 2026

The 16th annual Erie Gives Day is set for Tuesday, August 11 from 12:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. This 24-hour day of giving invites thousands of donors from across the country to support their favorite charity. All donations given during this campaign will receive a pro-rated match from the Erie Community Foundation and its sponsors, ensuring that your gift can make an even greater impact on the lives of children and families at Shriners Children's Erie!

How to support Shriners Children's Erie during Erie Gives

Donate by Check

- Mail checks to The Erie Community Foundation at 459 West 6th Street by Tuesday, August 4, 2026
- Must be made out to The Erie Community Foundation (minimum donation = \$25)
- Please reach out to Nicole Vommaro at 814-875-8746 or nvommaro@shrinenet.org for check donation form

Donate by Gifts of Stock or IRA

- Consult your advisor and initiate your stock transfer or IRA distribution to The Erie Community Foundation by Tuesday, August 4.
- Please reach out to Nicole Vommaro at 814-875-8746 or nvommaro@shrinenet.org for check donation form

Donate Online on Tuesday, August 11

- Gifts will be accepted on August 11 beginning at midnight (minimum donation = \$25)
- Online donations can be made via credit card (American Express, Discover, Mastercard, or Visa)
- All fees (transaction, platform and processing) are completely covered! This means that 100% of your donation goes directly to Shriners Children's Erie!

By Phone on August 11

- Call The Erie Community Foundation at 814-454-0843 between 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Thank you in advance for your generosity and support.

If you have any questions please reach out to Nicole Vommaro at 814-875-8746 or nvommaro@shrinenet.org



Save
The
Date



Shriners Children's Erie Patient Ambassador Shares Her Scoliosis Journey

On June 4, a powerful story featuring patient ambassador Savannah and her family were highlighted in both the Erie Times-News and GoErie. Journalist David Bruce interviewed the family, sharing Savannah's journey and how her scoliosis diagnosis has inspired her to advocate for earlier detection among children across Pennsylvania. Read the news story by David Bruce below.

Savannah Murdock was 10 when she suddenly started to lose her breath when playing at recess or participating in gym class. Her family doctor thought Savannah, might have asthma or long-term COVID-19 but an x-ray showed a different cause.

"As soon as the image appeared on the screen, they said that she had scoliosis," said her father, Brad. "Her spine looked like the letter S," said her mother, Tracy.

Scoliosis is an abnormal, side-to-side curvature of the spine. Savannah's spine was so curved that it was starting to squeeze her lungs, making it difficult for her to take deep breaths. Early diagnosis is vital in treating scoliosis because the abnormal curves worsen as the child's spine grows, said Alex Betancourt, manager of Pediatric Orthotic and Prosthetic Services at Shriners Children's Erie. "The earlier you diagnose scoliosis, the better the treatment options are," Betancourt said. Savannah's abnormal curves were measured to be 48 degrees, near the borderline for determining whether to treat with a back brace or spinal fusion surgery.

She and her parents chose a form-fitted back brace made at Shriners Children's Erie. She wears the hard-shell brace between 18 and 23 hours a day, seven days a week. "It was hard to wear at first," said Savannah. "It was hard to sit down and it just felt weird."

"She would cry at first while trying to sleep while wearing it," Tracy said. Savannah adjusted to the brace and wears it nearly all of the time, except when bathing or eating a large meal. She even wears it horseback riding, though she said she plans to remove it for future rides.

Her parents worried about the reaction other children would have to their daughter wearing a brace. They even hosted Savannah's friends for a sleepover to tell them about the brace. Tracy said there has been no teasing. "People have asked questions about it, that's all," Savannah said.

Besides wearing the brace, Savannah also does the Schroth Method, a specific type of exercises and stretches designed to help scoliosis patients. She attends Schroth sessions at AHN Grove City and does the exercises and stretches on equipment her father built at their home.

A recent checkup showed that Savannah's curves now measure just 33 degrees, a marked improvement in two years. Betancourt cautioned that such a reduction isn't typical with back bracing and could be caused by other factors. Most patients see their curves stabilize when they use the brace. "While some patients may experience a decrease in curvature, the primary goal of bracing is to prevent further progression rather than to achieve correction," Betancourt said in an email.

Savannah expects to wear her brace for another two to three years. Children are instructed to wear them until their bones have fully grown and hardened, which for girls is between the ages of 13 and 15.

She also has become a scoliosis advocate. A 4-H participant, Savannah donated the proceeds of a pig she raised to Shriners Children's Erie.

"I also learned that scoliosis screenings don't start in Pennsylvania until sixth grade, so I decided to write to our state senator, Michele Brooks, and see if they can make the screenings earlier," Savannah said. Brooks recently introduced Senate Bill 1234, which would lower the age for scoliosis screenings to fifth grade. It would also require them in eighth grade, in addition to sixth and seventh grades. As for Savannah's future, she and her family are encouraged by her progress but won't know if she will need surgery until her bones are done growing.

"I'm just looking forward to the day that I don't have to wear the brace," Savannah said.

