



FUND NEWS

Making a Difference.

December 2011 • Fourth Issue

The Forrest Spence Sibling Playroom

“During Forrest’s life we spent every moment with him that we could. We were constantly at his bedside showering him with love and affection and wanted to be at the hospital as much as possible to really be a part of things with his medical team. If we had other children at that time, I cannot imagine how difficult that would have been, given that children are not allowed in the ICU for the health of the patients there. The financial strain of that much childcare would have been too much, and it would have been even more emotionally distressing to have our family in different places all the time. Thinking back on our short time with Forrest, I am so thankful for the hours that we were able to spend with him. Now that we have two other sons, I am particularly aware of the needs of the whole family, siblings as well, and the need that every parent has to care for and protect ALL their children.” - Brittany Spence



Brittany and David Spence brought Forrest’s siblings, Miller and Austin, to visit the Forrest Sibling Playroom.

The parents of critically or chronically ill children obviously long to spend quality time with their sick child. Not only do they need to be available at the hospital often to speak with the medical staff and learn how to care for their sick child, it is also crucial to the healing process for the parent and child to make meaningful connections and spend loving time together. Unfortunately, for many families, the ill child is not the only child in the family and other children are not permitted on the ICU floors and many other areas of the hospital. While volunteering at Le Bonheur, Brittany Spence realized that many parents of multiple children could not visit their sick child due to the difficulties associated with finding childcare. During the planning of the new Le Bonheur hospital, Brittany brought this need to the attention of the hospital administrators and they subsequently gave the Forrest Spence Fund an official “go ahead” to begin designing a Sibling Room...

August 26th, 2011, marked the grand opening of the Forrest Sibling Playroom at Le Bonheur, and it now provides a safe and fun place for the healthy siblings of hospitalized children to be while their parents spend crucial quality time with their sick child. This special space is designed and fully funded by the Forrest Spence Fund and it is a dream come true for the Spences and the Fund community. The Spences contracted a local artist, Elaine Pacello,

to paint wall murals and she transformed an otherwise drab hospital room into a fun and whimsical forest of pine trees and friendly animals. The Spences and other Fund representatives were thrilled to get to design the room from the furniture to the flooring and to stock it with interesting games, toys, and play equipment. The Sibling Room is supervised by a full-time staff-person and a steady stream of loving volunteers.

The siblings of the young patient are dear to us just as the parents are, and we are so thankful to be able to provide this safe place for

them. Our hope is that they can enter this whimsical room and relax, have fun, and just be kids while their parents tend to their sibling. We are also thankful to have Le Bonheur hospital as a supportive partner in this project. The hospital administration caught the vision and literally opened the doors for us to be able to complete this precious project.

“Recently my healthy two year old grandson, Sam, contracted strep pneumonia and had to be in ICU on a ventilator. His five year old brother, John, was having a really difficult time since he had hardly ever been away from his parents. The sibling play room was a Godsend. Childlife came and took him and his father down several times when he visited. Thank you for providing such a precious gift. Praise God that Sam is healing and at home. Our family is grateful that in your grief you have been able to give to others.” - Kelli Williams, *Grandparent*

So far 2011 has been a full year at the Forrest Spence Fund! Many new initiatives are underway, and exciting changes have taken place. We near the end of 2011 encouraged by the work of our volunteers, humbled by the generosity of our donors, and committed to the precious families in our community like never before. Below are some highlights of what we have been doing in 2011, in the words of those on the “front lines” of our mission.

Providing supplies for Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital...

“The Forrest Spence Fund graciously supplies Le Bonheur NICU families with items such as lovies, tote bags, journals, swings, bouncy seats, and many other ‘touches from home.’ Parents’ worried faces often soften and they give a grateful smile of hope when they receive these thoughtful comforts.” - Ruth Munday, *Lactation Consultant, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital*

Starting the Parent Mentor Program at Le Bonheur ...

“Through this awesome and much-needed program, 11 mentors fulfill their passion of ‘loving on’ families and being there for them physically, emotionally, and now, also financially.” - Brittany Cochran, *Volunteer Services Coordinator, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital*

Providing necessities for families... “As a social worker in the NICU, I have seen first-hand how having a baby in the NICU is one of the most difficult emotional experiences a parent will ever face and the expenses are often overwhelming as well. The medical bills pile up, but so do other expenses such as cafeteria food, gas driving back and forth to the hospital, and items that insurance won’t cover but are needed due to the infant’s special needs. After paying for these extra expenses, basic necessities for the child or baby often become an extreme burden. The Forrest Spence Fund helps our families by providing meal vouchers, gas cards, car seats, clothes, and cribs. The Fund has also purchased special items for families when needed, such as cloth diapers for an infant with a skin condition. I feel that one of the most important services the Fund provides is to pay for counseling services for families that are grieving the loss of a child. Many families cannot afford to pay for counseling services, but they are often necessary for the healing process. We in the NICU are very grateful that so many non-medical needs of our families are met through the Forrest Spence Fund.” - Kimberly Higgs Volner, *L.C.S.W., Social Worker, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital*

“The survival tote bag the Fund provided was full of comforting gifts. It held a journal for our stay, a washed pink lovie that was ready to be held by our daughter, and supplies to make breastfeeding easier. We are thankful beyond words for the Funds’ continuous support and for the amazing people they sent to help us on our journey.” - Robin Ramsey, *Parent*

Providing dinners for families at Le Bonheur...

“Not only do family members stress about whether their child will heal, but they also have added financial, physical, and emotional worries. Dinners provided by the Fund give

our families a touch of home and a comfort to know that they are part of a community that supports them.” - Allie Olson, *Volunteer Services Assistant, Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital*

Providing dinners for families at the FedEx Family House

“The Forrest Spence Fund has impacted the families of the FedEx Family House in a dramatic and powerful way. Each month volunteers from the Fund prepare and serve a home-cooked dinner for our families. They not only wait on the families, they sit down and talk with them. Rarely do groups minister to the families in such a meaningful way. They also support the House in many other ways whenever it is needed. Their faithful support is a huge gift to FedEx Family House and each month they make a BIG impact on the lives of many people here.” - Thonda Boals Barnes, *Development Manager, FedEx Family House*

Providing counseling for families... “Counseling was my way of healing a wound I was trying to keep covered. The Forrest Spence Fund financed my counseling so I could begin the healing of losing my baby girl. It was something I needed but could not do for myself.” - Trisia Shannon, *Parent*

Supporting medical staff ... “I have personally suffered loss and I see how the Fund has such a unique impact on others’ lives. I can call on the people of the Fund for support when a family at Le Bonheur has a need, or when we as nurses are experiencing an especially hard time.” - Melody Burchett, *RN, BSN, Volunteer, Le Bonheur PICU nurse*

Providing grants to families in need ... “The Fund has become like family to us... Not only do they give you a real, personal face to show you what hope looks like, but they pass along hope in physical means as well, from kangaroo chairs in the NICU, to mother’s nursing equipment, to meal vouchers for the cafeteria. My family received a grant from them at a time that couldn’t have been more opportune and it helped ease the expenses of being away, on and off, from work for nine months.” - Jonathan Chu, *Parent*

“Our second son, Liam, was unexpectedly born with Down Syndrome and a bad heart condition. We had to miss a lot of work during his four and a half month stay in the NICU. Liam had a few procedures done and a big heart surgery. We didn’t even have time to think about money and necessities, but the Forrest Spence Fund gave us a grant to get us through. Because of the emotional and financial assistance they provided us, we were able to pay our bills, easing that burden and giving us a smoother transition back to home life.” - Violeta Brown, *Parent*

Volunteering in new ways ... “Once a month, we serve dinner at the FedEx Family House to families whose children are being treated at Le Bonheur. Most of the time, I do not know

what to say to the families I meet; they are experiencing pain and heartache that I have not experienced. Even though I do not understand, I can share in their pain by being present with them and listening to their stories, knowing that Jesus shares in our pain, and he does understand.” - Sarah Lawrence Allen, *Volunteer*



Volunteers providing dinners for families.



The **FORREST SPENCE FUND** is a non-profit organization which assists with the non-medical needs of critically or chronically ill children and their families in the Midsouth.

www.forrestspencefund.com

Local artist, Elaine Pacello, painted beautiful murals on the walls of the Forrest Spence Sibling Playroom.



FORREST SPENCE 5K | 2011



We are thrilled to report that this year's 5K was the best-attended to date with a whopping 1,064 participants! THANK YOU to our generous sponsors, tireless volunteers, and the many supportive runners and participants who made it such a success! Approximately 200 of our participants were children and we are thrilled that this 5K has become such a popular event for families in Memphis and beyond. Children are at the very heart of our mission, and we love seeing hundreds of smiling faces and enthusiastic little runners on race day!

The race festivities began bright and early with volunteers arriving at 5:00 a.m. to make preparations and set-up the course. Our team of volunteers operated the road race itself as well as a plentiful food table, two different races for children, registration and awards, and a large kids' area with giant inflatables and games of all sorts. We were also blessed to have many families with us that morning that we have cared for in the past... people we met while they struggled with an ill child and who have now become like family to us. Six families shared their personal story with the crowd at the post-race party to shed light on our mission and how it affects individuals in our community.

The annual 5K race is our biggest event and provides the bulk of our budget for the year. We are pleased to report that the 5K this year raised \$38,500 toward our goal. The generous sponsors who made the 2011 5K possible are listed to the right. Thank you again to these incredible sponsors and all our volunteers and participants! Planning for the next 5K is already underway. We welcome your involvement and it is never too early to make plans for sponsorship!

Platinum Level Sponsors (\$2000 donation)

- Campbell Clinic Orthopaedics
- Harris Madden & Powell – Insurance and Bonds
- LSI – Identifying Your World
- Shoemaker Financial
- Olympic Industries
- Walnut Grove Animal Clinic

Gold Level Sponsors (\$1000 donation)

- Adelman Law Firm, PLLC
- The Colton Cockrum Family
- Hope Christian Community Foundation
- Kid Station
- Lucas Orthodontics
- Madison Pharmacy
- Mark Loft – UBS Wealth Management
- Riverside Printing

Silver Level Sponsors (\$500 donation)

- Brown Dog Lodge
- DePuy Orthopaedics
- Fleming/Associates/Architects, P.C.
- Independent Presbyterian Church
- NexAir

- Pediatric Dental Group
- SportsTurf Solutions
- State Farm – Parker Rhett
- The Fred Stukenborg Family
- TruGreen
- UWT Logistics
- Wealth Solutions, LLC
- The Mark Weatherly, MD Family

Bronze Level Sponsors (\$250 donation)

- Commercial Advisors, LLC
- The Grady Coleman Family
- State Farm – Laura McKay



Volunteer Opportunities The Forrest Spence Fund seeks to continually discover new ways to support the non-medical needs of families with a critically or chronically ill child. We can only charge ahead in this way because of the tremendous commitment of our volunteers! They provide the framework for all we do and their tireless efforts make it all possible. If you have given your time to the Fund this year, whether it was one hour or many, your contribution made a significant impact and we give you a sincere “thank you.” Through your work, the Forrest Spence Fund has earned the reputation of heartfelt care and excellence of service and we hope to spread that impact further in the years to come.

Whether you have volunteered with us in the past or are looking for ways to get involved, here are some easy ways you can be involved... we hope you will join us!

Monthly Dinners at the FedEx Family House

Dinners are served to families on the second Thursday of each month. Volunteers arrive at 4:00pm to do light preparations for dinner, which we serve at 5:00pm. This is a three-hour commitment with no experience necessary! You can volunteer once in a while when your schedule allows or every month. Many of our volunteers befriend the families they meet while serving dinner and you will find it to be a true and rich blessing to serve them in this way.

Quarterly Dinners at Le Bonheur - This is a three-hour commitment from 5:00pm to 8:00pm at Le Bonheur. We provide dinner and serve the families any way we can as they eat. A smile, a listening ear, a drink refill, a dessert brought to the table, or packing-up food for other family members are just a few ways to help during these meals. The dinners occur in April, July, November and December. The one remaining for this year is Monday, December 19th.

Hospital support and Unit Adoption - Through our work with various units at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital, we have seen the dedication and tireless efforts of the medical staff there. A piece of our mission is to support the medical staff so that they can better serve our families, and toward that goal we are launching a new program in 2012 called Unit Adoption. The Unit Adoption program will feature one of Le Bonheur’s hospital units per month and we will seek to bring cheer to

the men and women who work tirelessly providing medical care within the selected unit. We intend to do this by providing the staff with sweet treats and other small acknowledgements. This is a new concept, and we are in need of volunteers to pioneer this service and put their talents and interests to work in this way. Are you interested in baking? Do you love putting together treat bags or goodie bags? Do you have a knack for making someone feel special? This is perfect for you!

Family Baskets - We have spent much of 2011 continuing our family basket initiative: collecting supplies, assembling and delivering hospital care baskets. These baskets are how it all began at the Forrest Spence Fund and are perhaps the service for which we are most known. These baskets show the compassion of the Fund in a unique way, acknowledging the importance of families’ non-medical needs. We often hear that the baskets provide just what a tired parent forgot, or something that they did not realize that they would need. This year the

Delta Christian Association partnered with us in this initiative and stocked and assembled ten family baskets. In addition, several families provided children’s books for our baskets through book drives. Our basket program is the cornerstone of our mission and we are pleased to have had partners in this initiative over the course of 2011. If your family or organization would like to be a part of this demonstration of caring, please contact donna@forrestspencefund.com for more information about how you can help.

The volunteer community of the Forrest Spence Fund is widely varied in talents, interests, and backgrounds. If you have a desire to serve children and families through the Forrest Spence Fund, we will joyfully find a place for you and we welcome your involvement! We are always considering new ways to meet the non-medical needs of families with chronically or critically ill children. The goal of the Fund is to evolve and grow as the needs of our families do also and we welcome your fresh ideas. Please contact donna@forrestspencefund.com with your questions, or to volunteer in any way. To stay in touch with the happenings of the Fund, please visit our Events page at <http://www.forrestspencefund.com/events/>. We also regularly update our Facebook and Twitter pages at <https://www.facebook.com/ForrestSpenceFund> -or- <http://twitter.com/forrestspence5k>.



Volunteers providing dinners for families.

HOW TO GIVE You are receiving this newsletter because you are – in a meaningful way – a friend of the Forrest Spence Fund. Your donations support the families in our care by providing for many of their physical and emotional needs. The resources that you entrust to us show hurting families love in action and deed.

The bottom-line is this: your donations make it happen. Your donations change lives and set loving action in motion. So how can you give? We make it easy. The easiest, fastest and most secure way to give directly is to go to the donation page of our website at www.forrestspencefund.com/donate and contribute via PayPal. There you can review the specific types of needs you can directly support like sponsoring bereavement

counseling for a family for \$95 or a hospital-stay family basket full of items for \$125. We also accept scheduled monthly donations. If you have a desire to contribute to our mission throughout the year as a regular donor, please contact us at info@forrestspencefund.com to explore the possibility of a set monthly donation. All checks may be mailed to the following address: **The Forrest Spence Fund | PO Box 770478 | Memphis, TN 38177**

We greatly appreciate your consideration of the Forrest Spence Fund as you consider your charitable donations. Donations of ALL sizes are gratefully accepted and every dollar is put to use. Please contact us at info@forrestspencefund.com with any questions about donating.
