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Newsletter of
Children's Hospital Branches, Inc.
Winter 2026

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As I reflect on 2025 for the Branches and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland, the recurring theme of change is evident. The hospital has seen many changes in the last year. As part of an ongoing major modernization effort, which will take several more years to complete, a new Administrative Services Building has been under construction, and is well under way, along with concrete and

steel construction for the new hospital building. In the new hospital, there will be expanded and modernized operating rooms with the latest technology, a new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit with private rooms, and an Emergency department with integrated resources for trauma, among many other changes. There is a lot to look forward to!

In the meantime, we can appreciate the amazing current hospital that ranks in the top ten pediatric hospitals nationwide in the areas of cancer, newborn specialty care, gastroenterology and GI surgery. Children's Hospital Oakland was also ranked nationally in all 11 specialties according to the US News & World Report 2025-26!

The Children's Hospital Branches continue to support the hospital by fulfilling many items on their wish list every year, and 2025 was no different. Our 2025 mid-year distribution of approximately \$246,000 included items for the renovated PICU unit, the Emergency Department, Pulmonology and the Sickle Cell Program. Our end-of-year distribution of over \$277,000 funded wish list items for over 15 different departments at the hospital including Gastroenterology, Nephrology, and Audiology. And our support will also sponsor ten Oakland families for the Endocrinology-Diabetes Youth Families Camp this year.

In addition, the Branches are providing funds for Spirometry machines for the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Claremont Clinic. We are also funding some of the equipment needs for a new Mobile Health Clinic that the FQHC launched in 2025, which is providing essential services and primary care for families throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties. You can read more about the Mobile Clinic in this newsletter.

The Branches' Board saw changes this year as well. Our long time board member and Chairman of Cacao Branch, Sandra Carpenter passed away. She will be dearly missed. Three other members Linda Webber, Chairman of Lilac Branch, Deirdre Henry of Rowan Branch and our Board

Treasurer and Kerry Plain of Garden Branch and a Bambino volunteer retired from the board. Luckily, all of these women are staying active with the Branches!

We are truly fortunate to welcome three terrific new board members: Kate Addiego from Hill Branch, Leonela Castillo from Rowan Branch and Ellen Sullivan from Lombardy Branch. You can learn more about them in this newsletter.

I am always grateful for all the Branch volunteers and their commitment. Branches Board member Carol Miller, who is also on the Board of the Bambino Thrift Shop, worked with the Bambino volunteers to make significant changes to the organization and flow of the shop to enhance the shopping and checkout experience. The shop continued to report outstanding sales reports in 2025. Stop by and discover the treasures there!

And finally, on a personal note, our family's lives were changed by the arrival of our new grandson, six weeks early! Luckily, he is doing fine, but the experience made me more aware of the devotion of NICU nurses. The change in our family's life is not unlike what so many families go through when one of their children has a traumatic injury or a serious illness. Children's Hospital Oakland is there to provide the exceptional care that is needed and the support that helps families cope.

The Branches' support continues to help the hospital provide this outstanding care to children, regardless of a family's background or ability to pay. Our community is fortunate, and we can be excited about the important changes that are coming to Children's Hospital Oakland!

2026 Board of Directors

Gretchen Gibson.....	Hill, President
Lucy Talbot.....	Hill, V.P.
Eileen Caponio.....	Rowan, Treasurer
Kristina Smith.....	Rowan, Secretary
Kate Addiego	Hill
Leonela Castillo	Rowan
Fredora Darmstedt.....	Oak, Family House
Julie Davidson.....	Lombardy
Wendy Dunn.....	Lombardy
Marianne Malenk.....	Oak, Bud Branch
Clare McDonald.....	Lombardy
Carol Miller.....	Oak, Bambino
Julie Parodi.....	Lilac
Ellen Sullivan	Lombardy
Linda Webber.....	Lilac

Cece Werson..... Hawthorne Emeritus, Advisory

New Board Members



Kate Addiego

Born in San Francisco and raised in Piedmont, Kate is a Bay Area native now based in Orinda. She studied design at California College of the Arts and has built a career

leading brand, marketing, and creative work for major retail companies across digital and print. She previously served for two years as Chair of Marketing & Communications for Hill Branch and co-chaired the 2024 Have a Heart fundraiser, overseeing event branding, press materials, and auction platforms, including Auctria. Kate is currently launching a new business focused on her original designs and writing. Outside of work, she enjoys exploring new cities, discovering ephemera and vintage shops, finding new parks with her dog, and cooking and baking across many types of cuisine.



Leonela Castillo

Leonela has been a registered nurse since 1995 and has loved working at Children's Hospital Oakland since 2001. She spent 15 meaningful years in

the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at Children's, caring for critically ill children and supporting families during challenging moments. Today, she works as a Diagnostic Imaging, PreOp, and PACU nurse, focusing on compassionate patient care. Leonela has truly enjoyed volunteering with the Rowan Branch ladies since 2019 and is excited to now serve on the Children's Hospital Branches Board. She's thrilled to celebrate her 25th wedding anniversary and is the grateful mom of a 21-year-old son and 19-year-old daughter. Leonela cherishes time with family, friends, their playful pups, and the simple pleasures that make life meaningful~life is short, enjoy!



Ellen Sullivan

As a grateful parent Ellen is passionate about giving back to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. Since her son's successful treatment for cancer at the hospital both Ellen and her husband, Greg, have been long-time community advocates.

Ellen and Greg raised their children, Hudson and Molly, in Lafayette and relocated to wine country during COVID, where they enjoy the more rural lifestyle. Ellen has discovered many new hobbies since relocating - gardening, wine tasting and country hikes!

On a professional level Ellen has built a career in the advertising and media industry and currently works at PEOPLE Inc. Greg is an IT consultant for the VC and investment industry.

LILAC BRANCH PRESENTS

A KENTUCKY DERBY INSPIRED GALA

Run for the Roses
BENEFITING

UCSF BENIOFF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OAKLAND



Saturday May 2nd
2026



General Meeting September 2025

Once again, the foundation hosted Branches members for the All Branch General Meeting at the CHORI library on Wednesday, September 17th.

Branches Board President Gretchen Gibson led the group through the meeting program. She started with a review of Branch activities since our last meeting in the spring, inviting members from the Hill, Lombardy, Lilac, Rowan and Hill Branches as well as the Bambino to share updates on their past events as well as any upcoming events they have planned. Then, she shared a summary of combined funds raised by all of the Branches to date in 2025, over \$300,000 and the wishlist items purchased mid-year in June.

Next, Beverly Ingram, our liaison at the foundation, provided a general update from the hospital with information about the progress about the hospital construction and the new Chief Radiologist, Dr. Raymond Sze.

Beverly then introduced Dr. David Panek, Pediatric Medicine Specialist. He started by telling the group about his personal history and family, including a new baby. Next, he educated the group about what a sleep medicine specialist does, the importance of sleep studies as a diagnostic tool as well as the logistical challenges and long wait times that can delay diagnosis and treatment for

patients. He thanked the Branches for purchasing equipment that has allowed for home sleep tests, increasing the convenience for families and shortening the wait time. He also explained the importance of Custom 3D Printed Non-Invasive Positive Airway Pressure masks to ensure the proper fit for babies and children with genetic conditions that affect facial structure. Amazingly, the Branches were able to fund a 3D printer and material for the creation of these masks as part of our end of year 2025 distribution.

After the meeting's conclusion, the foundation provided a delicious lunch in a lovely setting. We are grateful for their generosity.



Sleep study

Over \$520,000 contributed to the hospital in 2025 to the following departments...

Audiology
Center for Child Protection
Dermatology
Emergency
Endocrinology-Diabetes Youth
Families Camp
FQHC - Claremont Clinic
Gastroenterology
Hematology
Nephrology

Oncology
PICU
Pulmonology
Resilience Clinic
School Based Teen Clinics
Social Services
Stad Center for Pain, Palliative &
Integrative Medicine
Trauma Center

Mobile Clinic Launches

The Federally Qualified Health Clinic launched a Mobile Health Clinic in December 2025. This will expand the health care infrastructure and support essential outreach and primary care for families with unstable housing throughout Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.

Each morning, the team (medical staff, administrative support, and a driver) holds a quick briefing and loads the van for the day. Vaccines, wound care materials, diagnostic tools, and syringes are packed alongside registration forms, tablets for electronic health records, snacks and hygiene kits. Water tanks are checked to ensure a clean supply for sanitation and procedures, the van's gas tank is filled, and a final safety check is performed.

The van arrives at the satellite location, which may include underserved areas like Walnut Creek Shadelands, a local school without a health center, or a partnership site such as an Early Start Program. At a registration tent outside the van, staff check in patients, and insurance or sliding-scale eligibility is verified as needed. Throughout the day, the medical team provides essential services such as physical exams, vaccinations, developmental screenings, or sports physicals. Health education is offered to patients and families, along with referrals for follow-up care or additional resources at the primary clinic or other community facilities.

Using funds raised in 2025, the Branches were able to sponsor a day of operations for the Mobile Health Clinic. With these funds, the mobile clinic is able to serve up to 16 patients, fully stock medical supplies and cover additional

costs including gas, parking, permits, insurance and ongoing maintenance. We look forward to continuing to support their important efforts!



FQHC Mobile Clinic Ribbon Cutting

A Taste of Amalfi

25TH
ANNIVERSARY

Rowan Branch

**SHOPPING
SPREE**

ROUND HILL COUNTRY CLUB

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM | MONDAY, APRIL 20

\$125 PER ATTENDEE
LUNCHEON, SILENT AUCTION,
RAFFLES AND MORE

TICKET PURCHASE AND INFO AT
ROWANBRANCH.ORG
BENEFITING UCSF BENIOFF CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL OAKLAND

Live La Dolce Vita
SUNDRESSES AND
LARGE BRIMMED HATS ENCOURAGED

Lombardy Oktoberfest at The Nelsons' Home

On October 3, 2025, a Lombardy Branch Oktoberfest fundraising event successfully raised over \$10,000 to support specialized pediatric care and equipment.



Lombardy Branch Members



Event Hosts Sara and Mark Nelson

Event Highlights

The Celebration: Held on a Friday evening, the event transformed a local venue into a traditional Bavarian beer garden. Guests enjoyed authentic German cuisine, including artisanal pretzels and bratwursts, paired with a selection of seasonal Oktoberfest brews.

Festive Activities: The fundraiser featured a Flight of Specialty Beer Auction, pool tournament, horseshoe tournament and a very competitive wine basket raffle. Live polka music provided a high-energy atmosphere that encouraged community participation.

This collaborative effort emphasized the community's commitment to improving health outcomes for UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland.

Rowan Phoenix Boutique Benefits Art Therapy

The Rowan Branch Phoenix Boutique benefiting the Art Therapy program at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland was held on November 12th at Boundary Oaks Country Club. Hundreds of shoppers turned out to marvel and purchase from the diverse array of 18 local artisans. Carol singers from North Gate High School and the Stay at Home Moms delighted the crowd and Deirdre Almanzan, patient events manager, spoke about the importance of the creative and artistic outlets for hospitalized children. Event founder and Rowan member Julia Minasian agrees. "We know that Art Therapy helps children process physical pain, emotional stress and depression, increase self-esteem, promote resilience and improve cognitive and sensory motor functions. It gives them a way to express themselves when words are hard," she said.

The community generosity was in evidence as Boundary Oaks donated their club, food and refreshments, Loosen Up Bodywork & Massage in Walnut Creek treated attendees to free massages and community businesses provided over 60 enticing raffle prizes. Rowan members were on hand to sell raffle tickets for the guaranteed Win/Win prizes and share information about Rowan membership. In all, the event raised \$8,232 for the Art Therapy program and spread the word about Rowan Branch and the vital work done at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland daily.



Rowan member Fiona Adcock and her son Callum sell holiday cards designed by Callum to benefit Rowan Branch.



Shoppers enjoy the beautiful wares offered by the vendors.



Rowan members Deirdre Henry and Christy Campbell along with friend Pat DeRensis take a break from shopping.

Holiday Season 2025 at Bambino

Bambino completed another successful holiday season! From the many donations gathered from Branch members, loyal customers, and Beehive Estate Sales, Bambino Thrift was transformed into a winter wonderland. Preparations began on November 9, 2025, as stored merchandise was transported from Sharon Levaggi's home to the shop. Christmas trees were assembled, decorated and lit. Santas and snowmen adorned the tops of the clothes racks, and wreaths covered the walls.

Co-chairs Susan Sperry and Colleen Lund, with the generous help of Carol Maes, set their crew consisting of Allison Ketler, Barbara Gross, Flo Hori, Lori Framsted, Dee McDonough, Chris Ferreira, Misha Nelson, and Carol Miller to work creating an amazing shopping adventure. (Excuse me if I missed anyone!) The soft opening occurred on Thursday, November 13th with a private volunteer showing on Sunday, November 16th. The magic holiday ended for this year on Saturday, December 20th.

Mark your calendars for next November so as not to miss this experience!



HELP THE BABIES & CHILDREN!
DONATE TO BAMBINO



We accept donations
Tuesdays through Saturdays
11am- 2pm

Please **call the shop** ahead of time
if you want to **donate furniture**
510-658-7473

Five-bag maximum for
each donation drop-off

Large or small, donations are always
welcome, provided the items are
clean, undamaged and ready to be
priced for the sales floor.

Bambino Thrift Shop – Volunteers Needed

Do you have a few hours each week to volunteer in a fun and friendly thrift shop? We have the job for you whether you like to work with customers, research anything from clothes to collectibles and vintage to modern or prepare donations for sale. Everything we do supports UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland.

If you are in a branch, you can earn credits that are included in the money your branch raises. You "earn" \$10 for each hour you volunteer at Bambino. The hours you volunteer are reported on a quarterly basis.

Named after the children it serves, Bambino has been open for almost 100 years! Its first location was in the house where the "Baby Hospital" first started. Later it was in Oakland and South Berkeley sites before moving to College Avenue in 1994.

Bambino offers high quality vintage and brand-name items at a fraction of the retail and on-line costs. The shop also provides a service to our community, offering access to one-of-a kind items and minimizing fast fashion by giving clothes a second life. For these reasons "thrifting" has seen an increase in popularity over the last few years, and the hospital is the beneficiary!

Bambino strives to sell quality donated items and serves a wide range of customers who discover great deals on clothing, housewares, jewelry, and vintage items. Along with a large children's section our customers frequently check-in to see what quality furnishings are available each week.

We welcome you to consider volunteering! Please contact Lou Gates, the Bambino Thrift Shop Manager at BambinoThriftManager@gmail.com.

Bambino Thrift Shop

5290 College Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618
510-658-7473

Visit & Shop Our **Etsy!!** SHOP HOURS

Tuesday through Thursday: 11 am - 3 pm
Friday and Saturday: 11 am - 4 pm
Closed Sunday and Monday

BambinoThriftManager@gmail.com

Please visit our website for further information:
www.BambinoThriftShop.org

Hill Branch presents
An Evening in Paris benefiting
UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland



HAVE A HEART FOR THE HOSPITAL



SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 2026 | 6PM
CLAREMONT COUNTRY CLUB
5295 BROADWAY TERRACE | OAKLAND, CA

TICKETS \$200/PER PERSON
AVAILABLE AT HILLBRANCH.ORG



OR SCAN ME!



Children's Hospital Branches, Inc.

5700 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way T-2
Oakland, CA 94609-1673

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SUPPORT OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

Hill Branch "Have a Heart"

Saturday, April 11th at 6pm
Claremont Country Club

Volunteer Recognition Luncheon

Wednesday, May 6th at 11am
Sequoyah Country Club

Rowan Branch Shopping Spree

Monday, April 20th from 10am to 3pm
Round Hill Country Club

**Lilac Branch "Run for the Roses"
Casino Gala**

Saturday, May 2nd at 3pm
Green Valley Country Club

Please consider donating on our website: childrenshospitalbranches.org/donate
You may also mail your donation to the office; look for the donation envelope inside.