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Newsletter of
Children's Hospital Branches, Inc.
Summer 2025

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I am honored to have taken over the Presidency of the Children's Hospital Branches, Inc. Board in January. It has been a busy and productive first few months of the year, and I am in awe of all the amazing volunteers in our Branches!

In February, Hill Branch hosted a western-themed fundraiser "Boots, Buckles and Big Hearts" at the Cal University Club at Memorial Stadium, which raised \$100,000, and fully funded VR headsets, the wish list item of the Pediatric Oncology Clinics in Oakland and Walnut Creek. These were a top priority for Dr. Jennifer Michlitsch, who spoke at the event and explained the importance of the headsets in helping to provide distraction and decompression to Oncology patients in the infusion center.

Hill Country Club. The Fund-A-Need focus of their event was the Arctic Temperature Machine for the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. After hearing the pediatric clinical care specialist, Dr. Mandeep Chadha speak, the guests raised their paddles to fully fund this \$80,000 piece of equipment!

The following weekend, Lilac Branch held a sold-out fundraiser, Run for the Roses, at the Green Valley Country Club, with dinner, live music, dancing, and casino gaming. An enthusiastic group of attendees donated generously to the Oncology Department.

Every month, members of Oak Branch raise funds at the Bambino Thrift shop on College Avenue. The shop continues to do well with lovely collectors' items and they are now selling through Etsy, so check them out!

I couldn't be prouder of all these hard working volunteers. And because of the support and generosity

"I couldn't be prouder of all these hard working volunteers."

Then in April, Bud Branch, the high school group of girls in Alameda, organized a Bingo event in support of the hospital. We are proud that they are carrying on the tradition of philanthropy through the Branches!

Next in April, the Branches celebrated their outstanding volunteers of 2024 at the Annual Recognition Luncheon at the Sequoyah Country Club. The Alice Bullard Lifetime Achievement Award was given to Colleen Lund of Oak Branch, and an outstanding member from each branch was recognized for their volunteer time and achievements in 2024. A highlight of the luncheon was hearing from our speakers - Jasmine Payne, the Assistant Vice Chancellor and Chief Development Officer for the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals and Dr. Karim Mansour, an Emergency Medicine Doctor at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals. Dr. Mansour expressed his gratitude to the Branches for specialized equipment that the Branches had previously funded for the Emergency Department.

The day after the Recognition Luncheon, Lombardy Branch held a fun afternoon of shopping at ReChic and Garden Nest, with a percentage of the sales going to support the hospital. The following week, Rowan Branch held their very successful Shopping Spree at the Round

of friends of the hospital, the Branches will be making a mid-year gift to the hospital of approximately \$250,000. Thank you to our members and supporters for helping us to carry on our mission of raising funds to purchase life-saving equipment for the dedicated doctors at the hospital so that they can provide exceptional medical care to children from all regions of California!

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Hill Boots, Buckles & Big Hearts Raises \$100K for UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland

With a golden sunset painting the sky, 100 guests gathered on February 9, 2025, for a Western-themed fundraiser at the University Club at UC Berkeley's Memorial Stadium. The evening was packed with music, dancing, and generous hearts, with nearly \$32,000 raised for virtual reality headsets for the hospital's Oncology Clinic—technology that is helping young cancer patients manage pain, anxiety, and stress during treatment.

The stadium's Club Level was transformed into a rustic-chic retreat, complete with twinkling lanterns, Western table settings, and cowboy hats. Guests showed up in full country flair—boots, buckles, fringe, and all—and were treated to a hearty spread including shrimp tostadas,

fried chicken sliders, and festive Valentine's-themed desserts courtesy of Ann's Catering and Levy Foods. The signature cocktail of the evening, Ranch Water—fittingly named for special guest Johnny "Love" Metheny's restaurant in San Rafael—was a fan favorite at the bar. Beer was generously donated by Oakland United Beerworks.

The J. Silverheels Band kept the party going all night, playing classic and contemporary country hits while a line dance instructor got the crowd heel-stompin'. One especially poignant moment came when Dr. Jennifer Michlitsch, a pediatric oncologist from the hospital, joined a young cancer survivor and his family onstage to share the impact of VR during treatment. The audience was visibly moved, reminded of the evening's deeper purpose.

Guests bid generously on silent auction items ranging from wine baskets to Lululemon gifts to a stunning Western photograph donated by Graham Gibson, son of committee member Gretchen Gibson.

The night wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of event chair Kris Miller Fisher, and heartfelt thanks go to Lillis Stern, Kate Addiego, Gretchen Gibson, and Sandy Vogl for their behind-the-scenes magic.

From toe-tappin' fun to mission-driven moments, *Boots, Buckles & Big Hearts* proved that a community with big hearts and good boots can make a powerful difference.



Branches Board Chair and Hill Branch Member Gretchen Gibson and her husband, Event Chair Kris Miller-Fisher and her husband



Grateful mom, patient and Dr. Michlitsch



Hill Branch Chair Sue Farley and her husband



Guests on the dance floor



Gretchen Gibson, Kris Miller-Fisher, and Dr. Jennifer Michlitsch

General Meeting March

We were back in the Outpatient Center Auditorium for our General Meeting on Saturday, March 1. Attendees enjoyed some coffee, tea and pastries before gathering for the meeting program.

After a welcome from Board President Gretchen Gibson, Beverly Ingram, Director of External Relations at the hospital foundation, provided an update from the hospital. She then introduced Dr. Mandeep Chadha, Pediatric Critical Care Specialist, who spoke to the group about the importance of temperature management for patients in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) and specifically how the Arctic Sun system could improve patient outcomes. He was clearly passionate about his work and the group was clearly moved by his presentation. It brought home the importance of the funds that the Branches are hoping to raise this year to support the purchase of this equipment.

Board President Gretchen Gibson shared the wonderful news about the funds raised by the Branches in 2024. As a result, the Branches were able to contribute \$440,000 towards equipment on the 2024 wish list from the hospital. This was possible thanks to a joint effort from all of the branches.

Various branch members shared information about branch events that had occurred since our last General Meeting in October. Gretchen reported about the Acorn letter-writing campaign, the Cacao Quilt Raffle,



Branches Board Meeting with Beverly Ingram from the hospital foundation and the Hill Branch patron letter. Kris Miller Fisher, one of the chairs for the Have A Heart event, Boots, Buckles and Big Hearts, shared details of the evening and funds raised with the group. Bettina Pletkin from Rowan Branch reported on Rowan's holiday events - the Phoenix Boutique and the Holiday Sip and Shop. She also let us know about the Rowan Shopping Spree on April 28th at the Round Hill Country Club. Linda Webber spoke about the second annual Lilac Casino Night at the Green Valley Country Club on May 3rd. Finally, Gretchen Gibson reminded the group about the upcoming Volunteer Recognition Event on April 16th at the Sequoyah Country Club. After the meeting, the Branches Board gathered for a photograph with Beverly Ingram from the hospital foundation to celebrate the contribution of funds to the hospital.

Lombardy April Showers Bring May Flowers

Lombardy branch hosted a fun spring event called April Showers bring May Flowers! ReChic in Orinda along with the Garden Nest Shop, next door, hosted the event with several fun vendors who all donated 20% of the day's purchases to UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland!

We raised over \$2400 and we were able to donate close to \$1500 to the hospital. A vibrant spring Easter basket was raffled off to a lucky winner. Lombardy branch thanks everyone who came to support our exciting spring fundraiser!



Lombardy Branch members Sara Nelson, Clare McDonald, Joy Braitberg, Julie Davidson, Ellen Davis, Tina Tierney



Raffle Basket



Rowan Shopping Spree

It was Derby Time at the 24th annual Rowan Branch Shopping Spree and Luncheon on April 28th. The Rowan facilities committee festooned Round Hill Country Club with derby themed décor including fun backdrops where the 225 guests posed for photos to show off their colorful hats and fascinators.

The robust silent auction, twenty fun and diverse vendors, vendor raffles and jewelry raffle featuring an exquisite sapphire and diamond ring, gave attendees plenty to do before lunch featuring southern dishes was served.

Rowan Branch Co-Chairs Bettina Pletkin and Kristina Smith welcomed the crowd into the red and black decorated ballroom. Sponsor Chairs Azita Ansari and

Nazie Shakarin thanked the many generous sponsors and in-kind donors for their support.

Emcee Joe Cunningham delighted the ladies with fun games offering fabulous prizes before jumping into the program. The featured speakers were Branches President Gretchen Gibson and Pediatric Intensive Care Specialist Dr. Mandeep Chadha. The crowd was deeply moved by Dr. Chadha's story of local high schooler Maya who suffered a cardiac arrest while running at school. After an extensive stay in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and rehabilitation Maya is back to being a regular teenager. Dr. Chadha explained how the Arctic Sun Temperature Management System we were

attempting to fund would make a huge impact in the outcomes for patients like Maya. Guests raised their paddles for a whopping \$90,000 to purchase this state-of-the-art equipment and then some!

Longtime repeat guest Laura Larson gushed, "Wonderful day! It all looked beautiful, and was a lot of fun! I also walked out with some shopping done, some silent auction items purchased and time with friends and all for a great cause!"

This Rowan Shopping Spree and Luncheon was the most successful to date, bringing in over \$180,000 for UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland. The women of Rowan Branch are incredibly proud of their efforts and are already planning a fun theme for next year's Spree.



Rowan member Fiona Adcock in front of the step-and-repeat



Derby-themed table setting



Rowan Branch Members



Dr. Mandeep Chadha speaking to the group

Lilac Memorable Night at Run for the Roses

What a beautiful and unforgettable evening it was at the elegant Green Valley Country Club Mansion in Fairfield for the Lilac Branch's "Run for the Roses" event on Saturday, May 3rd.

Over 150 guests gathered in their Derby finest to celebrate and support a heartfelt cause. The evening began with a spirited bourbon tasting and a silent auction featuring an array of exceptional items. Guests then enjoyed a delicious Kentucky Derby-themed dinner, specially crafted by the club's chef, served in the mansion's grand dining room.

After dinner, the fun continued with lively gaming tables where attendees tested their luck at blackjack and Texas Hold'em. The entertainment soared as The Duo Sonics took the stage, delivering an incredible performance that had guests dancing the night away.

The Lilac Branch is deeply grateful for the generous support received throughout the evening. Thanks to our incredible attendees and donors, the event raised significant funds for

the pediatric oncology department at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland.

A special thank you to everyone who made this night special! Please plan to attend the May 2nd 2026 "Run for the Roses".



Run for the Roses hat made by Patricia Cosgrove



Julie Parodi at the check-in



Hill Branch members Laura Giles, Kate Addiego, Gretchen Gibson and Carol Phillips at the event



Patricia Cosgrove, Leyla Carreon, Heidi Klyn

Celebration of service and teamwork at annual **Volunteer Recognition Luncheon**

On April 16, members from seven different branches gathered in person at the Sequoyah Country Club to celebrate the contributions of Branches volunteers in 2024. The day began at 11am with a social hour.

Branch members were excited to see each other and catch up. At noon, the luncheon began. Board President Gretchen Gibson was the master of ceremonies, welcoming the attendees and setting the stage for the program. After her opening remarks, she introduced Susan Sperry from Oak Branch to present the Alice Bullard Award to the deserving Colleen Lund from Oak Branch.

Gretchen then introduced Jasmine Payne, the Assistant Vice Chancellor and Chief Development Officer for the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals who provided an update on the hospital. Next, Dr. Karim Mansour, an Emergency Medicine Doctor at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals spoke about his work with patients and the value of the specialized iPads that provide translation for patient families.

He also expressed his gratitude to the Branches for equipment that the Branches had previously funded for the Emergency Department.

Next came the volunteer recognition portion of the event. The Outstanding Branch Member of the Year Awards for 2024 were awarded to:

Kathy Lollock from Lilac Branch
Sandy Turnbull from Oak Branch
Kate Addiego from Hill Branch
Clare MacDonald from Lombardy Branch
Sofia Titvinidze from Rowan Branch

It was wonderful to hear about the contributions of these amazing women.

Finally, Nia Blakeney from Cacao said a few words about the lengthy service and significant contributions of Sandra Carpenter, Cacao Branch Chair and Branches Board Member, who recently passed away.

Gretchen announced that the board had voted to make a contribution to the hospital in Sandra's honor to support patients with Sickle Cell Disease.



Alice Bullard Award Winner Colleen Lund with Susan Sperry



Hill Branch Awardee Kate Addiego with Gretchen Gibson



Lombardy Awardee Clare MacDonald with Julie Davidson



Rowan Awardee Sofia Titvinidze with Eileen Caponio



Lilac Awardee Kathy Lollock with Patricia Cosgrove

Bud Branch Event

On April 12th, Bud Branch hosted a Bingo event at the home of Garden Branch member and Bambino volunteer Kerry Plain in Alameda. The bingo tables were set up on the outdoor patio on a sunny Saturday afternoon. Delicious snacks and beverages were provided for the attendees while they marked their cards. In addition to the prizes for the winning Bingo cards, there were raffle prizes generously donated by Branches members and the Bambino shop. A good time was had by all and \$700 was raised for the hospital.



Bingo Prize Table



Delicious Treats



Bud Branch Chair Izabella
Jauregui and Board Liaison
Marianne Malenk

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

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.



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SUPPORT OUR UPCOMING EVENTS!

Rowan Branch Oktoberfest

October 23, 2025 (Thursday)
Canyon Club Brewery, Danville

General Meeting

Date T.B.D.
CHORI Library

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