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# MGH WINTER 2011

MGH MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL



## WINTER WONDERLAND

**SCRUMPTIOUS SNACKS**, festive decorations and holiday cheer abounded at this year's MGH employee parties. Celebrations were held Dec. 13 at the Charlestown Navy Yard and Dec. 19 on the Main Campus for both day- and night-shift MGHers. Peter L. Slavin, MD, MGH president, and Jeff Davis, senior vice president for Human Resources, were on hand to wish happy holidays to all.



New and longtime employees alike gathered for the receptions. Carlota Resende, an appointment coordinator for Pediatric Medical Services, has been to the annual event in the past, but this year she took the opportunity to bring along her new colleague, Jeymi Severino. Severino joined the MGH a few months ago as an administrative assistant in Pediatric Nephrology.



Although he has worked at the MGH for 24 years, the holiday party was a first for cardiovascular perfusionist Kevin Grace. "I've never been before, but this is nice. I'll have to tell everyone back at the Operating Rooms to stop by if they can." ■

## Sports stars score holiday smiles

**DECEMBER WAS** an all-star month at MassGeneral Hospital for Children (MGHfC), with holiday visits from players from the Boston Red Sox and Boston Bruins. The Red Sox Holiday Caravan stopped by MGHfC Dec. 13 with pitcher Michael Bowden, center fielder Darnell McDonald, catchers Ryan Lavarney and Jarrod Saltalamacchia, and Wally the Green Monster. The players and Wally chatted with patients and handed out autographed Wally dolls.

The athletes were particularly eager to meet Josh Sharpe, an 18-year-old patient and diehard Sox fan. After learning the Sox visited another local hospital, *(Continued on page 4)*

**HOLIDAY HOME RUN:** McDonald high-fives with an MGHfC patient.





**FESTIVE FUN:** Linda Patten, of the Department of Anesthesia, Critical Care and Pain Medicine, gets in the holiday spirit.

## Singing songs of the season

**PATIENTS, VISITORS AND STAFF** were treated to a medley of seasonal songs Dec. 15 as part of the MGH Chaplaincy's annual Songfest. Staff and volunteers gathered in the White Lobby armed with songbooks and dressed in festive attire – including bright scarves, elf ears on red-and-green-striped stocking caps, and even a lighted Christmas tree atop one singer's head.

"Thank you very much! That was my favorite," a passerby called to the group after its rendition of "A Christmas Song." She smiled and applauded before continuing on her way.

"That's what it's about," says Gina Murray, program manager of the MGH Chaplaincy. "It's a chance for people to stop for a moment and sing a song or reflect for a few minutes about holiday blessings. We hope we are able to bring smiles and joy to them in the midst of whatever they are going through – and we hope it makes their day a little brighter."

The carolers were accompanied by pianist Stephen Lee of St. John's Evangelist Church in Winthrop. Suzanne Munroe, RN, BSN, unit nurse leader in Pathology, and Chastity McMullon, of the Emergency Department, were deemed the best dressed and each took home a prize thanks to Munroe's Santa scrubs and McMullon's head-to-toe holiday ensemble.

## Santa's sleigh stops at MGHfC

**'T WAS TWO WEEKS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**, and all through the inpatient pediatric units at MassGeneral Hospital for Children (MGHfC), children were cheering because Santa Claus had come with presents galore. While Santa's reindeer were resting, patient services coordinators Aimee Lydon and Christie Hilgendorf pitched in as penguin helpers, pushing carts full of toys donated by MGH employees.

For the last six years, the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery's Oncology Service has arranged the holiday visit. The department collects toys and donations from other MGH employees and sorts the goodie bags by age group and gender, says Cris Moore, administrative assistant to Kevin A. Raskin, MD, director of the Musculoskeletal Oncology Fellowship Program, who plays a special role in the visit each year. The department receives generous donations from several areas including Buildings and Grounds, Imaging, Nutrition and Food Services, and the Gift Shop.

Maria Schreib, patient scheduling coordinator, and Jeannette Harvey, patient services coordinator, also helped Moore collect, wrap and deliver the gifts for the Dec. 13 event. Moore's friend, Marie Fowler, sewed 80 holiday pillowcases for the department to use as gift bags.

"It is our pleasure to prepare and participate in this activity," Moore says. "The joy the families show on our visits encourages us to keep focused and do more each year." ■

### NORTH POLE VISITORS:

Patient Naysha DaSilva talks with Santa and his penguin helpers.



## Brightening the holidays

**THERE MAY BE NO PLACE** like home for the holidays – but staff at MassGeneral Hospital for Children (MGHfC) do their best to brighten the season for both inpatient and outpatient pediatric patients. From visits with Santa Claus and local sports stars to holiday bingo and Chanukah craft-making, each year MGHfC child life specialists coordinate a month full of festive activities.

Many of these events are made possible through the generosity of local organizations. One such event is the annual Angels Above holiday party, held Dec. 15. During the party, patients, families and employees enjoyed refreshments in the Ellison 18 playroom while Santa Claus traveled from room to room distributing bundles of donated toys, games and treats. Angels Above has sponsored the holiday party since 1996.

"It's really nice what they do for the kids," says John Cartales, father of 13-year-old patient Simone. "The care here has been excellent."

Other special donations included a Dec. 2 delivery of more than 500 toys from Ayesha's Angels, a charity established to support young patients undergoing cancer treatment, as well as a Dec. 15 annual drop-off from the Conroy family of stockings filled with goodies. The stockings, which will go to children staying on inpatient floors during the holidays as well as children receiving treatment in the Hematology-Oncology Unit, were donated in memory of the Conroy's daughter, Mary. ■



**'T IS THE SEASON:** MGHfC patient Simone receives a gift from Santa.



**A CHEERY CHART:** Warshaw looks through Santa's lengthy medical file.

## MGHers help Santa stay in tip-top shape

**EVERY DECEMBER** for as long as many staff members can remember, a cheerful old man with a long white beard has been admitted to the MGH Department of Surgery. And each year, this jolly patient insists on leaving the hospital at midnight on Dec. 24, saying he has important “things to do.”

The tradition of caring for Santa Claus at the MGH began in the early 1950s, when a surgical resident with some downtime decided to provide a little comic relief for his colleagues. Since then, thousands of notes have been added to Santa's medical chart by services ranging from physical therapy to the pharmacy. An article about the annual holiday custom was published in the December issue of *Annals of Surgery* by Gregory Ruhnke, MD, MS, MPH, an internist at the University of Chicago and former MGH resident, and Andrew L. Warshaw, MD, MGH surgeon-in-chief emeritus.

Treating Santa for whatever might ail him – whether a bump on the head from a troublesome chimney landing or the sound of bells ringing in his ears – is more than just holiday fun. Santa serves as a valuable training tool for staff and is the topic for educational discussion during Surgical Grand Rounds. But children need not worry about their holiday gifts; regardless of the medical issues Santa may face, MGH clinicians are always able to heal him right on time. ■

## Friendly competition brings holiday joy

**THE BATTLE** began brewing at the MGH in the final weeks of November. Anesthesia resident Thomas Caruso, MD, was spearheading a Toys for Tots drive within his department and decided to challenge the Internal Medicine and Pediatric sections to see who could bring in the most toys. They readily accepted, and in the end the friendly rivalry became something none of them expected.

Standing in one of two rooms chock-full of toys on Dec. 16, Caruso, Betsy McKeen, MD, Pediatrics resident, and Renee Rutledge, MD, Internal Medicine resident, said they were awestruck by the combined batch of toys totaling an estimated \$6,000. “This is 10 times the amount I expected,” McKeen says. “Maybe it's because it's the first year, maybe it was the competition or maybe people just wanted to do something to help – either way, it's incredible.”

And in the end, which department brought in the most toys? “It's unclear who the winner is,” Caruso says. “It really was too close to call.” All agreed that it didn't matter: the real winners will be the children of Boston who wake on Christmas morning to find a special surprise addressed just to them.

But the battle begins again in 11 months. “Next year, it will be twice as big,” Caruso says. ■



**RIVALRY RESULTS:** Marine Sgt. Matthew LaRoche, Toys for Tots coordinator, came to the MGH to thank the organizers for their support. He is seen here with, from left, Caruso, Rutledge and McKeen.



**LIGHTING THE WAY:** Lanckton lighting a menorah.

## Celebrating the eight-day Festival of Lights

**ALTHOUGH THE ENTIRE** Chanukah season is filled with memorable moments, for Ellen Forman, there is one she fondly recounts as her favorite. “I look forward to that process of adding more and more lights each night. I love when it's dark and all the candles are ablaze and I can see the glow reflected in the faces of my family. It's a moment I cherish,” said Forman, manager of the MGH Community Resource Center, during the second annual Chapel Chanukah Chappening.

Forman joined other attendees to form a “HuManorah” to share family traditions and memories at the Dec. 16 event. Rabbi Ben Lanckton, MGH chaplain, presided over the service, which included traditional prayers of gratitude, songs and reflections from Katrina Scott, MDiv, MGH oncology chaplain, and Rev. Catherine Perry, chaplain intern. Chanukah, also known as the eight-day Festival of Lights, is a Jewish holiday commemorating the victory of the Maccabees, the rededication of the Jerusalem Temple and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

**Senior HealthWISE events**

MGH Senior HealthWISE will host a lecture for seniors age 60 years and older, "Macular Degeneration," Jan. 5 from 11 am to noon in the Haber Conference Room with guest speaker Chirag P. Shah, MD, of Ophthalmic Consultants of Boston. For more information or to register, call 617-723-6756.

**Smoking cessation program**

The MGH Tobacco Treatment Service is offering a seven-session, weekly "Kick Butts 101" group program starting Jan. 10 from 5 to 6 pm. The program will include counseling on developing a quit plan, stress management, preventing weight gain and staying tobacco-free. For more information, call Hilary Aguirre at 617-726-7443.

— **Sports stars**

(Continued from page 1)

Sharpe tweeted asking the team to visit MGHfC.

"We read your Twitter post and now we're here," Lavarnway said.

On Dec. 20, Bruins defenseman Adam McQuaid and forwards Patrice Bergeron and Rich Peverley

brought a wagon loaded with toys to the Ellison 18 playroom as part of their annual holiday toy donation. To welcome the special guests, MGHfC patients decked out their rooms in Bruins gear, including miniature Stanley Cup trophies.

Patient Connor Smiddy, 14, showed Bergeron a photo they had taken together at a game in the

TD Garden when he was 7 years old. On Ellison 17, Peverley and 3-year-old Alexis Pereira compared favorite Disney characters. Alexis is a fan of Cinderella and Snow White, while Peverley's daughter prefers Tinkerbell.

For more photos from these and other MGHfC holiday events, visit [www.facebook.com/mghfc](http://www.facebook.com/mghfc).

**Puppy Pals**

**SYDNEY VITTI, 9**, hugs a teddy bear given to her by Santa Claus and his helpers, Stephanie Ploof and Taylor Poucel, as part of the 14th annual Puppy Pals event on Dec. 20. During December, all blood donors at the MGH Blood Donor Center had the opportunity to fill out a gift tag that was attached to a stuffed animal and delivered to pediatric patients on Ellison 17, Ellison 18, the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and Yawkey.

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**HAVEN gift drive brings cheer to local families**

**MGH EMPLOYEES** with gifts ranging from bicycles to microwaves poured into the Buswell Room and later the North Garden Room during the Dec. 15 annual HAVEN (Hospitals Helping Abuse and Violence End Now) gift drive. Each year, HAVEN identifies local families who have experienced domestic violence and are in need of additional support during the holiday season. The families write a wish list and are matched with MGHers who buy the items they need. This year, 90 families were "adopted" by staff from more than 70 departments.



**GOOD TIDINGS:** Gift drive volunteers accept donations from colleagues.