

ImPACT

A newsletter from the
Parent Advisory Council



PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (PAC) BACKGROUND

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) includes parents and caregivers from the Akron and Mahoning Valley campuses whose children have received care at Akron Children's Hospital. Advisors work with hospital liaisons on behalf of other families to enhance the delivery of family-centered care. Parents serve on hospital committees and participate in hospital focus groups and performance-improvement projects. They also offer support on program development and policy upgrades. Learn more at akronchildrens.org/PAC.



PATH TO PAC: FEATURING DECEMBER WEST, AKRON



What was your path to PAC?

I have been a part of PAC for 3 years. I am married and the mother of 5 children who have all used services at the hospital. My youngest 2 utilize Akron Children's services the most. My 10-year-old daughter has a rare disease that affects her kidneys, hearing and sight so she sees various specialists to ensure she stays healthy. My son, who has autism spectrum disorder, sees several specialists and has received services through Akron Children's Family Child Learning Center (FCLC) located in Tallmadge.

I wasn't aware that PAC existed until I met Kristin Hafford, parent advisor coordinator. When Kristin told me about PAC, I thought it would be a great opportunity to give back. When my kids were first diagnosed, Kristin, along with doctors and other hospital personnel, really helped our family. Having the opportunity to help another family who is experiencing some of the things we went through has been rewarding.

Have you been involved in any hospital committees, PAC subgroups or FACT groups?

Currently, I'm part of the hospital's disparities workgroup and the PAC recruitment subgroup. In the future, I'd love to get a nephrology FACT group started. Recently, I have been accepted as a Parent Advisory Committee member to the Ohio Department of Health, Children with Medical Handicaps Program.

If there were no barriers, what would your Dream PAC look like (service, equipment, etc.)? DREAM BIG!

Since you said to dream big, I would love to see our PAC GIVES BACK event daily instead of once a year—working with the hospital to offer spa services to families and staff. Along with the coffee cart, it would also be nice to offer games like Wii, PlayStation 5 or Xbox to help families cope with their inpatient stays. PAC would have a FACT group in every department and help get more equipment, like devices to help nonverbal children. I would also like to see PAC help the FCLC become a school with top-of-the-line technology for our kiddos.

VIEW FROM THE VALLEY

On May 11, the Family Garden (a youth gardening program in the Mahoning Valley) received approval to plant gardens this spring. In past years, different departments throughout the hospital have planted and maintained the gardens. This year, physical and occupational therapy plan to use the gardens for therapeutic sessions with children. The raised beds have a section that is accessible so those in wheelchairs can participate.

The garden beds were recently rebuilt by Lukas Peters for his Eagle Scout project. He raised funds, rebuilt the beds and created signage for the gardens. Lukas belongs to Troop 60 and will receive his Eagle Scout this summer. Family Garden members are excited to dig and plant now and await harvesting in the fall. Members meet 2 to 3 times monthly from Memorial Day through October. Meetings include guest speakers and short programs on subjects such as beekeeping, recycling, composting and using items grown in the gardens.



LIGHTS, CAMERA, PAC-TION IN AKRON

While the pandemic has put a hold on many activities, it has not stopped PAC from engaging with the hospital.

According to PAC secretary Shawna Roach, "It was important to continue PAC's work during the pandemic because we wanted to maintain forward momentum in member engagement. We thought we might see a decrease in member participation but the opposite happened. Pivoting to a virtual platform has given members the flexibility to attend from home and not worry about arranging for child or nursing care in order to participate in person."

PAC members have been busy recruiting new members while focusing on increasing diversity.

"It's important to have a diverse membership representative of our patient population to share their feedback and insight," said Shawna. "In April and May, a total of 8 new guests joined our monthly meeting to learn more about the council and how they might be a part of this group in the future."



TAG LINE

The Teen Advisory Group (TAG) is made up of teens ages 13–18 from the community who have been or are siblings of frequent or long-term patients at Akron Children’s. Teens share their experiences to help improve hospital stays for future patients. They offer input on facilities and services, participate in hospital-wide events and interact with patients and families (activity cart, peer-to-peer mentoring, etc.).



“ I love to help people. Participating in TAG is a great way to make friends and share ideas. I began exploring different medical pathways and found that I’m passionate about helping others live the best life they can. Being a part of TAG not only helps me share my journey but supports and encourages patients through their own. ” ~Ana Greer



“ I joined TAG to give a kid’s perspective on ways to improve. Since I’ve spent a lot of time in the hospital I want other kids to have the best experience they can. ” ~Tanner Ross

PAC EVENTS

The PAC events group has been meeting virtually to plan events that support physical distancing and follow other hospital policies to safeguard patients, families, visitors and staff. In May, PAC members shared inspirational chalk messages with Akron Children’s employees in Perkins Square Park.

“In a pandemic, I can only imagine that being a health care worker is extremely stressful,” said PAC member John Hafford II. “We just wanted to say thank you to Akron Children’s employees and let them know that we see them.”

