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Marci Matthews endows telehealth chair with $1 million gift

Endowment supports efforts to improve access to care and expand training through technology

When crisis hits, one truth stands firm at Akron Children’s Hospital: Our patients still need us.

As the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic reached our community, we immediately went into action to expand our current telehealth efforts, increasing remote access to health care for our patients and their families.

Now through the generosity of hospital donor and friend Marci Matthews, a $1 million gift will create the Marci M. Matthews Endowed Chair in Telehealth. Believed to be the first of its kind in the nation, this endowed chair will help strengthen our current telehealth services while moving our efforts forward into the future.

Telehealth helps expand access

The Marci M. Matthews Endowed Chair in Telehealth will give Akron Children’s the unique ability to access a broad range of technologies and services to improve access to patient care as well as the ability to expand health care training.

After the announcement of Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine’s stay-at-home order, our hospital experienced an exponential increase in telehealth appointments. Between March and April, the total number of completed telehealth visits increased by 88 percent.

“The recent events in our world reinforced to me the need to support efforts to give patients and their families access to medical treatment without
barriers,” said Matthews. “I appreciated how Akron Children’s responded quickly to expand telehealth services to its patients and families. This rapid transformation of care delivery led me to support the advancements of telehealth by establishing this endowed chair.”

Telehealth utilizes technology to connect our children — and their families — to health care services. Through tools such as secure video consultations and emails, our hospital provides a variety of clinical services, including well-check and subspecialty visits. This delivery of care is cost-effective, reduces exposure to viruses and minimizes wait times. We’re also able to facilitate staff training and continuing medical education.

Most importantly, telehealth helps us broaden patient and family access to care. It breaks down barriers like geography – particularly in rural areas – lack of transportation and now COVID-19 restrictions.

Endowment sustains telehealth efforts now and into the future

The Marci M. Matthews Endowed Chair in Telehealth will be held by Sarah Rush, MD, chief medical information officer; director, neuro-oncology; pediatric oncologist at Akron Children’s.

“We believe this to be the first telehealth endowed chair in the nation, and we are so grateful to Marci for this generous gift,” said Grace Wakulchik, president and CEO of Akron Children’s.

Endowed chairs are critical to the pursuit of new and innovative treatments for our patients. An endowment provides a permanent, annual source of income through the interest earned on its investment. This income, in turn, allows a chair holder to pursue new advancements in their respective fields.

“Our medical landscape is changing rapidly,” said Wakulchik. “The creation of the Marci M. Matthews Endowed Chair in Telehealth will ensure Akron Children’s remains at the forefront of this innovative way to treat our patients and expand access to learning and training.”

Make a permanent mark on pediatric care

Help Akron Children’s pursue the very best care for our patients. An endowment creates a continuous source of income for our medical staff to seek out the advancements that will propel pediatric care – and our hospital – forward.

Contact Megan Hopper, senior director of principal giving, at 330-543-8340 to learn more about creating an endowment at Akron Children’s.
Remobilizing Akron Children’s Hospital after COVID-19

Some areas of focus strengthen Akron Children’s reach and service lines

In a matter of months, the COVID-19 pandemic brought an unprecedented number of changes to our world. All the while, the dedicated health care workers of Akron Children’s Hospital continued to provide needed care to our patients and their families.

As an organization, we limited our services to those most essential to helping our region’s children. And we implemented new procedures to do our part in reducing the spread of the coronavirus.

Now, as our country begins the process of emerging from the COVID-19 shutdown, Akron Children’s is committed to providing medical services in a way that’s both safe and responsible.

Like many of you, we’re excited to get back to business as usual. And if this crisis has made one thing clear, it’s that there will be a “new normal.”

As we continue to raise funds to meet the health care needs for children across northern Ohio and beyond, the Akron Children’s Hospital Foundation pivoted to focus our team’s work on the following newly determined priorities as a result of the current environment.

### Telehealth

**Why is it important?**
Over the past several years, Akron Children’s has invested in telehealth technologies to improve access for our patient families – particularly those in rural areas. But in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth is more important than ever.

By investing in telehealth, we can provide more services to patients from homes. This reduces patient exposure to viruses and may help patient wait times.

**How will support make an impact?**
Expanding telehealth services will require a substantial investment in new technology and diagnostic equipment for transport teams and health centers.

Thanks to our new endowed chair in telehealth, made possible by a generous $1 million gift from Marci M. Matthews, we are well-positioned to grow this essential service offering.

### Behavioral Health

**Why is it important?**
For children with a mental health diagnosis, the added fear, anxiety and uncertainty that comes from a global pandemic can make a difficult situation worse.

According to The National Institute of Mental Health, one in five adolescents has a mental illness severe enough to impair their functioning. To meet these needs, our Lois and John Orr Behavioral Health Center is at the forefront of providing our region’s kids with mental health support.

**How will support make an impact?**
Behavioral health diagnoses are on the rise among children and adolescents. Your gift can help us add the staff we need, expand our services and provide early interventions to help kids facing depression and thoughts of suicide.
Our patients and their families need YOU

All of us are facing unsettling times. But one certainty remains – the children and families Akron Children’s Hospital serves rely on us to deliver the essential care they need.

Just as our community needs us, we need you – our family of donors. Please consider making a gift to Akron Children’s today. Your donation, no matter the size, can make all the difference for a child or family in need.
Thank you, donors!

We are overwhelmed by the outpouring of support we received from our community of donors. Your generosity provided relief and support to our patients, families, staff and visitors during this challenging time. The following are just a few of those individuals and organizations we would like to recognize.

**Akron Children’s Hospital Employee Front Line Hardship Fund**

Thank you to **KeyBank Foundation** for its gift to support our staff as they work tirelessly to care for our patients. We also want to extend our thanks to **Tim Burke**, president of Northeast Ohio, KeyBank.

**Mark and Tina Oelschlager**, longtime donors and friends of Akron Children’s, made gifts to support both the Akron Children’s Hospital Employee Front Line Hardship Fund and the Akron Children’s Hospital Crisis Relief Fund. Thank you for your commitment to our patients, families and staff.

A special thank you to **Rick Altman** and **Lou Altman** of the A. Altman Company, whose donation is helping to provide resources for our hospital staff who are facing unexpected hardships during this time. (From left) **Rick Altman**, **Harrison Zoldan** and **Lou Altman** also donated 3,000 masks.

Thank you to the **Akron Community Foundation** for its grant to support the fund. The donation comes from the Foundation’s Community Response Fund for Nonprofits for COVID-19, which provides resources to area nonprofits that are working on the front lines to educate, engage and support those impacted by COVID-19 and the broader ramifications of the crisis.

**The Women’s Board of Akron Children’s Hospital**, led by President **Tammy Gersman**, made a generous gift to support both the Akron Children’s Hospital Crisis Fund and the Akron Children’s Employee Front Line Hardship Fund.

**Akron Children’s Hospital Crisis Relief Fund**

Our sincerest thanks to **Carter and Carol Lewis** for supporting our hospital through a gift to this fund.

The **Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company** generously provided 300 meals per day to employees for an entire month, helping them to focus on serving our patients. We greatly appreciate this show of support from our long-standing partner. We also want to thank **Darren Wells**, chief financial officer; **Laura Duda**, senior vice president and chief communications officer; and **Joni Fitch** manager, global community engagement, for these important acts of kindness.

Thank you, **Boxout LLC**, for donating 7,500 face masks and 72 gallons of sanitizer. In honor of Nurses Week, the company also donated 4,200 containers of hand sanitizer and lotion for the Blessing of the Hands, a ceremony that recognizes the care and dedication of health care workers to their patients. CEO and owner **Ron Harrington** and **Gerrie Miller**, vice president of human capital management and customer service, led Boxout’s efforts.

Thank you, **JoAnn Stores**. The company has been donating fabric and supplies for fabric masks. We distributed these masks to patients, families and visitors at our locations. **Amanda Hayes**, manager of corporate communications, served as the liaison for this critical donation.

**Longtime supporter Bobby Ina** generously supported our front-line staff by delivering 200 hot meals from Bucci’s J•Bella in Strongsville. He also donated 130 art and writing activity bags for patients with help from **Target**, which donated gift cards to help Bobby’s efforts.
Thank you to Handel’s Homemade Ice Cream—Corporate Office for donating ice cream to our front-line workers along with bags to safely store masks. Gary Crandall and GLI Pool Products donated masks. We appreciate your support.

Gino and Barbara Faciana, CEOs of Pleasant Valley Corporation, and their employees partnered with D’Agnese’s at White Pond Akron. Together, they’ve provided 750 meals for our front-line staff. Akron Children’s Hospital President and CEO Grace Wakulchik (pictured bottom right) and Dr. Bruce Cohen (bottom left photo, right side) thanked participants.

The Davey Tree Expert Company recently made a generous donation of 2,000 masks, which supported our front-line workers, patients and their families. Sandra Reid, vice president, corporate communications and strategic plan administration, was instrumental in the coordination and delivery of these masks.

Thank you to our friends at Giant Eagle for donating 18,000 brown lunch bags and 30 cases of candy for staff at the Mahoning Valley and Akron campuses. We appreciate Melinda Guas, senior administrator, community relations and development, and Michelle O’Brien, executive store leader, for their contribution to this effort.

Thanks to Tom Zidian, president and CEO of Summer Garden Food Manufacturing, and the Aqua Pazzo Restaurant for supporting the front-line workers at Akron Children’s Hospital Mahoning Valley, delivering 150 gift bags to staff.

Bill and Becky Considine made a gift to support both the Akron Children’s Hospital Crisis Fund and to the Akron Children’s Employee Front Line Hardship Fund.

Telehealth

We are extremely grateful to the Cynthia Parker Matthews Family Foundation for its gift to establish The Marci M. Matthews Telemedicine Innovation Fund. Thank you, Jerry Welty, (left), pictured here with CEO Emeritus Bill Considine, for making a gift designated to our telehealth program. Jerry’s support helps us provide the best possible care in the safest manner for our patients and families during this time – and beyond.

We want to extend a special thanks to one of our early telehealth supporters, Peg’s Foundation, and its president, Rick Kellar.

Behavioral Health

To all the generous donors who made the Mahoning Valley Behavioral Health Center possible, thank you! We want to express our sincere appreciation to The Hine Memorial Fund of The Youngstown Foundation, the Florence Simon Beecher Foundation, and Peg’s Foundation and its president, Rick Kellar, and many other contributors.

The generosity of longtime supporter and friend John Orr helped establish the Lois and John Orr Behavioral Health Center, as well as The Lois C. Orr Endowed Chair in Pediatric Psychiatry. Thank you for your commitment to our kids.

We’d like to celebrate some of the donors whose contributions helped us launch the new outpatient clinic for our Addiction Services Program, now a part of behavioral health. Special thanks to Lea Heidman and Brian Malone of Fighting For Alyssa, Marci M. Matthews, Robert B. and Regina M. Cooper, AultCare, Medical Mutual and FedEx Corporate Services.

See the latest stories about donors and the many ways they are affecting the work at Akron Children’s Hospital by liking the Akron Children’s Hospital Foundation Facebook page at facebook.com/akronchildrensfoundation or on Instagram at @akronchildrensfoundation.
Akron Children’s Hospital embraces a philosophy of family-centered care. We believe that every child has the right to world-class medical care, regardless of a family’s ability to pay.

Member, Children’s Hospital Association (CHA)
Member, Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals

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