

Written by Christine Whitton

Next month, Cardon Children's Medical Center will celebrate its one-year anniversary, a very special birthday for the East Valley pediatric hospital that has aided an estimated 8,000 inpatients in its first year.



A division of Banner Health's Mesa-based campus, Cardon Children's Medical Center, bears the name of a family whose 16 of 18 grandchildren were born at neighboring Banner Desert Medical Center. Longtime Valley residents Wilford and Phyllis Reneer Cardon recognized the East Valley's need for specialized pediatric care and became a major donor in the hospital's capital campaign. After three years of planning and two years of construction, Banner Health, and its associates, opened its new pediatric building on Nov. 2, 2009. In the process of relocating the entire intensive care unit (ICU), oncology and pediatric floors to their new location, the hospital never decreased its patient admissions.

By March 2009, the new state-of-the-art 248-bed facility had doubled in patients. "[This] shows [there is a] real need for continued growth and continued care for the children in the state of Arizona," says Rhonda Anderson, CEO for Cardon Children's Medical Center. "And the 300-plus children that came to us from outside the state of Arizona."

The hospital's trusted reputation is reflected in the families that seek the most technologically advanced medical care for their children. "Since 2001, when we began developing our specific pediatric programs in neuroscience, oncology, pediatric surgery, cranial-facial plastics and others, we [Banner Health] began searching and employing specialists from throughout the country and various specialties," Anderson says. Today, those programs encompass a dedicated pediatric radiology department and rehabilitation unit, a large critical care program, a level-three perinatal center and an expanded pediatric emergency department and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The building's new 464,000-sq.-ft. Cardon Children's Tower has given the hospital the ability to expand on its comprehensive pediatric care programs and be even more patient-centered.

With those advanced programs now in place, patient satisfaction has been off the charts, scoring in the 95th percentile. Unlike most sterile-looking hospital rooms, Cardon Children's designed each of the rooms to replicate the entrance of a house. To ease children after they receive treatment, each patient can venture over to the toy closet and pick out a goodie to keep. Those toys, which are donated, are meant as a comfort measure. The hospital's family-centered care also encourages families to stay before, during and after any surgery—time is never a factor. To better accommodate mom and dad's extended visit, the hospital has equipped each patient's room with a pull-out sofa. Each floor—coined "the neighborhood" because of its nature-inspired design—also houses a laundry facility for all families to share as well as a "quiet room" where parents and siblings can achieve peace and quiet.

The 400-plus physicians understand that questions arise all the time—some in the middle of the night. To better assist families and patients, the hospital has equipped each room with a "Get Well Network." At first glance, kids might mistake this gadget for a TV but it is actually a communication device. Attached to a keyboard, the network allows anyone to enter a question for the doctor to answer when he or she returns from rounds; it is also an educational tool providing information about the disease in question and allows Internet access.

Whether in-person or over the Internet, the hospital takes the kids' education as seriously as their medical care. "[The] kids told us years ago the one thing that stresses them most is missing school," Anderson says. So for the last five years, Banner Desert Medical and now Cardon Children's Medical Center has been employing teachers to help kids with educational needs. Like school, the children get a hall pass to go to class if they can get out of bed, are not infectious and can interact with other children. (Sometimes the teachers have to instruct bedside.) This helps alleviate any unwarranted stress and allows the kids to keep up with their studies.

This year, Cardon has teamed up with five Mesa schools for an afterschool program, "Kids Sports Stars," that teaches students about the benefits of proper weight management. The goal is to jumpstart good nutrition, weight management and exercise to prevent juvenile diabetes—a disease rapidly affecting young people.

As much as Cardon aids the community, the community proves to be just as helpful to the hospital. Volunteers have played a huge role in building up the morale of children. Thanks to a \$1 million donation from NFL legend Steve Young, the Steve Young Foundation and Swiss Charities for Children, the pint-size patients enjoy kid-friendly entertainment in a medical-free "Forever Young Zone"—an area with large flat screens, a stage and a broadcast recording booth. With such amenities that allow kids to have fun while still getting well, Cardon is showing that laughter truly is the best medicine.



Happy Birthday!

To celebrate turning one, Cardon Children's Medical Center has invited all its patients (past and present) to a birthday party from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Oct. 30. Food, gifts (those interested are asked to donate a present that will be put in the toy closet for future patients) and games (word is the children may be able to sink their doctors in a "Dunk-A-Doc") are some of the planned festivities.

To Learn More:

Cardon Children's Medical Center 480.412.5437, www.bannerhealth.com.