

SPOTLIGHT

A Hospital Stay: Through a Child's Eyes

A trip to the hospital can be a frightening ordeal for anyone, but especially so for a child. Not feeling well is scary – being sick, and having to go to a hospital where unfamiliar surroundings and strange people are all around, is even scarier. And unfortunately, some illnesses require a child to stay in the hospital overnight or for extended periods of time, compounding his or her feelings of unease and fear of the unknown. Likewise, the parents of a sick child who needs to remain in the hospital for any length of time are frightened for their child, worried about his or her condition and uncertain of what the future holds. To this end, many hospitals employ “non-threatening” tools like stuffed animals and coloring books to help explain to the child why they are there, what procedures or treatments they’ll experience and how they fit into the hospital environment.

Such tools, which evoke more positive associations, also serve to create a venue

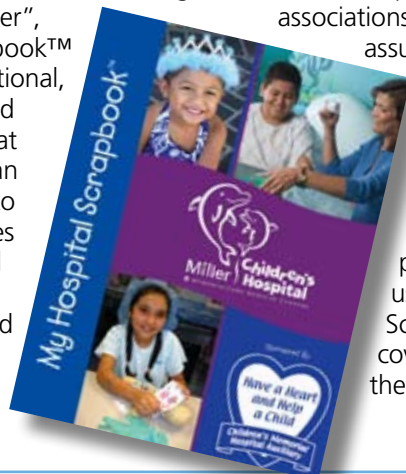
for parents and kids to open up to one another and honestly discuss what is happening to the child. However, as time passes it’s not uncommon for these tools to become worn, outdated and in need of replacement. Such was the case for Miller Children’s Hospital.

Rita Goshert, clinical operations manager of the Child Life Department, and her staff of twenty-five knew the time had come to retire their rarely-used, antiquated coloring books in favor of a newer, more relevant pediatric patient tool. But, the question remained – replace them with what?

That answer came while attending the 2008 Child Life Conference in San Diego, California. There, Goshert happened upon the Medical Memories My Hospital Scrapbook™ booth, helmed by creator and founder Craig Schnierow. With one look, Goshert exclaimed, “This is it! I have to make this My Hospital Scrapbook™ program happen!” ■

Medical Memories – A Scrapbook with Heart

What Goshert recognized is a high-quality, unique, fresh version of a scrapbook and activity book which pediatric patients could use to help alleviate their fears and better understand their surroundings. An ideal “ice breaker”, My Hospital Scrapbook™ serves as an educational, informative, fun and therapeutic tool that parents and kids can work on together to chronicle the phases of a child’s hospital stay and help give both the parent and child greater peace of mind.



Approximately forty pages in length, with customizable page options including a hospital-specific welcome letter and unique room and department images, My Hospital Scrapbook™ allows hospital staff to create positive associations with their young patients – assuring kids that not all items they’ll encounter during their stay are scary or pain related. Schnierow collaborates with each hospital, working with them to ensure their own imagery, photos and branding are used to create a My Hospital Scrapbook™ and customized cover that presents as uniquely their own. ■

Taking the Fear Factor out of the Hospital Experience

Miller Children’s Hospital began the rollout of My Hospital Scrapbook™ in January of 2009. In a short time, the hospital has realized tremendous results. A hit with hospital staff, pediatric patients and parents alike, My Hospital Scrapbook™ is handed out upon admission to any child between ages five and thirteen who finds themselves having to stay in the hospital overnight or for an extended length of time. These tools have been the perfect way to introduce children to their new surroundings and help them understand both what will happen in the hospital and the illness that brought them there. And while all the kids love using their scrapbooks, certain age groups rave about their favorite parts.

As for parents, they are simply grateful to have this soft-spoken, lighter-hearted means to help them speak openly and honestly with their children about what staying in the hospital means. “If their child is having a procedure or surgery, the parents can go through those pages in the scrapbook with their child the night before, pointing to pictures and explaining the process so that the child knows what to expect and can be less afraid,” explains Goshert. “My Hospital Scrapbook™ helps alleviate anxiety for both parents and children, providing them with a degree of comfort that’s simply invaluable!” The staff of Miller Children’s Hospital agrees – My Hospital Scrapbook™ is an invaluable asset. Unlike anything they have ever seen or used before. ■