

# Pedi Press

A Department of Pediatrics Publication  
June 2026



## Message from the desk of Dr. Lara Shekerdeman



Dear Team,

As the days grow longer and the pace of summer begins to settle in, we have a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the impact of our work and the moments that bring our community together. This season offers both a sense of momentum and a chance to recognize the dedication that continues to define our care for children and families.

In May, we proudly celebrated Nurse Week, honoring the incredible nurses whose compassion, clinical expertise, and steady presence are essential to everything we do. The care and advocacy you provide each day create a lasting difference for patients and families, often in ways that extend far beyond the clinical setting.

May and June also bring important opportunities to recognize educational achievements across our faculty and trainees. From teaching awards and graduation milestones to engaging educational events, these highlights reflect a strong culture of mentorship and learning. The time and energy you invest in education not only support individual growth but also strengthen the future of our field.

Throughout the summer months, your commitment, teamwork, and excellence continue to shine. It is a privilege to work alongside such a dedicated group, and I am grateful for the care and purpose you bring to your roles each day.

Happy reading and take care!  
Lara

**For more Department of Pediatrics updates:**  
Connect with [Dr. Shekerdeman on LinkedIn](#)

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# Spotlighting a Remarkable Career

## Highlighting Loretta Collins

For 25 years, **Loretta Collins** has been a dedicated leader in Adolescent Medicine and Sports Medicine, leaving a lasting impact through her commitment to patient care, mentorship, and professional excellence. As she soon begins her retirement, we celebrate her remarkable career and the legacy she leaves behind.

### *A message from Loretta*

I have been with Baylor College of Medicine for 25 years and have truly valued the opportunities and experiences throughout my career. I was originally hired as the Pediatric Core Clerkship and Research Coordinator in 2001 and have been fortunate to grow professionally over the years into my current role as Senior Business Operations Associate.

In this position, I have the privilege of working directly with Dr. Hergenroeder, the Division Chief of Adolescent Medicine and Sports Medicine, and alongside an outstanding group of faculty members and staff who make each day rewarding and meaningful. Baylor College of Medicine has been a wonderful institution to work for, and I am grateful for the support, mentorship, and professional growth I have experienced during my time here.



### A message from her colleagues



**From Dr. Albert C. Hergenroeder**  
Division Chief, Adolescent and Sports Medicine, Professor of Pediatrics, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital

*"Everything we have accomplished in the Division has directly or indirectly been facilitated by Loretta for the past 25 years. Certainly she has facilitated everything I have done as the Division Chief, and she being the Senior Administrative Coordinator for the past 13 years. Loretta is a master problem solver and embodies the attitude "Whatever it takes."*

*She knows the TCH-BCM systems so well and is able to get things done in an effective and efficient manner. She has embraced the mission of the division in all of our teaching, research, clinical efforts and has touched the lives of every one of our faculty, staff and fellows by facilitating their efforts in teaching, research, professional development and clinical care. Her loyalty has been unwavering.*

*If Loretta cannot answer a question or solve a problem she will find someone who can answer the question or solve the problem. In this regard she is a consummate professional.*

*She will be missed beyond words."*



**From Dr. Jorge E. Gomez**  
Division of Adolescent Medicine and Sports Medicine, Associate Professor, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children Hospital

*"Dear Loretta,*

*I don't think I've met anyone else at Baylor/TCH who is as good at what they do as you are.*

*I will miss you a lot.*

*Welcome to retirement."*

## Beyond the Exam Room

### Expanding your Impact through Advocacy

AAP Leadership Visit + Conference

**Save the Date!**  
**Friday, August 21, 2026**

**8 am - 9 am** Grand Rounds with AAP Leadership  
**9:30 am - 4 pm** Conference for Faculty and Trainees (Hybrid)

### Special Guests



**Mark Del Monte, JD**  
CEO and Executive Vice President  
American Academy of Pediatrics



**Lee Savio Beers, MD**  
Chief Medical Officer  
American Academy of Pediatrics

# Introducing PREP Blocks

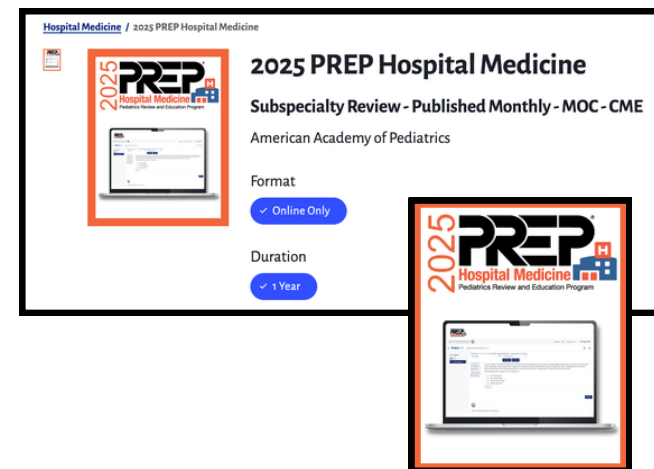
## What Are PREP Blocks?

PREP Blocks consist of 20 case-based self-assessment questions focused on a specific content area. Each block provides up to 4 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ and 4 MOC Part 2 Points, making them a valuable resource for continuing medical education.

Each block remains valid for three years after its release. They are available for purchase individually or as part of the comprehensive PREP Blocks Plus package.

Developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, PREP Blocks offer a flexible, app-based CME format that allows users to switch from an annual to a quarterly subscription model.

**Discounted subscriptions are available to all AAP members!**



## Introducing the Mobile Simulation Unit



**The Texas Children's Hospital Simulation Center** recently held a ribbon cutting for their new mobile simulation unit. This is a fully functional ambulance which will be used to extend simulation based education to our community partners, including EMS agencies, community hospitals, schools, and community events, as well as for transport simulations for our teams. The first outreach event was held on March 14th and included a full day of simulation and education in partnership with El Campo EMS, led by **Dr. Kathryn Kothari** and **Saamia Masoom**. For more information, please contact **Dr. Cara Doughty** (medical director) or **Jeannie Eggers**, manager of the simulation center, or use the link here to fill out a request for service. [Click here!](#)

## Former Pediatric Critical Care Fellow Becomes Pediatric Department Chair and Critical Care Chief at Ecuador's Leading Teaching Hospital

In pediatric critical care, our fellows and our faculty come from all corners of the world. For 3 years, we offer our fellows the chance to recognize life-threatening illness, stabilize the sickest children, and, in collaboration with other gifted and privileged pediatric specialists, chart these children's journey back to health. The best of our fellows leave the program humbled. The best realize they have only experienced a fraction of the universe of critical illness and critical care and are—appropriately—awestruck by how much they still must learn. Many also leave grateful, aware that they may never practice in such a resource-rich setting again.

In July 2012, **Dr. María Caridad Dávalos** joined the pediatric critical care fellowship in the division then led by our current chair, **Dr. Lara Shekerdemian**. **Dr. Dávalos**, a native of Quito, Ecuador, made the courageous decision to leave her country to pursue the best pediatric training possible, with the goal of returning and applying that expertise acquired abroad to the benefit of children who would otherwise lack access to that care. Those of us who knew Caridad as a fellow soon learned of and admired her fearlessness and devotion to children. She was uncompromising in advocating for the highest quality care for her patients, a quality that could provoke discomfort in less zealous colleagues.

At the conclusion of her fellowship, **Dr. Dávalos** returned to Ecuador, full of energy and with dreams to build high-quality pediatric capacity at home. Nothing went according to the original script, however. She encountered more obstacles than anyone could have imagined. But true to her character, she never gave up: every setback became a lesson learned. While amassing these lessons, she also used them to begin building a future in which not only would doors no longer close in her face, but she would be the one to open doors for others. On February 19, 2026, **Dr. Dávalos** was named Chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Pediatric Intensive Care at the Hospital de los Valles, the most important teaching hospital in Ecuador. This announcement, together with her previous appointment to the medical school faculty at the University of San Francisco de Quito, consolidated her position as one of the most prominent pediatricians in her country.

When she talks of her time in Houston, at Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine, **Dr. Dávalos** gushes with pride. She speaks of both the institutions and her experience in reverential tones. Even before her appointment to this role, she sought advice and counsel from the faculty who helped her on this journey. She will continue to reach out to us in this new, and influential, role she has assumed. Our supportive responses will reaffirm our commitment to helping children on a global scale.





## Texas Children's The Woodlands Celebrates 9th Birthday and 2026 HEART Values Awards

As **Texas Children's Hospital The Woodlands** celebrated its ninth anniversary on April 23, 2026, the campus also honored a cherished tradition of recognizing team members who exemplify the organization's core values through its Annual Values Awards program, established in 2019.

This year marked an exciting new chapter as the program evolved into the **HEART Values Awards**, recognizing individuals who demonstrate **Humility, Excellence, Accountability, Respect, and Trust** in their daily work and interactions.

The celebration brought together staff, providers, and campus leaders to honor those who consistently go above and beyond in caring for patients, families, and colleagues. Through heartfelt peer nominations and inspiring stories, the event showcased the compassion, collaboration, and excellence that define the culture of the Woodlands campus.

This year's awards reflected remarkable engagement across the hospital community, with **more than 205 peer nominations** recognizing acts of kindness, leadership, teamwork, innovation, and dedication to patient-centered care.

**Congratulations to the 2026 HEART Values Award recipients:** ❤️

| Humility   | Excellence  | Accountability   | Respect  | Trust  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Provider Winner:<br><b>Rebecca Slagle, NP</b><br>Neonatology | Provider Winner:<br><b>Grace Kim, MD</b><br>Endocrine | Provider Winner:<br><b>Susan "Susie" Lee, MD</b><br>Pediatric Hospital<br>Medicine | Provider Winner:<br><b>Ricardo Flores, MD</b><br>Hematology-Oncology       | Provider Winner:<br><b>Eddie Espineli, MD</b><br>Neurology |
| Staff Winner:<br><b>Joy Snell</b><br>Care Management         | Staff Winner:<br><b>Barbara Bledsoe</b><br>Child Life | Staff Winner:<br><b>Melanie Garcia</b><br>Perioperative Business<br>Ops            | Staff Winner:<br><b>Jacqueline Barker</b><br>Perioperative Business<br>Ops | Staff Winner:<br><b>Erin Randle</b><br>Pharmacy            |

The stories shared throughout the event served as a powerful reminder that the **HEART** values are not simply words on a wall, but principles actively demonstrated every day across our teams and departments. **Thank you to all nominees, award recipients, committee members, and campus leaders who helped make this event such a meaningful celebration of our people and culture at Texas Children's The Woodlands.**

## Publication Highlight

### A Scoping Review of the Associations Between Ascariasis, Helicobacter pylori Infection and Gastric Pathologies

By Nina L. Tang, Jacob J. Williams, Jennifer Stockton, Maria Elena Bottazzi, and Jill E. Weatherhead

This publication explores the relationship between ascariasis, a parasitic worm infection caused by *Ascaris*, and *H. pylori*, a bacterium linked to stomach disease. Both are common globally, especially in resource-limited settings. A review of 86 studies found that these infections often occur together and may be associated with gastric abnormalities in humans and animals. While most evidence is observational, the findings suggest a notable overlap between ascariasis, *H. pylori*, and gastric pathology, highlighting the need for further research. [Click here to learn more!](#)



# Pedi-Team at PAS!

Hosted in Boston!

The Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) meeting is a leading national conference in pediatrics, bringing together experts to share research and advance child health. We're proud to highlight our faculty and team members who attended and represented our institution at this year's meeting!



# A groundbreaking initiative in TB receives the Penta Brighter Future Award for Leadership in Maternal TB!

**Dr. Pauline Masta** accepted the **Penta Brighter Future Award** for the Oceania Region during a ceremony in May 2026 for her leadership in detecting and treating maternal TB in Papua New Guinea as part of the TB Free Papua New Guinea (TB Free PNG) project. This award is a global initiative that honors champions working to improve health outcomes for pregnant people and children affected by infectious diseases worldwide. As recipients of this award, the **TB Free PNG team** exemplifies the vital role of local, community-led action in advancing maternal and child health and making science more accessible and equitable at the grassroots level.

TB Free PNG integrates TB screening within maternity services to detect TB in pregnancy and protect newborns and households at the earliest point of risk. TB Free PNG combines clinical care, teaching, and advocacy to strengthen family-centered prevention in PNG.

For the past decade, **Dr. Henry Welch**, assistant professor of pediatrics in the Global Health Division, Global TB Program, at Baylor College of Medicine, has been supporting clinical, educational, and research activities for pediatric and maternal TB, HIV, and malnutrition in PNG. Together with **Dr. Masta, Dr. Welch** has overseen the implementation of TB Free PNG and worked to integrate the project's findings into clinical practice and guidelines.

The TB Free PNG project demonstrates that TB services can be delivered effectively, safely, and acceptably within maternity care in a high-burden, resource-limited setting and that they can be incorporated into planning, service delivery, and policy.



**Dr. Pauline** who accepted the award on behalf of the team (third from right) with the TBFreePNG Team.



## Congratulations to Nompumelo Mzizi!

Congratulations to Baylor Global TB NIH Fogarty D43 Fellow and Siyakhula Scholar **Nompumelelo Mzizi** on successfully defending her PhD dissertation and graduating from the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health in May. Under the direction of PI **Dr. Anna Mandalakas (Chief of Global Health)**, **Dr. Mzizi's** thesis, **Economic Evaluation Of Tuberculosis Algorithms For Screening And Diagnosis: A Cost-Effectiveness Analysis In Eswatini**, synthesized the existing economic evidence of AI-assisted detection of TB across screening and diagnosis strategies for active TB, estimated the resource costs of implementing the current TB lab screening and diagnostic algorithm among the GTB TB GAPS project participating clinics in Eswatini, and evaluated the cost-effectiveness of select TB screening and diagnostic strategies recently introduced via the TB GAPS project among adults in Eswatini compared to the existing diagnostic algorithm.

This important milestone, the culmination of extensive and rigorous research and mentorship supported by the Baylor GTB team and colleagues abroad, reflects her sincere dedication to health economics and advancing global health research. We are incredibly proud of Mpumie and her accomplishments and wish her all the best as she returns to Eswatini to apply her expertise in health economics locally.



## At Hill Day 2026: Dr. Regina Okhuysen-Cawley and Keisha Odunze Unite for Child Health Advocacy in Washington, DC

At Hill Day 2026 in Washington, DC, on April 14, **Dr. Regina Okhuysen-Cawley** represented UNICEF USA alongside **Keisha Odunze**, a PCCM Fellow representing the American Academy of Pediatrics. The day was dedicated to advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill, engaging with policymakers and advancing priorities in child health. In a notable moment, Dr. Okhuysen-Cawley and Dr. Odunze unexpectedly crossed paths outside Senator John Cornyn's office, highlighting the shared commitment of pediatric professionals working to influence policy at the national level.

# Buzz around the block

from the heart of pediatrics



## Texas Children's Arthritis Avengers Walk to Cure Arthritis in Houston

The Rheumatology Faculty, Fellows, and Nurse Practitioners from the Texas Children's Arthritis Avengers proudly participated in the 2026 Arthritis Foundation Walk to Cure Arthritis on April 25th at MacGregor Park, near the University of Houston. Their presence spotlighted advocacy and encouraged family engagement.

**From left to right**, the team included Drs. Andrea Ramirez, Dawn Gist (Fellow) with her son, Shelby Jones (NP), Dr. Marietta de Guzman, Dr. Cagri Toruner, Juan Torres (Fellow), and Shelby's husband, John Jones.



## Retrovirology Team Supports Walk to End HIV

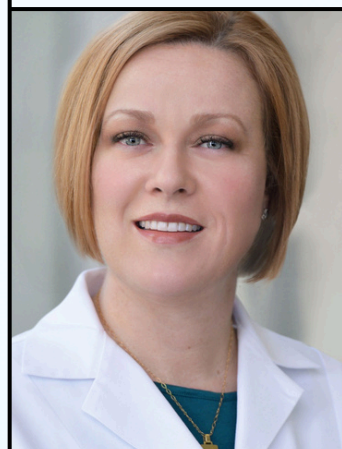
On April 18, **Dr. Susan Gillespie**, **Dr. Mary Elizabeth Paul**, HIV research nurse **Alejandra Martinez**, and research manager **Litty Koshy** participated in the Walk to End HIV as members of the Texas Children's Hospital Retrovirology Team. Together, they helped raise funds for Allies in Hope, an organization that supports individuals affected by HIV and sponsors Camp Hope, a summer camp for children and teens living with HIV.



## Congratulations to Dr. Amanda Macias on HEAR-PHM Selection

Congratulations to **Dr. Amanda Macias** on being selected for the second cohort of the HEAR-PHM (Health Equity Academic Research in Pediatric Hospital Medicine) program. This prestigious program supports emerging leaders in health equity research, providing mentorship, collaboration opportunities, and training to advance research that improves care for hospitalized children.

We congratulate **Dr. Macias** on this well-deserved achievement.



## Congratulations to Dr. Mary E. Rocha!

**Dr. Rocha** has been appointed for a second three-year term as Editor-in-Chief of the PREP-HM Editorial Board, from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2029!



## Texas Children's Rheumatology Team Joins 2026 Walk to Cure Lupus: Pushing for Remission and a Cure!

Members of the **Rheumatology Division Texas Children's Hospital SPARK Lupus Team** attended the **2026 Lupus Foundation of America (LFA) Inc., Gulf Coast Chapter Walk to Cure Lupus** which was held on Saturday, May 4 at 3347 Blodgett St. (at the Texas Southern University Campus) **PUSHING** toward not only **REMISSION** for all patients – but also **FOR A CURE!**

# Buzz around the block from the heart of pediatrics



## Dr. Rathi Asaithambi Honored with Outstanding Teacher Award from Graduating Class!

Congratulations to **Dr. Rathi Asaithambi** on being selected by the graduating class to receive the Outstanding Teacher Award!

This recognition is especially meaningful, as the last pediatric faculty member to receive this honor was in 2013. **Dr. Asaithambi's** dedication to teaching, mentorship, and supporting medical students has made a lasting impact, and we are proud to see her commitment recognized in such a special way. Please join us in celebrating this well-deserved achievement!



From left to right: Maria Jose Villar and Brian Keegan



From left to right: Dr. Hotez and Dr. Bottazzi

## Tropical Medicine Annual Chili Cook-Off, Peter Hotez's Birthday, and Cinco De Mayo Celebration!

Tropical Medicine recently held their annual chili cook-off, combining it with **Dr. Peter Hotez's** birthday and Cinco de Mayo celebrations for a memorable event. The division enjoyed an afternoon of laughter, camaraderie, and delicious food, featuring both cake and chili.

Highlights included the announcement of the chili cook-off winners: **Maria Jose Villar** won the traditional category with her "Three Little Pigs and a Cow Walked into Texas Chili," while **Brian Keegan** took the top spot in the vegetarian category with his "Swamp Donkey" chili!



## Congratulations to the recipients of the 2026 DeBakey Excellence in Research Awards!

We are pleased to announce that **Dr. Ann M. Leen** and **Dr. Zhandong Liu** are the newest recipients of the 2026 Michael E. DeBakey, M.D. Excellence in Research Awards. Made possible through the generous support of the DeBakey Foundation, these prestigious awards honor faculty whose published research over the past three years has made significant contributions to advancing clinical or basic biomedical science. Their work reflects a sustained commitment to innovation, discovery, and impact in improving human health. Please join us in congratulating **Dr. Leen** and **Dr. Liu** on their outstanding achievements!



## Congratulations to Dr. Gordon E. Schutze for the Global Champion Award!

Rice360 co-director **Dr. Rebecca Richards-Kortum** presented the 2026 Global Champion Award to **Dr. Schutze**, recognizing his transformative leadership within the Texas Children's Global Health Network and the Baylor College of Medicine International Pediatric AIDS Initiative.

**Dr. Schutze's** career has been defined by a deep commitment to health equity. Under his leadership, these global health initiatives have supported the delivery of care for infants and children affected by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malnutrition, reaching more than 8 million people across Africa, Eastern Europe, and South America. In his address to graduates, **Dr. Schutze** broadened the meaning of "global" health, emphasizing that the skills developed in training are needed not only worldwide but also within local communities. He encouraged the Class of 2026 to pursue work that serves people wherever needs exist, closing with a simple message: "Go forth and do good."

From left to right: Maria Oden, Co-Director of Rice360; Dr. Gordon E. Schutze; Yvette Mirabal, Executive Director of Rice360; and Rebecca Richards-Kortum, Co-Director of Rice360. (Photo by Ebony Thornton.)



## QIPS Scholar Award Highlights!

Congratulations to all the winners from the Department of Pediatrics who were honored with the BCM Quality Improvement and Patient Safety (QIPS) Scholar Award on May 14th! These distinguished recipients were celebrated at the 12th Annual BCM Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Conference. The 2026 Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Scholar Award recipients include **Mayar Al Mohajer, Jess Casas, Daniel DeSalvo, Sarah Detlefs, Bryan Greenfield, Huay-Ying Lo, and Tracey Patel**. We applaud their dedication to enhancing quality, safety, and patient care.

Christopher Greeley completed the Saumur De la Loire Half Marathon on May 10th in Saumur, France!





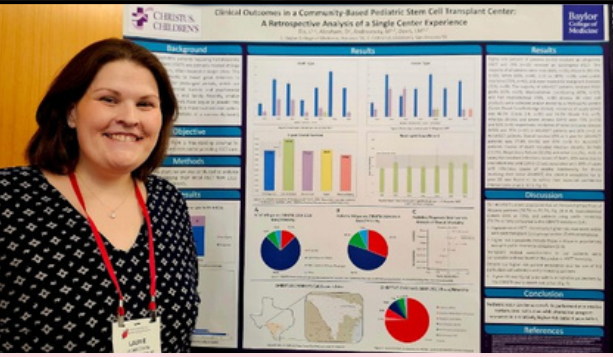
## Pickle Ball Fun in San Antonio!

On April 25, Baylor physicians and residents competed in the San Antonio South Texas Chapter of the American College of Healthcare Executives (STC-ACHE)'s San Antonio Healthcare Pickleball Cup Tournament! A day full of awesome fun!



# Buzz around the block

from the heart of pediatrics



## Dr. Laurie Davis Presents Groundbreaking Pediatric Stem Cell Research at PTCTC Annual Meeting

Laurie Davis, MD, PhD, from the Pediatric Blood and Marrow Transplant team at CHRISTUS Children's, recently presented a poster abstract at the annual Pediatric Transplant and Cellular Therapy Consortium (PTCTC) meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The PTCTC is a national organization that brings together leading experts in pediatric stem cell transplantation and cellular therapy to share cutting-edge research to advance the care of children with life-threatening diseases. Her poster titled "Clinical Outcomes in a Community-Based Pediatric Stem Cell Transplant Center: A Retrospective Analysis of a Single Center Experience" highlighted outcomes from 53 pediatric patients who received hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) at CHRISTUS Children's between 2019 and 2025.



## On April 21, The Baylor at CHRISTUS Children's faculty and admin team took 3rd place in the annual Battle of the Flowers Parade!



## Hospital Week Highlights from CHRISTUS Children's San Antonio

From faculty feeling groovy through the decades to going purple and proudly showing their San Antonio Spurs spirit!



## The BPR Research Leader Council proudly kicks off its inaugural meeting!

The Baylor Pediatrics Research Leadership Council, including liaisons from each division and campus, held their inaugural meeting on June 11 in the Feigin Tower. This group supports the goal of BPR to make the greatest possible impact on child health through research. The BPR Leadership Council will engage in department and division strategic planning and development of working groups to accomplish this goal.



## Congratulations to Carrie Altman!

Congratulations to Dr. Carrie Altman, recipient of the 2026 Maria Serratto Master Educator Award from the American Academy of Pediatrics. This prestigious honor recognizes a cardiologist or cardiothoracic surgeon who exemplifies excellence in education and leadership. Dr. Altman will be honored this October in San Diego.



## Congratulations to Wallis Molchen!

Dr. Wallis Molchen (Critical Care Medicine & Academic General Pediatrics) was celebrated as the TCH 2026 Volunteer of the Year at the Texas Children's Houston Open Celebration Luncheon! A big high-five to Dr. Molchen, for her outstanding dedication with over three years of service and more than 100 volunteer hours!

# Buzz around the block from the heart of pediatrics



## David's Dream Run 2026

On Saturday, May 2nd, **The David Clinic**, in partnership with **David Elementary**, hosted their annual **David's Dream Run**. This event continues a meaningful Houston tradition dedicated to honoring the life and legacy of **David Vetter** (also known as "Bubble Boy"), whose story brought global awareness to severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) and the importance of advancing medical research. Through participation and support, attendees help raise critical funds that drive innovative research, enhance patient care, and foster hope for future breakthroughs. More than just a run, David's Dream Run is a powerful reminder of resilience, compassion, and the progress made possible through collaboration and dedication.

Special thank you to **Dr. Lenora Noroski**, **Dr. Javier Chinen**, and **Teresa Aldape** for leading David's Champions along with **Ms. Carol Ann Demaret**, David's mother.



## Texas Children's The Woodlands Hosts Neurology Symposium for Community Pediatric Providers

On February 28, 2026, Texas Children's Hospital The Woodlands hosted Bridging the Synapse: Neurology for the General Pediatrician, a CME-accredited symposium that brought together more than 50 pediatricians, advanced practice providers, nurses, and specialists from across the greater Houston area and College Station.

Led by course directors **Drs. Swati Karmarkar**, **Eddie Espineli**, and **Michelle Yen Tran**, the event focused on strengthening collaboration between pediatric neurology and primary care through practical approaches to common neurologic concerns. Topics included seizure evaluation, headache management, tic disorders, POTS and syncope, hypotonia, neuroinflammatory disorders, and functional neurological disorders. The symposium provided attendees with actionable clinical tools, highlighted pathways for timely neurology access, and reinforced Texas Children's commitment to supporting high-quality neurologic care through education and community partnership.



## West Campus Pediatric Hospital Medicine Retreat!



## BCM Department of Pediatric Quality Day Highlights!

The fourth annual Department of Pediatrics Quality Day held on April 17 was a success! **Dr. Lalit Bajaj** (Chief Quality Officer of Children's Colorado) gave a wonderful Grand Rounds, followed by platform presentations by faculty and staff. We are also excited to welcome **Dr. Deb Franzon** as our new System Chief Quality and Safety Officer!



## Trainees Recognized for Excellence in Leadership, Education, and Service!

Congratulations to the trainees recognized with the Academy of Resident and Fellow Educators (AoRE) Trainee Excellence Award for their outstanding contributions to well-being, education, leadership, and community engagement.

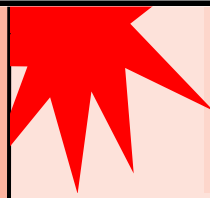
Honorees included **Dr. Jelina Castillo** (Adolescent Medicine), **Dr. Vidya Menon** (PHM), **Dr. Nour Gebara** (Pediatric Critical Care Medicine), **Dr. Heerali Patel** (Pediatrics Resident), **Dr. Matthew Postolowski** (Pediatrics Resident), **Dr. Aswin Srivatsav** (Pediatric Cardiology), and **Dr. Sarah Tucker** (Pediatric Cardiology).

The award ceremony featured presentations from selected trainees, including **Dr. Sarah Tucker**, who delivered a platform talk on leadership. We congratulate all award recipients on this well-deserved recognition.

### HAPPY TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK!



During Teacher Appreciation Week, **Kennedy Stacy, Ashley Matthews, and Lindsey Heinzman** were recognized for helping patients stay connected to school through reintegration planning and tailored academic support!



**Dr. Lisa Bouchier-Hayes' lab** investigates how caspases regulate cell death and other processes involved in cancer and inflammatory diseases. Using innovative fluorescence-based tools, molecular biology, and live-cell imaging, the lab visualizes and studies real-time caspase signaling at the single-cell level to uncover new therapeutic strategies. [Learn more here!](#)

**The Research Tissue Support Services (RTSS) lab** is the largest biorepository at TCH and the official biorepository for the DLDOCC. By providing high-quality tissue samples and expert support, RTSS enables cancer and hematology research across the TMC, advancing new therapies and precision medicine. [To learn more, click here!](#)

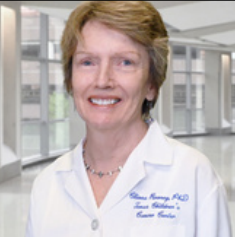
## Awards/Achievements



**Nikki Valencia, DHA**, Administrative Director, earned her Doctorate in Healthcare Administration from OSU, graduating with a 4.0 GPA—an achievement that reflects her discipline, and commitment to excellence.



**Bambi Grilley, RPh, RAC, CIP, CCRC, CCRP**, was named ISCT president-elect (2026–2028). She will help guide the global organization advancing safe, effective cell and gene therapies for patients worldwide.



**Cliona Rooney, PhD**, received ISCT's 2026 Darwin J. Prockop Mentoring Award. Over 40 years, she mentored 143 trainees, shaping generations of scientists through thoughtful guidance and leadership.



**Sarah S. Kappa, MD**, was named Co-Director of the Liver Tumor Program, partnering with **Sanjeev A. Vasudevan, MD** to lead care, innovation, and multidisciplinary collaboration for patients with complex liver tumors.



### Celebrating Admin Excellence ★

In recognition of Administrative Professionals Week, leadership hosted a luncheon celebrating the vital contributions of administrative team members across Texas Children's Cancer & Hematology Center. The event also marked the inaugural presentation of the **Robin Wiles Administrative Excellence Award** to **Mackenzie Davis** and **Shanna Fulton**.

Established in honor of **Robin Wiles**, the award recognizes exceptional non-management administrative staff. Robin was known for her meticulous approach, pride in her work, and commitment to excellence—qualities reflected in this year's recipients. Their contributions underscore the essential role administrative professionals play in supporting clinical teams and advancing care for patients and families.



**The TXCH Recognition Day Ceremony** brought together the many disciplines that shape care for children with cancer or serious blood disorders. The event honored excellence across out Center, including **David Poplack, MD**, for lifetime achievement; **Marika C. Highberger, APRN, MSN, CPNP**, for **Top 15 nursing excellence**; and **Joseph Lubega, MD, MPH, CPE**, for **contributions to global health**. Research accomplishments were also recognized, with competitive grants and high-impact publications from faculty including **Amanda Grimes, MD; M. Monica Gramatges, MD, PhD; and Rayne Rouce, MD**. Together, the honorees reflect the collaboration and expertise needed to advance care for patients and families each day.



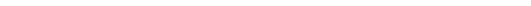
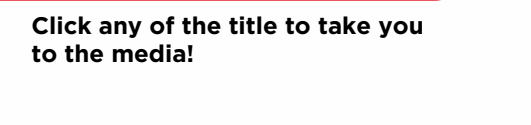
Six Texas Children's Cancer & Hematology Center nurses—**Rhea Noval, Vanessa Coronado, Tori Stovall, Marika Highberger** (also named a Top 15 Nurse), **Ashley Makara, and Michelle Nguyen**—were recognized among the Houston Chronicle's Top 200 Nurses and honored at the Salute to Nurses Luncheon. Representing inpatient care, infusion, care coordination, education, and advanced practice, they reflect the strength and breadth of our nursing team.

Their clinical expertise, resilience, collaboration, and compassion define the exceptional care provided to children and families facing cancer and blood disorders.



The Bravo Awards recognize team members who go above and beyond for children and families facing cancer and blood disorders. This year's honorees—**Juanita Cano, RN (not pictured), Mary Day, RD, Lori Douglas, RN, Robert Holland, RN, Jadaí Sells, RN, Miranda Short, RN, and Jessica Smith, RN**—were selected for their exceptional dedication, teamwork, and compassionate care. Congratulations to all of our Bravo Award recipients!

Pictured left to right, top to bottom: Mary Day, RD; Lori Douglas, RN; Robert Holland, RN; Jadaí Sells, RN; Miranda Short, RN; and Jessica Smith, RN. Juanita Cano, RN, is not pictured.



## IN THE MEDIA

Click any of the title to take you to the media!

- BCM Blog: "Children survive blood clots, but are we failing them afterward?" - written by [Clay Cohen, MD](#)
- ABC13 Video: "Woodland wins Houston Open, first title since brain surgery: I wasn't alone today."
- KHOU11 Video: "High school golfer battling Leukemia finds strength on Houston Open course" - featured [Dr. Matt Willis, MD](#)
- YouTube: "Angie's Osteosarcoma Journey at Texas Children's Cancer & Hematology Center" - featured [Dr. Shoba Navai, MD](#)
- Blog: "It's a Bird! It's a Plane! It's...a Man Hanging from a Chandelier: Meet Barber of Seville supernumerary Alessandro Baldan, PhD" - featured [Dr. Alessandro, Baldan, PhD](#)

# News from Immunology, Allergy and Retrovirology (IAR)



## IAR's Retrovirology Team take home GOLD!

On April 9, 2026 the CRA hosted a Consent Experts Competition and IAR's Retrovirology team took home the GOLD! Kudos & Congratulations to **Laura Reyes-Jauregui**, **Alejandra Martinez**, and **Litty Koshy** for their outstanding job.



## Administrative Professionals Day Celebrations!

On April 22, 2026 the IAR and Rheumatology admin team celebrated Administrative Professionals with lunch and whimsical, candy themed certificates of appreciation. Thank you **Kim Nguyen**, **Stephanie Baxter**, and **Charlene Johnson** for your thoughtful display of appreciation for the team.



## April TEA TIME Relaxation!

For the month of April, IAR and Rheumatology partnered up with the well-being team for TEA TIME, a moment of relaxation. They also had a special four-legged guest stop by. Thank you to **Taiya Ivery** for hosting these events.



## CIL Medical Lab Professional Week Highlight!

For the week of April 19-25, the CIL within IAR hosted a week's worth of events for Medical Lab Professionals week. Special shoutout to **Kruthi Murthy** for hosting these events.



## From Miss to Mrs.

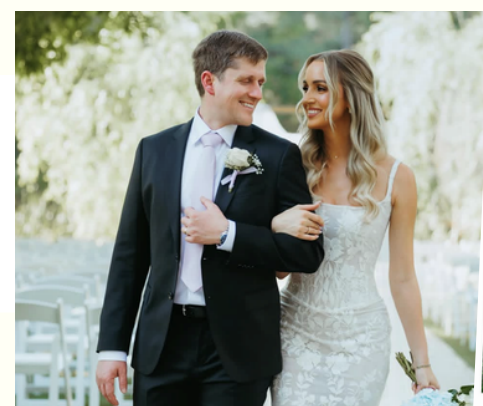
On April 29<sup>th</sup> IAR and CRA came together to host a surprise bridal shower for Sr. Research Administration Mgr., **Brooke Smith**. She had no idea it was coming. Special shoutout to **Samantha Johnson** for hosting a lovely event.



## Celebrating Hospital Week!

IAR and Rheumatology came together to show their team spirit for hospital week

Only a few days later, on May 2<sup>nd</sup> **Brooke** became **Mrs. Andre**.



THE Andre's  
05.02.26

# News from Infectious Diseases



## Celebrating 25 Years of Dedication: Honoring Cynthia “Cindy” Gaskill on Her Retirement

The Pediatric Infectious Disease group recently gathered to celebrate—and fondly bid farewell to—our longtime Fellowship Coordinator, **Cynthia “Cindy” Gaskill**, on her retirement. **Cindy** dedicated 25 years of service to Baylor, leaving an enduring impact on generations of fellows, faculty, and staff through her commitment, warmth, and institutional knowledge. Her presence will be deeply missed, and we are grateful for the many years she helped shape and support our program. We wish **Cindy** all the best in this well-earned next chapter.



## Highlights at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Texas Children’s Research Symposium!

Our faculty and fellows participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Texas Children’s Research Symposium on May 15, 2026, organized by the Texas Children’s Research Institute. The Theme of the symposium was, “Advancing Health Through Collaborations, Discoveries and Transformational Therapies” and the keynote speakers were **Drs. Katherine King** and **Maria Elena Bottazzi**.



## Highlights at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pediatric Infectious Diseases Research Retreat

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pediatric Infectious Diseases Research Retreat was held on April 17, 2026, in the lobby and 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room of the Feigin Tower.

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATE!



## Global Child Health Program Celebrates Six New Graduates

Six graduating residents were recognized for completing the **Dr. Kelly DeScioli Pediatrics/Global Child Health Residency Program**. Led by **Drs. Heather Haq** and **Stephanie Marton**, the program includes an intensive one-year global health training experience within a four-year combined curriculum. **Mr. and Mrs. Feavel**, parents of the late **Dr. Kelly DeScioli**, were in attendance. Graduates reflected on the program’s impact on their clinical practice, professional direction, and commitment to caring for patients across diverse settings.



Pediatric Endocrinology Graduation



Pediatric Hospital Medicine Fellowship Graduation

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

Congratulations to our faculty, staff, fellows, residents, and their loved ones on this special graduation milestone! We're proud to celebrate all of our graduates and wish them success in the journey ahead. 🎓 ✨



## BCM-TMC LEAH Program Fellows Graduation!

We celebrated the graduation of fellows from the **Baylor College of Medicine-Texas Medical Center Leadership Education in Adolescent Health (BCM-TMC LEAH)** program, recognizing trainees across medicine, nursing, nutrition, psychology, public health, and social work. As one of nine HRSA- and MCHB-funded programs, LEAH continues to prepare interdisciplinary leaders dedicated to improving adolescent health.



On May 16th, BCM Business Manager, **Miriam Hinojosa** received her Doctorate in Business Administration from the University of Houston

Pediatric Cardiology Graduate with the addition of presenting the Teacher of the Year Award!



## Congratulations to our distinguished Faculty College graduates!

On May 14th, **Christopher Case, MD**, primary care, and **Gabriella Nunez, PsyD**, psychology, graduated from Faculty College at Texas Children's Hospital and Baylor College of Medicine. The Texas Children's Hospital Faculty College is now accepting applications for the sixth cohort of scholars for the 2026-2027 academic year. This program is designed for clinical teachers who seek to enhance their skills and development as clinician-educators. We encourage all Baylor College of Medicine faculty members across CHRISTUS Children's to apply for careers in health professions education.



Neonatology Fellows Graduate



Left to right: Graduates and PEM Division Graduates from Pediatric Emergency Medicine, PEM- Global Health, and Point-of-Care Ultrasound fellowship programs!



Department of Pediatrics Advisor, Lindsey Gurganious Celebrates her son Devin's graduation from Kindergarden!

# Congratulations to our Faculty!

## BCM Faculty Award Day

### Clark Faculty Service Award, Norton Rose Fulbright Award and Master Clinician Patient Care Award

- **Dr. Parth Mehta** - Clark Faculty Service Award & Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Michelle Lopez** - Clark Faculty Service Award & Norton Rose Fulbright Teaching Award
- **Dr. Daniel Penny** - Master Clinician Award
- **Dr. Aderonke Ojo** - Master Clinician Award
- **Dr. Joseph Garcia-Prats** - Master Clinician Award

### Star Patient Care Award

- **Dr. Jose Ruben Rodriguez** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Cassandra Duran** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Emy Kuriakose** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Wilson Lam** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Brent Mothner** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Sutapa Khatua** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Emily Lawrence** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Sara Sexson Tejtel** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Jamie Cargill** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Danny Castro** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Matei Petrescu** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Sarah Lyons** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Andrew Chu** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Jennifer Hemmeger** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Stephen Edwards** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Andrea Hauser** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Huay-Ying Lo** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Sarah Risen** - Star Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Cruz Munoz** - Star Patient Care Award

### Early Career Patient Care Award

- **Dr. Denver Niles** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Omar Shakeel** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Andrea Vo** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Ashish Ankola** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Christopher Broda** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Oluwaseun Olaiya** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Kirsten Schneider** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Bryan Greenfield** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Abhay Kulkarni** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Alfonso Hoyos Martinez** - Early Career Award
- **Dr. Keshawadhana Balakrishnan** - Early Career Award
- **Dr. Stephanie Baskin** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Laurie Davis** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Grant Stimes** - Early Career Patient Care Award
- **Dr. Kimberly Sawyer** - Early Career Patient Care Award

### Norton Rose Fulbright Award

- **Dr. Akshat Katyayan** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Kiyetta Alade** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Diedra Anseh** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Adam Cohen** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Kayla Foster** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Miriah Gillespie-Taylor** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Heather Haq** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Kathryn Kothari** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. William Kyle** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Stephanie Marton** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Mariana Masciale** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Sanghamitra Misra** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Tam Dan Pham** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Esther Sampayo** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Teri Turner** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Adam Wolfe** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Linessa Zuniga** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Anna Banc-Husu** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Wilson Lam** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Anitha Parthiban** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Andrea Ontaneda** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Fabio Savorgnan** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Nathan Serazin** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Jennifer Cervantes** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Anthony Arrendondo** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Asha Morrow** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Bonnie McCann-Crosby** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Krupa Mysore** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Jonathon McNeil** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Sharada Gowda** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Matthew Sitton** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Elizabeth Klinepeter** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Elizabeth Onugha** - Norton Rose Fulbright Award
- **Dr. Colleen Keough** - Norton Rose Fulbright Teaching Award
- **Dr. Rathi Asaithambi** - Graduating Class Outstanding Teacher Award



Highlight of our Pediatric Emergency Medicine Faculty Day Award!

## Congratulations!

Award Winners Voted by  
the Pediatric Residents at  
CHRISTUS for AY 2026

### Clinical Teaching Honor Roll

- Dr. Nicole Clifton
- Dr. Anthony Gardea
- Dr. Hannah Gardner
- Dr. Louise Giles
- Dr. Monesha Gupta
- Dr. John Manaloor
- Dr. Ashley Martinez
- Dr. Kelly McIntyre
- Dr. Matei Petrescu
- Dr. Nga Tang

### Champion for Resident Wellness

- Dr. Summer Donovan

### Mentor of the Year

- Dr. Hannah Gardner

### New Faculty of the Year

- Dr. Grace Han
- Dr. Ashley Martinez
- Dr. Kelly McIntyre

### Faculty Excellence in Clinical Care and Communication

- Dr. Cory Henson

### Dr. Osvaldo Reguiera

### Humanism in Medicine Award

- Dr. Matei Petrescu

### Faculty All-Star Award

- Dr. Nicole Clifton
- Dr. Kristin Henley

### Faculty Excellence in Teaching

- Dr. Elizabeth Greer

# Nurses Week Highlights

A week dedicated to our incredible nurse at Texas Children's Hospital, who exemplifies compassion, dedication, and the true **HEART values** in every patient interaction.

May 6-12



Cancer and Hematology Center celebrated National Nurses Week with a video!

Horizontal: [Click here](#)  
Vertical: [Click here](#)



## International Nurse Day

from Marianna M. Sockrider

**Celebrated since 1965 on Florence Nightingale's Birthday, May 12.**

**Ms. Nightingale** was born in 1820 in Florence, Italy to English parents. She is known as the founder of modern nursing and established the first professional nursing school (in England). She promoted hygiene reforms. Her book 'Notes on Nursing: What it is, and What it is Not' was published in 1859. She encouraged life-long learning. Her book gives advice on good patient care and safe hospital environments.

*"Let us never consider ourselves finished nurses. We must be learning all of our lives."*  
- Florence Nightingale

*"Poetry and imagination begin life."*  
- Florence Nightingale

## International Nurse Day Poem

from Marianna M. Sockrider



## Happy Nurses' Day 2026

As all will agree, nurses are key to the success of all our healthcare,  
The role they play every day helps ensure the successes that we all share.  
They carry out treatments, get cultures, and give shots and prescription drugs.  
And there is no doubt who will step up when a child needs some hugs.  
Committed to teamwork, good communication and learning,  
The rewards of their efforts for patients and families are always returning.  
We cannot do without them and need to help nurture them to grow,  
As time moves forward, with health care advances and all we need to know.  
Like Florence Nightengale and so many dedicated nurses who followed her lead,  
We thank you for all your time, care, and efforts and appreciate your every good deed!

Marianna Sockrider MD, DrPH  
Professor, Pediatric Pulmonary  
Texas Children's Hospital

# With Gratitude for Moms and Dads

with Xanthi I. Couroucli



This month, as we celebrate **Mother's Day and Father's Day**, we honor the parents, mentors, and loved ones whose wisdom continues to shape our lives. **Dr. Xanthi I. Couroucli** reflected on the lessons that have guided her both personally and professionally.

For Mother's Day, **Dr. Couroucli** shared that her mother often said—and lived by—the belief that “Your education nobody can take away from you.” She also reflected on the influence of her dear friend, Mrs. Helen Colin, an Auschwitz survivor who was like a mother to her, whose words, “You can forgive, but don't forget,” left a lasting impression.

These lessons have stayed with **Dr. Couroucli** throughout her life, shaping her perspective and influencing how she cares for children and families every day.

In honor of Father's Day, she also recalled advice from her father, an accomplished businessman: “When it comes to business, you sell more than you buy, but when it comes to talking you buy more than you sell.”

Although she spent Mother's Day in-house on call, these words remained close at heart. As **Dr. Couroucli** reflected, one of the joys of her profession is the opportunity to be a “second mom” to so many babies.

These reflections serve as a meaningful reminder of the lasting impact that parents, mentors, and loved ones have on our lives and the compassion we carry forward in caring for children and families every day.



## New Babies highlights

This special feature highlights the newest additions to our pediatric family—our newborns and babies who bring so much joy to our faculty, staff, fellows, and residents. We celebrate these little ones as they grow and thrive, surrounded by a community dedicated to caring for children every step of the way.



**Janice M. Hopkin** welcomes her grandson, **Nico Jordan Petruzzo!** He was born on May 13, 2026!

We're thrilled to announce the newest addition to the pedi-family! Rheumatology second-year fellow **Dr. Sarah Molina** and her husband, **Gilbert Rodriguez**, joyfully welcomed their beautiful daughter, **Sophia Rose Rodriguez**, on April 1st, 2026. Congratulations to the happy family!

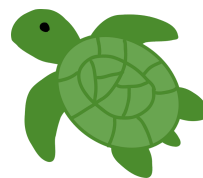
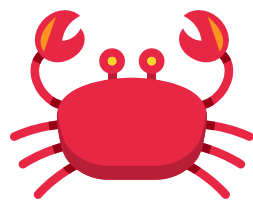




Let us know how we did!  
**Scan or press this QR code to share  
your thoughts!**



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If you want to **request a page for content**, email  
**Lana Thai at [Lxthai@texaschildrens.org](mailto:Lxthai@texaschildrens.org)**



*Thank you for Reading!*

keep doing you and take care!

