

Phoenix Children's Hospital Expansion

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On June 1, Phoenix Children's Hospital will debut part of a massive expansion, including a brand new tower and increased staff, that has been six years in the making.



The expansion of Phoenix Children's Hospital not only caters to the medical needs of children and the community but also pays special attention to the emotional and educational needs of each individual patient and family.

The hospital's expansion was planned in 2006 (groundbreaking occurred in 2008) after a study had shown that the population of children in Maricopa County is expected to jump from 900,000 in 2006 to a projected 1.5 to 1.7 million in 2030. Debra Stevens, director of marketing and communications for Phoenix Children's Hospital, says the expansion is a chance to improve the hospital, not stuff as many people in as possible.

Prior to the expansion, the hospital had semi-private rooms, and it tended to get very crowded very quickly. The new 11-story tower, however, is composed solely of private rooms. (Eight stories open this month.) "Having your own room in a hospital really is the standard of care for new children's hospitals, and we are really happy that the expansion allows us to offer that to our families," Stevens says.

Stevens also believes people will notice the "breadth and depth" of pediatric care in the hospital. Phoenix Children's Hospital offers more than 40 pediatric subspecialties that specialize in common to rare conditions as well as a Level 1 Pediatric Trauma Center. (There are only 18 in the country.) "If we didn't offer a particular service probably what would happen is Mom and the ill child would have to go out of state," Stevens says. "We feel an obligation to serve programs that serve the wide variety of conditions that the children have."

This was especially important to Ryan Zenhausern, a 13-year-old from Fountain Hills, who has a rare bone disease called Ollier's Syndrome. Zenhausern says he appreciates the colors that are used in the new tower, which he thinks makes it more welcoming. Stevens says the hospital utilizes bright colors, moving lights and scenes from nature to appeal to a broad spectrum of ages. "Little kids are attracted to color and to shapes and to moving light so it engages that and just gives them a better feel."

Stevens says the hospital also has medical-free playrooms where a doctor is not allowed to do an examination and a nurse is not allowed to give an injection. "We are trying to allow the child to have a normal childhood experience while they are here," Stevens says. "Our whole mission is about providing hope, healing and the best healthcare for kids and their families."

Nicole Zenhausern, Ryan's mother, feels the hospital is living up to that goal. "The way they make sure the child is not overly anxious and...is comfortable is great," she says. "They also show them pictures of what the doctors will be operating on and discuss it. Ryan even had time to crack a few jokes. The whole process is very comforting."

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