

# PLASTICS IN PEDIATRICS

BY CHRISTINA ORLOVSKY

**When you hear the term “plastic surgery,” you might think of purely cosmetic procedures. But the world of plastic and reconstructive surgery is so much more than that—especially when it comes to pediatrics.**

Pediatric plastic surgeons use their medical magic to make life-changing differences in kids and teens with a wide range of craniofacial conditions, disorders and traumatic injuries.

The Division of Plastic Surgery at Rady Children's is internationally recognized for its expertise in treating complex craniofacial disorders, as well as functional problems with the jaw and airway. The highly experienced team performs more than 1,000 procedures a year and treats a range of conditions, including cleft lip and palate, vascular lesions, craniosynostosis (a congenital defect that prevents normal skull and brain growth), and disorders of the hand and upper extremities. The team also performs plastic surgery for the ears and nose, reconstructive surgery following the removal of cancerous tumors and corrective surgery for sleep apnea.

Rady Children's plastic surgery division includes four physicians: division chief Amanda Gosman, MD; Ralph E. Holmes, MD; Melissa Kanack, MD; and Kate Hinchcliff, MD. They are able to perform cleft lip, cleft palate and congenital facial surgeries, and can handle lumps, bumps and general plastic surgery cases. Dr. Hinchcliff is also trained in pediatric hand surgery and primarily treats congenital hand differences and hand trauma. The division's doctors are supported by two physician assistants and a number of nurses.

“While our mission is to treat as many congenital defects as we can—both craniofacial and hand—because Rady Children's is a Level 1

trauma center, we also do a lot of trauma surgeries, both treating the actual trauma itself and assisting general surgeons,” Dr. Hinchcliff says.

Under the leadership of Dr. Gosman, the Division of Plastic Surgery also places a high priority on research. In the area of cleft lip and palate surgery, Dr. Gosman continues to investigate new techniques, such as the use of bone graft alternatives for the early primary repair of alveolar clefts. She is also the principal investigator for an American Society of Maxillofacial Surgeons grant to evaluate new and safer imaging exams for children under age 5 who are being treated for cleft lip and palate. The division also trains the next generation of pediatric plastic surgeons through its fellowship program, which has successfully been integrated with its research endeavors.

“We are a small division, but we play an interesting and interactive role in the hospital beyond the congenital work we do,” Dr. Hinchcliff adds. “We all have our primary interests and skillsets, and we leverage those to meet the needs of the Hospital and our patients.”

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# THE GIFT OF *A Fresh Start*

**Birth defects do not discriminate and neither should the care to treat them. That's the belief behind Fresh Start Surgical Gifts, a medical charity that transforms the lives of disadvantaged infants, children and teens with physical deformities caused by birth, accidents, abuse or disease through the gift of reconstructive surgery and related health care services.**

Founded in 1991 by the late Dennis Nigro, MD, a San Diego plastic surgeon who was inspired by trips to remote areas to provide reconstructive surgeries to kids in need, Fresh Start embarked on a partnership with Rady Children's in 2009 to create the

Fresh Start Clinic at Rady Children's, allowing the organization to

treat complex conditions and provide care more frequently.

"Fresh Start is the safety net for children that are uninsured, underinsured or do not have the means to undergo a procedure that is being turned down by their insurance. This is because a lot of their conditions, such as port wine stains, scarring from abuse and others, are considered cosmetic," explains Michelle Pius, chief development officer for Fresh Start. "We don't charge for any of our services, and a lot of our surgeons, nurses, scrub techs and other clinic volunteers are Rady Children's staff."

The Fresh Start clinic, located on the Rady Children's campus, makes use of the Hospital's operating rooms on weekends, when surgeries are not performed on Hospital patients.

"We have a shared goal to make sure the kids are getting the same exceptional services they need, regardless of their ability to pay," Pius explains.

Fresh Start holds six two-day weekend surgery clinics and a number of dental clinics every year. During

surgery weekend cycles, the organization is able to treat 60 to 65 kids, thanks to the roughly 400 community volunteers, mostly medical professionals, who donate their weekends. To date, nearly 9,000 surgeries with a value of more than \$51 million have been performed on the Rady Children's campus.

"A lot of our volunteer surgeons and medical professionals have said what they like best about working with Fresh Start is that they can give back without having to leave the community," explains Celene Nigro, RN, Fresh Start's director of medical programs. "They have been on medical missions in their career, and they now like that they can provide this high-quality care in a great facility where they have access to all the supplemental needs to provide the comprehensive, follow-up care that's often needed with complex surgeries."

**To learn more, visit [www.freshstart.org](http://www.freshstart.org).**

