



Artist Megan Tripp and Sacramento graphic designer Julie Knudsen are among the region's many Children's Miracle Network fundraisers who support UC Davis Children's Hospital programs.

NETWORKING FOR MIRACLES

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JULIE KNUDSEN

FROM THE MOMENT Megan Tripp drew her first breath, she knew what it was like to be a sick and hospitalized child. The El Dorado Hills resident, now 9 years old, was born with VATER syndrome, an acronym that stands for a collection of defects of the gastrointestinal tract. Beginning shortly after her birth, Megan required multiple surgeries to keep her alive.

That's why she and her father, Tom Tripp, have become regular participants in Painting for Miracles, one of the many grassroots fundraisers associated with the Children's Miracle Network (CMN), which raises funds for sick and injured children at UC Davis Children's Hospital. Megan paints a picture each year that is then auctioned by Painting for Miracles. The event, which began four years ago, has raised more than \$40,000.

Children treated at UC Davis Children's Hospital have benefitted from CMN's generosity since the charity's founding in 1983. Here in Sacramento, as elsewhere, many hands make light work of the fundraising miracle that benefits premature infants, children with cancer, congenital defects and other life-threatening conditions.

CMN works with hundreds of individuals and businesses from all walks of life who volunteer to hold small and large fundraising events. Four years ago, Julie Knudsen, owner of ZAP Creative Group, a Sacramento graphic arts company, became one of those volunteers, organizing Painting for Miracles to showcase art based on pediatric patients' lives.

“Children really are our future, and we let them know how important they are by helping those who are sick,” said Knudsen. “I'm one of nine children, and I tell my parents often how lucky they are that we're all healthy. But I know that lots of other families aren't so lucky.”

Like pennies in a piggy bank, Children's Miracle Network donations flow in from the purchase of the ubiquitous red and yellow balloons sold in grocery store checkout lines, community and corporate fundraisers, as well as on-air radio pledges. At UC Davis Children's Hospital, the donations have totaled more than \$15 million during the past 25 years. And the fundraising pace has quickened, topping \$1.8 million in 2007 alone.

Contributions to the Children's Miracle Network benefit an array of pediatric programs and services at UC Davis Children's Hospital, from those serving tiny premature infants to teenagers whose hopes and dreams are threatened by serious illnesses like cancer.

Anyone who wonders whether the dollar they gave to CMN at the checkout counter really matters need only ask Anthony Philipps, chair of pediatrics and medical director of the children's hospital.

“CMN is a godsend to the children of the Sacramento region,” Philipps said. “The organization has pledged \$2 million to support the planned construction of a new pediatric intensive care unit. Do those \$1 and \$2 donations make a real difference in real children's lives? The answer is decidedly, ‘yes.’”