Annie's PLACE




Annie's
PLACE


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Por favor quédese en su carro


TOY STORE

Why the partnership

Well over a century ago, Parkland opened its doors to care for the most vulnerable in our community. Today, Parkland continues to serve those who are mostly uninsured, underinsured and who live in areas of our community impacted by multiple health disparities including lack of affordable housing and healthy food as well as access to primary care and transportation.

And while great strides have been made to bring healthcare to individuals in neighborhoods where they live, for those with young children, many times that is not enough.

That's why a partnership like the one between Parkland Health and Annie's Place is critically important.

Annie's Place, a 501c3 nonprofit, provides childcare in its on-campus drop-off childcare center for patients facing challenges getting to medical appointments or receiving life-saving treatment because they simply have no place to take their young children.

On an airplane, we are instructed, "Place the oxygen mask on yourself first and then on the child." But we see the opposite occur in times of medical crisis such as cancer treatment, where caregivers may postpone chemotherapy or necessary surgery because they don't have a safe place to put their child. It's not a choice that's reasonable to ask caregivers to make.

Thanks to Annie's Place, patients no longer must make that choice. And the service is provided at no cost to the patient.

What makes the partnership so special is that parents can rest easy knowing their youngster is in a safe, secure place where they can laugh, play and well, just be kids, instead of being told to sit quietly, sometimes for hours, in a sterile healthcare environment.

Annie's Place is the culmination of efforts to think beyond the traditional social determinants of health that impact access to care. Currently, Annie's Place is primarily funded through philanthropic support. Parkland provided the space on its campus in an unused building along with a free lease and essential infrastructure, and Annie's Place renovated it into an open, inviting, and welcoming facility. The model for Annie's Place is one that can be replicated across the country.

All it takes are caring, compassionate advocates for the far too many parents who forgo their own healthcare simply because they have no childcare.

Kavita Bhavan, MD, MHS, FIDSA
Chief Innovation Officer, Parkland Health
Professor, Dept. of Internal Medicine, UT Southwestern

Natalie Boyle
Founder and CEO
Annie's Place


Childcare.
Community.
Compassion.

Annie's Place Milestones

October 2014
Natalie Boyle has a fateful visit to her friend Annie's hospital room and makes a promise to send the nanny she no longer needs (as she has recovered from her own health crises) to take care of Annie's two young kids. She begins a crowdfunding campaign to pay for two weeks of childcare for Annie and says she will provide as much care as the funds raised can cover. As the money comes in quickly, she realizes that this is destined to be something more and begins the process of creating a nonprofit organization.

November 2014
Natalie recruits a few friends to be on the first Board of Directors for this new nonprofit, Mommies in Need. Natalie Boyle is the Board Chair/President, Kristin Evans is the Treasurer and Tracy Jager is the Secretary. Kathy Bennett joined a few months later but is considered a member of the founding board.

November 14, 2014
Mommies in Need receives approval of its 501(c)3 status in record time.

April 2015
After six months of caring for Annie's children, we raise enough money to hire our second nanny and take on our second family.

November 2018
We hit the milestone of providing our families with 15,000 hours of free childcare!

February 2019
Officials announce that we will be opening a childcare center called Annie's Place at Parkland Memorial Hospital to provide free care to patients and that will be named in memory of our very first mom, who sadly passed from a reoccurrence of her cancer in 2018.

November 2019
Mommies in Need celebrates its 5th birthday with some of our nearest and dearest friends.

January 2020
Construction starts on Annie's Place.

February 2020
We find out we are a beneficiary for the Crystal Charity Ball!

March 2020
In light of the pandemic, we make the difficult decision to pause our in-home program until it is safe to resume it.

April 2020
We start serving families through our newly launched virtual program.

October 2020
We hire and begin training the staff of Annie's Place.

November 16, 2020
We have our ribbon cutting and official serve our first children at Annie's Place.

November 16, 2022
Groundbreaking is held for the Annie's Place Outdoor Playground and Learning Environment, funded by the Hamon Foundation, and will include a state-of-the-art playground equipment for STEM learning, a looping trike path and covered outdoor learning spaces with opportunities for arts and musical instrument practice. The space will incorporate innovative design elements inspired by the Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE!) Texas, including looping pathways, vegetable gardens and a variety of play settings to enable infants through 5 years old to be active, learn in nature and develop motor skills.

June 2023
Mommies in Need changes organization name to Annie's Place



7,370

total visits



3
days old

Youngest age enrolled in the program



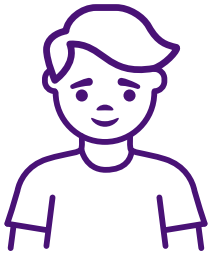
49

siblings born to kids
in our care



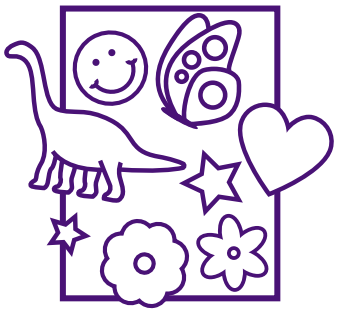
37,053

total hours served



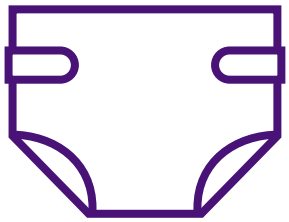
24

children cared for on an average day



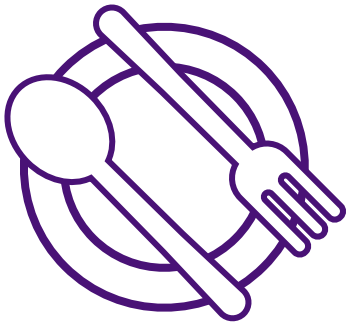
25,000

stickers received in a single donation



22,500

diapers changed



15,300

hot lunches provided


MHR

Maria Luisa Sanchez-Hernandez

The COVID-19 pandemic helped Maria Luisa Sanchez-Hernandez find Annie's Place.

COVID wasn't her medical issue though. A serious skin condition, a GI tumor, and a blood condition all were, and the Farmer's Branch mother could not miss her weekly Parkland appointments even though it was the height of the pandemic.

When Maria first learned she could not bring her 7-year-old daughter Allison to her appointments, Parkland staff told her about Annie's Place. It was an immediate blessing, emotionally, physically and financially.

"This program helps me tremendously because if I didn't have this option, I would have to pay someone to watch her on Wednesdays and Fridays. I am saving money thanks to Annie's Place."

The icing on the much-needed cake is how much her daughter loves it.

"I am overjoyed that Allison wants to come here [Annie's Place]. She really likes it and has a lot of fun here. When I tell Allison we are going to Parkland she gets so excited! And if I pick her up too soon, she gets upset. She would stay all day if she could."

With the help of Annie's Place, Maria never misses her medical appointments, including frequent phototheraphy treatments on her skin. She's able to take care of her own health and still take care of her daughter without any financial burden.

"The benefit of this program is that it is a free resource for me, it is a huge relief with the cost of everything it takes me to get to my appointments including gas and parking. Everything adds up."

Maria knows that intense childhood traumas played a huge role in her health and is determined to give her daughter a better childhood. Annie's Place is helping her do just that.

"I am so grateful. I never get tired of thanking the Annie's Place staff for everything they do for me."



Elisa Hernandez Torres

Three-year-old David Alexander wants to tell the world all about how he played with cars, played kitchen, and found a big green tractor today.

His mom wants to tell Spanish-speaking mothers like herself all about Annie's Place.

"When I see other patients in the waiting room struggling with their kids, I get up and grab a brochure and hand it to them, so that they don't have to deal with those same struggles."

Garland mother Elisa Hernandez Torres remembers when she first picked up an Annie's Place brochure she saw at Parkland during an appointment. She was immediately intrigued, but skeptical. Though it sounded too good to be true, she dialed the number.

"I asked the lady on the phone what the cost would be and she told me it was free since I was being seen at Parkland. I couldn't believe that! It was amazing. I knew it would be a great option for someone like me who didn't have people to watch my son."

Her son David had just turned 3 when Elisa found out she was pregnant with her second child, another boy. Annie's Place let her make all of her prenatal care visits without worry.

"In the past, I had to often reschedule or cancel appointments because I couldn't find someone to watch my son. Now with this program, it's so much easier to coordinate my appointments. I drop him off and go directly to my appointment."

Now, Elisa is an unofficial ambassador for Annie's Place to the Spanish-speaking community.

"There are instances where people aren't aware of Annie's Place. It could be a language barrier or something as simple as being too shy to ask a question or for information. That's why I make it a priority to inform other moms because I've seen them struggling. As a mom myself, I want to help others."

Annie's Place has even helped make Elisa's drive to Parkland a pleasant experience.

"Annie's Place has helped me be more relaxed, I even drive slower and more calmly now that I don't have to worry about missing appointments."



Melissa Flores

What's the first thing people do when they have a question about a product or service? They Google it. And Melissa Flores is no different.

"I was in Parkland and saw a sign about Annie's Place so I 'Googled' it to get more information," Melissa says. "I come from New Jersey and there they don't have anything like this. I was surprised and I thought, wow, this is nice.'"

Through her online research, Melissa learned more about Mommies in Need and the services they provide, especially for those with health issues. Thankfully, Melissa said, she was healthy throughout her pregnancy with her daughter, Jeilani, but suffered from gestational diabetes during her pregnancies with her sons, Jeremy and Joshua, and therefore Parkland clinicians wanted to closely monitor her condition.

"I needed a place to bring my sons while I went for my appointments, and Annie's Place was there for me. I brag on this place to everybody in New Jersey because we didn't have that over there," she said as a huge smile appeared. "I wish I had had that when I was pregnant with Jeremy, and I could have just dropped off Joshua. I always had to seek a family member to care for him while I went to doctor's appointments."

Melissa is especially grateful for the special care her children receive at Annie's Place. Jeremy, who is autistic, lights up when he knows he'll be going there. "Jeremy loves this place," said the excited mom. "They were doing play therapy here, so he'd always ask, 'Mom, is it Thursday today?' He loves coming here, he really does. And of course, now Jeilani is getting used to it."

Annie's Place has been a blessing for the New Jersey transplant, who notes that due to her son's health issues she's been bringing him for regular appointments at Children's Medical Center and is relieved to know there is a place where her other children are safe and well cared for during the clinic visits.

"Knowing that everyone here is very friendly has taken so much stress off of me and knowing that my kids are always very happy to come here has helped tremendously," Melissa says. "At first I thought Annie's Place was too good to be true, and I've always been very skeptical about where I drop off my children but when I walked in the door it was very inviting and everyone was so nice."

"Because my kids feel very comfortable here, it makes me feel very comfortable," she adds.


Block
Center

Erika Estrada

Erika Estrada heard about Annie's Place thanks to the cries of her young son.

"I was on the phone with my Parkland representative, and she heard my son crying in the background and they mentioned there was childcare available for my appointments."

It was just what the doctor ordered for Erika, who was preparing for a prophylactic bilateral mastectomy and attending numerous appointments with genetic counselors, breast cancer and plastic surgery physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers.

Her son, Americo, had just turned 1 year old when she was diagnosed with cancer and within weeks she was scheduled for surgery.

"Annie's Place was there for all of my appointments as well as for respite care, which was for 14 days of the month after my surgery to take care of my son because I was limited on how much I could pick up, which was not more than 10 pounds," she recalled. "My son was a big boy so I couldn't pick him up after the surgery so there was no way I could stay home with him."

Even though her in-laws arrived from out of state to help initially as well as help from her own mother, she found herself without additional help during the day while she continued post-surgery lift restrictions.

"I had intentions of staying home with Americo and not putting him in childcare in any capacity so even at first I was hesitant to bring him," Erika said, noting that she would pick up her son immediately following her numerous medical appointments. "But then after bringing him the first time, and then the second time when my husband brought him, my husband sent me a text and said, 'He didn't even look back and walked in like he owned the place.'"

The regular updates and photos from staff also helped to reassure Erika that her son was in a safe place and being well cared for. "Knowing the staff was here loving on my son was very reassuring and very comforting," she says.

She's quick to point out that other parents should rest assured that when their children are at Annie's Place "they're in good hands."


Block
Center

Diana Montano

Looking into Diana Montano's eyes you can see the young mother has faced numerous challenges over the past couple of years. And by far the most difficult obstacle has been juggling childcare so she could be by her mother's side while she undergoes chemotherapy at Parkland Memorial Hospital for liver cancer.

But the fear is quickly replaced by a twinkle as Diana describes how Annie's Place has lifted a tremendous burden off her shoulders.

"I had been taking my mom to her doctor's appointments and many times they were back-to-back," Diana said. "On those days my husband would have to take off work to stay with our boys because we don't have any family here to help."

That's when fate in the form of a flyer caught Diana's eye.

"There was a flyer in the hospital that said if you needed childcare to please call," she says, through an interpreter. "It would be impossible to come with my mother if it wasn't for this place."

Annie's Place provided the perfect medicine, not only for Diana, her husband and mother, but also for the two youngest of her three children. Elian, 3, and Evan, 1, who light up as they bound in the door into the welcoming arms of the staff.

"The staff have provided magnificent help and my children love coming here," Diana said. "I don't have to worry because I get updates throughout the day with photos of what they're doing. This time allows me to focus on my mom."

And the staff, she says, go beyond just caring for her children. "They worry about all of us. They always ask how my mom is doing, and how I'm doing, too. Parkland and Annie's Place have been good to all of us."

As Diana tries to scoop up her children and head home after a long day of clinic visits with her mom, she bursts into a joyful laughter. "This is always the hardest part because they love it so much they don't ever want to leave!"


GENERAL HOSPITAL

Dennis Benavides

Dennis Benavides is a loving single father of five who jokingly says he doesn't much care for the name "Mommies in Need." Afterall, "daddies need help, too!"

(Note: For this very reason the organization formally known as Mommies in Need rebranded as Annie's Place to be more inclusive)

The Cedar Hill resident smiles as he recalls the day he was in a Parkland clinic with his children who range in age from 2 to 8 and they were having a "day" as he describes it. "They wanted to play, everything in the room was new to them and they wanted to sit on the twirly chair and spin, and the others would cry because they wanted to do it," he says taking a breath. "That's when one of the nurses came in, saw the chaos, which I was used to, and she told me that Parkland had a daycare that was free for patients who come see us."

Dennis, who was a liver transplant patient in 2013 and has regular health maintenance visits at Parkland, says he didn't have to think twice about calling Annie's Place to learn more about the services they provide. "My appointments are year-round and when the kids aren't in school, this is the place for them," he said. "This is like a free day for them. When I tell them I'm taking them to daycare, they get excited because it's structured, the staff is so nice, and they let them just be a kid. And they love that."

While his children relish their time at Annie's Place now, Dennis had his reservations at first. "You know that old saying 'if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is'? I kept thinking there must be something, because daycare costs a lot and I have five kids. When I asked, well how much does it cost, they said it was free," he explained. "But what really got me is that I'm so used to carrying my diaper bag everywhere with me – I mean everywhere – and they said you don't bring anything for the kids, everything is provided."

Dennis says for a parent not to have to carry a bulky backpack full of diapers, snacks, and juices, "Well that was awesome. I only have to worry about getting the kids in the car and then out again."

And while his children are enjoying fingerpainting, sand art and interacting with others in class, Annie's Place gives him a chance to concentrate on his own health. "I can relax and take care of my business because I know they're in a safe place," he says, noting that single parents rarely, if ever, get a day off.

Annie's Place also affords Dennis the luxury of not turning into that "bad parent." That's the parent, he says, whose sentences begin with "don't" as in "don't touch that," "don't spin around on the chair," because the children need to know "the seriousness of the situation where you're going into a hospital where people are sick."

"For me to bring my kids to Annie's Place where they're well cared for and not have to change from good parent to bad parent, well that means the world because I can walk into my appointment and take care of my business without worrying about what my kids are doing," he said.

Dennis' praise of the Annie's Place staff comes from the heart. "To hear my kids tell me about all the things they did while they were here, how great the food was and whether I can cook the same thing," Dennis says, "Well, it's just awesome."


Block
Center

Marisa Myers

If you talked to Marisa Myers today, you would never guess that just a few short years ago she was battling addiction. She credits the staff of Dallas addiction recovery center The Magdalen House for helping her get on the road to recovery and the teachers at Annie's Place for helping her stay on that path.

Annie's Place provided Marisa with a safe place to leave her twins, Hadley and John Robert, while she met with her sponsor and attended classes. "This has been a blessing beyond belief and I'm so grateful for everyone here," she said.

As the classroom door opens and her 3 1/2-year-olds come bounding in, they squeal with excitement at the sight of their mom. But hugs and kisses quickly fall to the wayside as her toddlers spy the nearby shelves lined with a variety of toys. As they begin their careful inspection of trucks and puzzles, Marisa further explains what Annie's Place has meant for her recovery.

"It's crazy to believe there's a place like this that exists. We can bring our children for free while we attend appointments and know that they are in a safe place with such an amazing staff. They send me pictures periodically during the day, and if I'm running late, they will call to check on me," she said. "It has taken so much stress and worry off my shoulders. To say I'm grateful would be an understatement."

Before she discovered Annie's Place, Marisa's only option would have been to take her children to meetings where she worried they would be a distraction to others.

But now, "they get so excited and are genuinely happy when I tell them they're 'going to school'," Marisa said, noting that music class seems to be a favorite.

Hadley and John Robert are now enrolled in pre-kindergarten. Marisa says she plans to take advantage of Annie's Place during the summer months. "Just knowing Annie's Place is a safe, secure option for my children means more than I can ever express."

Parkland employees benefit from on-site childcare center

All kids deserve a safe place to go when the caregiver in their life needs to work, especially when that person spends up to 12 hours a day taking care of others. This became very apparent during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when the closure of many childcare providers left frontline healthcare workers suddenly scrambling to make arrangements for their kids – often resulting in taking paid time off and leading to an unintended domino effect of short-staffing at hospitals and healthcare facilities.

Originally established to provide childcare for Parkland patients, Annie's Place began offering limited backup care options for children of Parkland employees in 2021.

Today, Parkland is building on the success of the program by expanding facilities, hours, and services of Annie's Place, including fulltime daycare offered on a sliding payment scale for up to 80 children of Parkland employees year-round.



The need

Women account for 76% of Parkland employees and of those women, 55% are under the age of 45, the general window for starting a family or raising young children. Exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, caregiving responsibilities disproportionately fall on women. The Family Caregiver Alliance reported that female caregivers spend as much as 50% more time providing care than male caregivers.

At the onset of and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, most childcare centers and schools closed and sent children home. Many women, especially Black and Hispanic mothers, were forced to scale back their working hours or leave the workforce entirely during the pandemic – further widening economic and racial disparities. In the healthcare setting, these two compounding factors resulted in many employees making impossible choices between taking care of their patients or their families. Those who attempted to care for both groups found that increased physical and mental demands often led to burnout, injury or illness and resulted in the need to take unpaid leave.

Parkland conducted an internal survey of employees to assess the need for dependent care in March 2020. Of the 1,015 responses, 82% expressed interest in childcare on-site or nearby Parkland. Employees shared general feedback such as “Thank you for looking into this. I’m terrified that my kid’s daycare will close, and I won’t be able to work” and “this would relieve a lot of stress.”

Backup childcare for Parkland employees

At the height of the pandemic, January 2021, Annie's Place began providing up to two weeks of backup childcare for Parkland employees who otherwise would have needed to call out, exacerbating staffing issues and reducing the quality of care for our patients. As of October 2022, 375 Parkland employees have entrusted their children to Annie's Place for backup care.

The services provided at Annie's Place help employees like Andrea save paid time off instead of using it for ongoing childcare needs.

Andrea, a Medical Practice Assistant (MPA), recently needed help when her childcare plans fell through. Thankfully, Parkland's arrangement with Annie's Place meant Andrea could enroll her children at night and drop them off the next day. "This place is a godsend. I can't even get over it honestly", said Andrea. Her manager also sent her thanks to Annie's Place and Parkland saying, "If (Andrea) had called in today and the rest of the week for childcare, it would have left me with only one of five MPA's today and hurting the rest of the week."

Today, the success of the program and the ongoing need for employee childcare is driving a unique partnership between Annie's Place, Parkland, UT Southwestern and Children's Health to expand services for employees by providing weekend drop-in coverage which started July 23, 2022.





Full-Time Program for children of Parkland employees

Annie's Place and Parkland will further increase services by expanding the existing childcare center to build Annie's Place Learning Center, which will reserve up to 80 full-time, year-round childcare spots exclusively for children of Parkland employees. The learning center is expected to open in 2024.

The Full-Time Program will be an immersive learning experience that not only prepares children for success in school, but also nurtures their creative spirits and focuses on social-emotional learning. We are committed to constant innovation in early childhood education, forming partnerships with groups such as Educational First Steps, The Childcare Group, Child Poverty Action Lab, Early Matters Dallas, and many other organizations to continue to provide care informed by the latest educational data.

Annie's Place will utilize the award-winning Frog Street curriculum, which addresses the cognitive, linguistic, literacy, physical and social-emotional developmental domains of each child. We also partner with other organizations and companies to provide additional enrichment activities. Some of these include KidLinks live music performances, Sparkle and Shine music classes, Dallas Children's Theater performances, STEM activities from Perot Museum and Studio Bella and a partnership with the Dallas Library where librarians come to do Storytime with our kids.

While the play therapist will continue to primarily serve the Drop-In Program, they will also be available to help children from the Full-Time Program if needed. Additionally, a full-time case manager will work with enrolled families to help connect them with any additional resources they might need.



Brittany Clark

Brittany Clark was on a mission. It was summer and even though she had a teen at home, she needed someone to watch her 6-year-old son while she was at work in Parkland's Business Office.

"My oldest son helped me through the entire month of June watching my youngest son and that was very challenging because I was getting calls everyday … every hour about something that really wasn't that important," she said. "But you know how kids are."

That's when Brittany's director told her about a Parkland program to help employees with such a need. It took some sleuthing, but Brittany was able to track down the information she needed, made some phone calls and was able to secure a place for her son at Annie's Place during July. "It was," she says, "a blessing."

But Brittany's questions didn't stop with finding daycare. She needed to know the cost, what to bring each day. "It really was too good to be true. When I got to Annie's Place and saw everything that was in place, I really did just have to drop him off and pick him up! The only way I can describe it is it was a blessing."

A blessing that came just as she was running out of options.

Although her eldest son had watched his baby brother for a month, it was time for him to concentrate on himself and prepare for an upcoming basketball season. As Brittany ran through a mental list of those who might be able to lend a hand coupled with how many days of PTO she had, her resources were running dry.

"And then this blessing," she says with a smile. "What I love about this facility is they send you pictures throughout the day when he's doing certain things. That really helped in the beginning because you wonder, is he going to like this place? Are the kids going to be nice? You just have so much stuff running through your head. Those pictures just put me at ease and really made a big difference."

Brittany credits her coworkers with helping her get through those initial first days with her son in a new environment. Assuring them that her son was in good hands and doing well, Brittany then began sharing Annie's Place information with others who were facing similar childcare dilemmas.

"If I had the opportunity to tell people about Annie's Place, I'd say this opportunity for my child was truly a blessing, it came at the right time, and I love the people who are here. They are kind and loving people," she says. "My son is happy and that makes me happy."


Block
Center

Sara Weeks

Sara Weeks didn't learn about Annie's Place the way most users of Annie's Place did. She didn't see a flyer, read a brochure, or hear about the service during a clinic appointment. Rather, Sara heard about it from a friend who worked for Mommies in Need founder Natalie Boyle.

"My friend encouraged Natalie to start a play therapy program at Annie's Place knowing the benefits that children would have gained through counseling, having play therapy when their families are going through a medical crisis," Sara said. "At the time when they were brainstorming about how to make that happen, I was doing my PhD at the University of North Texas and I reached out to Natalie."

But Sara's efforts weren't to discuss Annie's Place, it was for support for Sara's husband who was having a surgical procedure – the same kind that Natalie had experienced. It was during this time that Natalie began work on establishing a play therapy program when Sara's friend asked if she knew anyone who might be interested. "When she asked, I said, "Me. This is my dream job. This is exactly what I want to do," Sara said, smiling as she recalled the conversation.

"There was nowhere in the United States that had a program like this that would help families who are going through a medical crisis especially the kids," said Sara, who is a registered play therapist. "So as soon as it became a possibility, I put my name in the ring because I thought, 'this is the job I've been praying for, this is the job that I've always wanted."

Sara uses Annie's Place to this day.

"It's hard to take care of yourself once you become a mom. I didn't think it until I experienced it on the other side. I really didn't understand the guilt and the pressure to put your kids ahead of your own health and how hard it would be to seek my own medical services," said Sara, who is now a mom to twins Ava and Leo. "When I was working here and seeing people who came through, I was happy that we got to serve them but being a participant is a lot different. I just feel so lucky that there is a place like this, and I knew about it."

During her time at Annie's Place, Sara said knowing what some of the parents were going through compelled her to "give all that I could give."

"All of medical things that people are coming for are hard, even if it's not cancer or end of life. People need help and everyone on the staff here just really cares about everyone who walks in the doors," Sara said. "You build personal relationships with everyone, and you can tell that everyone's empathy grows when you meet someone who is seeking prenatal care, who is seeking cancer treatment, who is having surgery, or like me who is going to physical therapy to heal their body."

Though Sara relishes the time she has at home with her twins, she readily admits it was difficult leaving her Annie's Place job. "I come here as often as I can because I miss the mission, I miss the staff who work here, and I miss the families who come in."

Still, she wants everyone to know that for her, like countless others, coming back to Annie's Place is "like coming home."



Nicole Garcia

Nicole Garcia was struggling to find childcare for her then 1-year-old son, Damian. Although her parents helped when they could, she was concerned about missing work and putting her job in jeopardy.

That's when a co-worker told her she should look into using the services offered at Annie's Place.

As a medical assistant in Parkland's Oncology department, Nicole knew about Annie's Place and had even recommended the service to some of her patients. Still, she was hesitant to call thinking it was reserved just for patients.

"That's when I learned that employees could use Annie's Place up to 15 times a year if there was space available," Nicole said. "I called to see if there were any openings and thankfully, I've been able to bring him on several different Tuesdays. Being able to take my son there has taken a huge weight off my shoulders."

The convenience of being located near Parkland's main campus has meant that Nicole can drop in and check on her youngster if she chooses, but more importantly, it's reduced the stress of worrying about childcare and her job.

"It's such a relief to know that he's just right here and they're taking really good care of him. He loves the attention, and I can see how happy he is when they send pictures of him during the day," Nicole said. "Plus, if there's ever an emergency, Parkland and Children's are right here."

As a staff member brought her youngster into the playroom for a surprise visit from his mom, Nicole paused to reflect. "People may think it's too good to be true, and so did I. But Annie's Place has helped me so much. I am forever grateful."


Art Center



Annie's PLACE



Parkland

Center of Innovation and Value