

A Dream Comes True

A very special place just for kids



MeritCare
Children's Hospital
Fargo, N.D.





A Very Special Artist

Artist Hans Gilsdorf, Detroit Lakes, Minn., has created special effects sets and costumes for Hollywood, shaped life-size animal sculptures for the blind at world-class zoos and sculpted realistic, full-size animals — from dinosaurs to wallabies and everything in between — for museums, parks and zoos across the country.

In 1997, he traded it all in to become a stay-at-home artist. That was the year his first daughter, who had been born five weeks premature, had heart surgery. Hans experienced firsthand the effects of prolonged hospitalization on both child and family. His daughter made a full recovery, and Hans came away with a dream.

"I wanted to find a way to take my talents and make a difference for kids," he says. "After we went through this, I asked myself what I could do to make it a more fun experience for the parents, children and siblings who have to deal with doctor appointments and hospitals." In MeritCare, he found a partner to help make the dream come true.

With Laffalot, Hans has created a world of imagination and wonder, a bright and happy place that helps children tap into their imaginations and begin walking the road to recovery.

Once Upon A Time...



Alfanz

...not so long ago, a very special place for children was created, the village of Laffalot. It is a place unlike any other on earth, bright, colorful and bursting with whimsy, where children with special health care needs come with their families. The big people of the world have another name for Laffalot: MeritCare Children's. To them, it's a special medical center for children with state-of-the-art technology, the latest in health care knowledge, advanced techniques and some of the most amazing experts in children's health you'll find anywhere. And the dream for Laffalot led to a specially designed, child-friendly hospital environment that fosters healing. But this story is for children. It is about the dedicated people who work to make them healthy, and a happy-go-lucky little friend named Alfanz who lives in Laffalot and aids in their work.

Alfanz understands children are not just small adults and that, for them, exceptional medical care is not enough. They also need a stimulating, non-threatening environment that helps them feel safe, secure and joyful, and where they can have their families close by. Most of all, Alfanz understands these children and their families have hopes and dreams for the future. Every day, Alfanz provides children regular reminders that there is more to life than strange machines, pokes, prods and everything else they must endure for good health. In this way he helps the doctors and nurses help the children. At MeritCare Children's, we're doing everything in our power to help them live...

...Happily ever after.

The Reality Behind the Fantasy

The village of Laffalot is a fantasy place. But for the children who come to MeritCare Children's, life might not always be a fairy tale.

Each year, hundreds of children from North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota come to MeritCare Children's. Some are battling serious and complex conditions like cancer and congenital heart disease, others struggle with more common illnesses such as diabetes and asthma, and still others need regular trips to the clinic for preventive care.

MeritCare Children's Hospital, located on the 4th floor of MeritCare Medical Center in downtown Fargo, N.D., includes a Pediatric Unit, a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit and a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Designated a children's hospital by the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions in 1986, MeritCare Children's Hospital is the only facility of its kind in the region and one of only 180 premier children's hospitals in the nation.

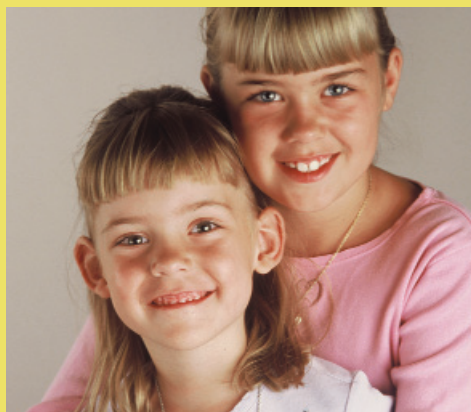
We also have two dedicated children's clinics in Fargo for outpatient care which are separate from the hospital but part of our overall system of children's care.

Our staff consists of about 50 pediatricians and pediatric specialists — including pediatric critical care and neonatology, specialties rarely found anywhere else in North Dakota or northwestern Minnesota. MeritCare Children's also includes more than 200 pediatric nurses, therapists and other staff.

These highly qualified medical experts practice in a number of important areas that allow children to be cared for right here in Fargo without having to travel long distances.

- ❖ Cardiology (Heart)
- ❖ Endocrinology (Diabetes and Metabolism)
- ❖ Allergy and Pulmonary (Lungs)
- ❖ Oncology and Hematology (Cancer and Blood Disease)
- ❖ Neurology (Nerves and Brain)
- ❖ Orthopedics (Bones and Joints)
- ❖ Gastroenterology (Digestive System)
- ❖ Psychiatry
- ❖ Critical Care
- ❖ Neonatal Intensive Care





Once upon a time...

Alexis and Anna Elfstrum, Fargo, sisters with more than two years between them, were both born with the same life-threatening medical condition.

Alexis was born 12 weeks premature and weighed only two pounds, nine ounces. She had Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA), which causes too much blood to flow into her lungs. She spent her first seven weeks in the NICU, and at 18 months returned for corrective surgery. Parents, Kevin and Lora thought they'd seen the last of the MeritCare NICU.

Then Anna was born. Fourteen weeks premature and weighing only two pounds, seven ounces, she also suffered from PDA. Fortunately, it was correctable through medication so surgery wasn't necessary.

"Having a baby in the NICU is very challenging, but our experiences were as wonderful as they could be under such circumstances," said Lora. "We are so grateful to MeritCare Children's Hospital for all they did for our two daughters and all they did for us."

..happily ever after.

At MeritCare Children's, we go beyond exceptional medical care to focus on children's special needs, both physical and emotional. We provide

- ❖ Child-friendly healing environment
- ❖ Kid-sized medical equipment
- ❖ Family-centered care that includes siblings
- ❖ Child Life program that lets kids be kids
- ❖ Distraction therapy, medical play and other coping mechanisms such as pet therapy

MeritCare Children's offers a level of care that is equal to or surpasses that provided at the most comprehensive, high-quality centers in the United States. More than that, it's a place where advanced health care and the human touch go hand-in-hand, where children are everything, and where we care for them as if they were our own.

An Expansion of Caring

MeritCare Children's has always had the expertise to provide the highest level of care, and we continue to recruit professionals who can help us get even better.

We've understood all along that children need more than expertise to aid in their recovery; they need to be in a welcoming, safe and happy environment. Numerous studies of children in these types of settings have shown marked increases in success rates.

We've been working toward such a place for years. With the expansion of MeritCare Health System to our South University campus in 2001, our opportunity arrived. In 2006, we will complete a \$5.1 million renovation that adds 8,300 square feet, bringing the total to 19,809. It will help us make some important changes to specific units and give us flexibility for care options.



A Place That Can Be Fun

Alfunz and the village of Laffalot are the creations of artist Hans Gilsdorf. The scenes on the pages of this book will give you a glimpse into this magical place. Hans had a dream to create a space for ill children that would make potentially frightening hospitalizations a little easier and more child-friendly. His dream connected with ours, and Laffalot became a reality.

Laffalot is a Renaissance-era village of crisp colors, friendly faces and tantalizing textures. The first thing children see upon entering is a giant, three dimensional mural of the village sculpted and painted into the front lobby wall. Alfunz is there to greet them. Up and down the hallways street pole signs provide directions to different patient areas. Each room is a private "cottage," with a roof overhanging the door. Even the signal lights for nurses look like old-fashioned lanterns.

Kids can leave messages for Alfunz about their feelings, frustrations or anything else in his mailbox in the lobby. Volunteers respond as Alfunz, returning messages to mailboxes built into the walls next to each cottage door.

All the murals and amenities are designed to create a unique setting that promotes a healing atmosphere, and educational value is infused into as many elements as possible. The halls of MeritCare Children's extend the village theme throughout the facility where it's appropriate.

To learn more about the story of Alfunz and the village of Laffalot visit children.meritcare.com.



nce upon a time...

Gretchen Finseth, Thief River Falls, had a breathing problem so serious she nearly died.

Her parents, Melissa and Larry, knew something was wrong as soon as she was born. After conventional treatments failed, Gretchen was transported to MeritCare Children's Hospital NICU, where doctors found the airways to her lungs were constricted.

A MeritCare pediatric cardiologist approached Melissa and Larry about an experimental nitric oxide treatment that might save their daughter's life. The treatment, available as part of a National Institutes of Health study involving only the top NICUs in the country, improves the flow of oxygen to an infant's tiny lungs. Gretchen's condition improved dramatically, and within two weeks, she was breathing on her own.

"To know such a high level of care for children is available in our region is wonderful," says Melissa. "Every day, we thank God she is with us."

...happily ever after.





Once upon a time...

The Bell triplets, Wahpeton, were born eight weeks early.

Brianna weighed only three pounds, nine ounces; Carlie, three pounds, eight ounces; and Alexis, the tiniest, only three pounds, three-and-a-half ounces. They were immediately transferred to MeritCare Children's Hospital NICU, where Alexis was placed on oxygen.

But something else was wrong. A pediatric specialist determined two of the girls had alloimmune neutropenia, a rare blood disorder characterized by abnormally low levels of white blood cells that defend our bodies against bacterial infections. He immediately put the triplets on medication to stimulate white blood cell production.

During their five-week stay in the NICU, parents, Sherry and Graydon, spent every possible minute at MeritCare, worrying about their daughters but also making friends they will hold forever close to their hearts. "We left with tears in our eyes and hugs at the door from the people who took such good care of our beautiful little girls," Sherry says.

Today, Alexis, Brianna and Carlie are healthy, active little girls learning all about how fun life can be as a triplet.

...happily ever after.

They're All Part of Our Family

Pediatric Unit

The MeritCare Children's Hospital general Pediatric Unit has 22 private rooms. Prior to the renovation, children often shared rooms. The rooms are designed to stimulate play and create a feeling of comfort, featuring amenities such as a PlayStation II, television, DVD/CD player and a computer available for games, internet access and e-mail. The rooms are also family-friendly, providing special couches or chairs that fold out into beds and allow moms and dads to sleep at their child's side. And that's important; studies show that sick children who are surrounded by their families in more personal environments recover more quickly. Each private room also has a bathroom and a shower.

Inside the Pediatric Unit are five rooms specifically designed for children with cancer. They have specialized air-handling and ventilation systems to help children with the most suppressed immune systems, providing specially-filtered air that prevents the spread of germs to their already weakened bodies.



Special Care for Those Who are Most Sick

Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU)

The MeritCare Children's Hospital PICU is next to the general Pediatric Unit and is designed specifically for children with the most critical injuries or illnesses. The staff is specially trained to care for very sick children ranging in age from a few months to 17 years.

As part of the renovation, we changed the PICU from an open ward to six private rooms and two isolation rooms with reverse airflow. The new individual rooms allow children and their families to be closer and more comfortable, but more importantly, they provide proven healing benefits.

For example, they lessen over-stimulation from the noise associated with the open ward, allowing our sickest children to rest more peacefully. Parents can also stay at the bedside 24/7.



nce upon a time...

Brandon Lee, Fargo, an athletic 9-year-old, began having painful headaches.

The headaches continued to get worse, and on New Year's Eve 2002, he could no longer tolerate the pain. His parents, Kimi and Jason, rushed him to MeritCare Emergency Center, where doctors discovered a tumor behind his eye.

Brandon was admitted to MeritCare Children's Hospital under the specialized care of a pediatric neurologist and a pediatric oncologist, and he began taking steroids to shrink the tumor. On January 6, it was successfully removed and Brandon began chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Kimi and Jason give high praise to our team of pediatric specialists. "They are very caring and special people, and we could not have made it through Brandon's surgery, treatments and hospitalization without them."

Brandon has finished his treatments and is planning for the future. His long-term goals are to become a football star and a registered nurse. He wants to work with kids who have cancer.

...happily ever after.



A Big Difference for the Tiniest Babies

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)

No experience is more powerful than when a baby enters the world. And nothing can be more frightening than discovering that your baby has a serious illness. Whether a baby is born prematurely or there are other complications, you'll want the most advanced care available. Our NICU — located just down the hall from the Family Birth Center — has state-of-the-art equipment and specialists with extensive training in caring for babies born with life-threatening conditions.

Through our renovation, we will expand the NICU from 26 beds to 32. It is designed specifically for newborns who require constant nurse care, complicated surgical procedures, continuous respiratory support or other intensive interventions. Our team of neonatologists and specially trained nurses provide care that has led to infant survival rates at the top of nationwide statistics.

The new NICU design provides a lower light and sound environment, crucial elements for newborn recovery. Studies of settings like ours demonstrate longer and higher quality sleep, decreased stress responses, greater psychological stability, better feeding rhythms, quality of movement and increased average daily weight gain.

In addition, the NICU will offer individualized health care and services for each baby and family. It provides privacy and maximum security as part of our overall commitment to protecting the physical safety of babies, families and staff.



Returning to the Village

Children's Clinics

MeritCare Children's encompasses several areas designed and staffed just for kids' outpatient clinic visits. Specialty clinics serve children with multiple medical needs. They can see several different providers in one day rather than having several appointments in numerous locations.

- ❖ Cerebral Palsy
- ❖ Down Syndrome
- ❖ Neurodevelopment
- ❖ Metabolic
- ❖ Juvenile Diabetes
- ❖ Muscular Dystrophy
- ❖ Acquired Brain Injury
- ❖ Cystic Fibrosis
- ❖ Child Maltreatment
- ❖ Myelodysplasia
- ❖ Hemophilia

Our two children's clinics in Fargo are special places just for outpatient visits. Like the Children's Hospital, the clinics feature the look and feel of Laffalot to lessen the anxiety that a child might experience, and members of the staff specialize in caring for children.

Children's Walk-In Clinic

For busy parents and kids who get sick outside of regular office hours, we offer walk-in care with no appointments necessary. MeritCare Children's Southwest Walk-In Clinic is open extended hours, seven days a week.



Once upon a time...

Twenty-month-old Simon Nelson, Hitterdal, nearly froze to death.

It was a bitterly cold, 10-degree night in 2001 when Simon wandered from his home wearing only pajamas. His dad, Brian, found him at 4:30 a.m. lying in the snow about 100 yards from the house, seemingly lifeless. When emergency crews arrived, Simon did not have a pulse.

Simon was flown to Children's Hospital by MeritCare LifeFlight helicopter. When he arrived, his body temperature was only 69 degrees. To warm him, doctors opened his chest and hooked him up to a pediatric heart-lung machine, one of the only child-sized machines in North Dakota.

Two weeks after nearly freezing to death, Simon toddled out of MeritCare surrounded by smiling family, friends and staff. "It's a miracle he's alive today," says Brian. More than just alive, today Simon is a healthy, active young man.

...happily ever after.





Children's Fundraising Campaign

The MeritCare Children's expansion and renovation, village of Laffalot, Alfanz — none would have been possible without the generosity of people who joined together to make a difference for our children. The capital campaign to raise funds for the project was extremely successful, raising \$5.1 million in less than one year. We live in an incredibly giving community, where people make miracles happen. In return, we can offer but two simple words — thank you — and the smiles of children whose lives you have changed.

MeritCare Children's Hospital is a proud member of Children's Miracle Network (CMN). CMN raises funds year round through an annual televised fundraiser, corporate events, paper miracle balloon sales, radio-thons, and college dance marathons — just a few of the programs generating thousands of dollars for MeritCare Children's Hospital. For more information visit cmn.meritcare.com or call (701) 234-6620.

...Happily Ever After.

It would be wonderful if MeritCare Children's could turn the life of every injured or ill child into a nursery rhyme, if every outcome included the words that end fairy tales. Instead, we give the children entrusted to us advanced, highly-specialized health care in an environment that fosters healing and success so they can recover or live as normally as possible. These children and their families deserve their dreams for many happy, healthy tomorrows. We do everything we can to make them come true in what is, indeed, a very special place.





MeritCare Health System

MeritCare Children's is part of MeritCare Health System, a non-profit health care organization based in Fargo, N.D. The 583-bed hospital includes the 56-bed Children's Hospital, the Roger Maris Cancer Center, a large physician medical group with specialists in almost every area of medicine and a regional network of clinics.

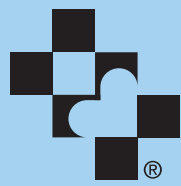
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