



SMILE CONNECTION

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2025

EMBRACING HER SMILES

A Dad's Hope for His Daughter's Future

First-time father Nathan Black had no idea what parenting a baby would be like.

His daughter, AvaLyn, was due to arrive in April of 2022, and all of the usual anticipation and excitement of the journey to parenthood was in ample supply. When AvaLyn's mother, Stephanie, was 20 weeks along in her pregnancy, she and Nathan received news that would add yet another layer of novelty—and fear—to his future as a father.



While attending a prenatal anatomy scan with Stephanie, Nathan began to suspect something was not quite right. The appointment was taking much longer than expected, and the sonographer kept leaving the room and returning to take more images. Eventually, she returned with the obstetrician to share the difficult news that AvaLyn would be born with a cleft lip and palate.

As questions and confusion swirled in Nathan's mind, a ray of hope was on the horizon. He and Stephanie were immediately referred to the Clinic. **"From 20 weeks on, the Clinic was there to support us,"** Nathan shares.

Nathan emphasizes the vital importance of the Clinic's presence in that season of uncertainty and credits their thorough, knowledgeable, and compassionate care as the reason he and Stephanie felt fully equipped for the birth of AvaLyn, as well as the details of her condition and treatment to come. Consequently, when AvaLyn arrived in April and Nathan saw his beautiful daughter for the first time, the joy of her birth was not clouded by surprises nor fear of the unknown. Nathan could focus on his precious daughter, not her difference.

Now a sweet and energetic almost-three-year-old, AvaLyn has already undergone two successful surgeries: the first one was when she was three months old and the other right before her first birthday. Fortunately, there were no surprises with the surgeries, nor during recovery periods, because he and Stephanie felt fully informed and supported. Nathan says, **"The whole team prepared us and has been phenomenal through this process."**

AvaLyn's sweet, upbeat personality captivates her father's heart. He says she loves to play with her kitchen set and pretend to take orders and serve food, most likely because Stephanie is in food service. Nathan describes her as "bubbly" and it's clear she brings him so much joy. He feels so thankful for the way the team at the

Clinic adores his daughter as well. **"When we go to the Clinic, Ava's not just another patient...it's like we're family."**

While Nathan says that AvaLyn has a wonderful relationship with all of the team members at the Clinic, he notes the "special connection" his daughter has with her audiologist, Rachel Sharnetzka, AUD, CCC-A. Even though AvaLyn sees Rachel at the end of the day, a fresh wind of enthusiasm seems to lift her spirits as she approaches her audiology appointment. Nathan says with tenderness, **"AvaLyn absolutely loves her...she is so sweet and patient with Ava."**

As AvaLyn grows, and Nathan contemplates her future, he admits he has moments when he fears she will be the target of teasing and taunts from kids at school. However, he says with humility, **"The only thing that I can try to do is to prepare her to be confident about it... to embrace the scar and her story."**

Nathan knows that his hope for his daughter's future is made possible by the Clinic's amazing staff and incredibly generous donors. AvaLyn, and so many other children, are able to receive the resources needed to become confident kids with bright smiles because of monetary donations. Without donor generosity, most families could not afford a fraction of the services they receive. Nathan wholeheartedly wishes all kids with clefts could receive care at the Clinic and knows that many other families drive miles just to be seen here. The quality of care is unmatched in his estimation. He says, gratefully, **"I understand that we are blessed."**





SMILING Bigger, Brighter, and Better Together in 2025

As we march into 2025, I can't help but smile and feel gratitude for each and every member of our team of providers and staff at the Clinic. Whether the team member works directly with patients or behind the scenes, each person shows incredible dedication and tenacity to make sure that we serve each of our families as if they are our own. We jump into action every time that a new baby with a cleft enters our world. Regardless of that baby's circumstances, we make sure that he or she has access to the resources needed in order to thrive. We support moms and dads who may feel anxiety, guilt or loneliness with a new diagnosis. Every day, we let them know that they are a part of a village that cares deeply about their child's future.

We are looking forward to several exciting events this year, including the annual session of the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA) in Palm Springs, California. At this meeting, we will share five research and patient care presentations from LCPC. I am thrilled that I will be representing our Clinic at this meeting as a new member of the ACPA Board of Directors.

This March, we will send members of our pediatric dental and orthodontic team to Duke University in North Carolina to learn more about infant orthopedic care for pre-surgical cleft treatment. In April, our orthodontic team will attend the American Association of Orthodontists meeting in Philadelphia, PA, to learn about the newest advances in orthodontic treatment.

We also look forward to engaging more with our community with our upcoming "Celebrating Smiles" Art Auction in Lancaster City and the "Day of Gratitude" picnic in June. Please continuing reading for details! We can't wait to see you at these engaging events.

As always, THANK YOU for your interest in LCPC and your ongoing support of our mission.

Sincerely,

Liz Prada, DMD, MPH
Executive Director and Pediatric Dentist



Funding a Future that Beams with BRIGHT SMILES

The 2024 ExtraGive was a big success! We shared lots of smiles and surpassed our goal to raise over \$40,000. Thank you so much to everyone who gave during this special day of community giving. Our smiles are bright for an even more successful 2025 with you! May 1 is the next community giving day with Give Local York, and we hope you will participate.

Our patients smile brighter with your support. We could not support over 7,000 patients without you. Their future success is because our whole community cares about their future. Only about 50%

of care costs are covered by insurance reimbursement because, fortunately, so many are insured through Medicaid. State supported insurance reimburses at the lowest rates and does not allow uncovered costs to be charged to the patient. This is great for our patient families! And it means we always benefit from community support.

There are many ways to share smiles together in 2025. We have been collecting art for the spring **Celebrating Smiles** event on April 4. This year, we will display everything in the heart of Gallery Row (123 N Prince Street). Live music, beverages, goody bags, and a children's art-making table will help us fill the night with great fun.

Make sure to block your calendar now for our **Day of Gratitude** on June 7 from 3 to 5 pm at the Overlook Park Destination Playground Pavilion. We want to say thank you as we all play games, have a picnic, and share time together. Additional events are listed at the end of this newsletter, posted on our website and social media. We honestly want to share them all with you and look forward to the year ahead with bright smiles.

Deanna Meyler, PhD
Director of Development



LOOKING BACK TO LEAP FORWARD

LCPC Digitizes World's Largest Collection of Cleft Models and X-Rays!

Did you know the Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic has the largest collection of pre- and post-surgical facial cleft models and x-rays in the world? Between 1960 and 1980 we created these models and x-rays to follow patient progress and plan for future intervention as needed. It was the best way to capture changes at the time. Knowing the extent of our collection, orthodontic students from all over the world have visited our Clinic for research purposes. We have always welcomed these visits and recognized that it can be challenging for students to travel to Lancaster from far away locations.



Today, we are working with Case Western University and the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO) to digitize our collection through a grant from the AAO Foundation. A digital collection will allow all AAO members to access the archive remotely and explore the life-changing care we have provided for 87 years. It is very exciting to make our collection more accessible and we look forward to more people engaging with our work. The physical collection will remain at our Clinic for others to access and we will continue to welcome visits.

CHAMPIONING Changes in Cleft Care



Dr. Liz Prada Joins ACPA Board

Our Executive Director and Pediatric Dentist, Dr. Liz Prada, DMD, MPH, has joined the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA) Board of Directors for three years. She looks forward to taking a larger role in shaping the future of craniofacial care.

Clinic Team Achieves Success at Annual Conference

Practitioners from our Clinic had five abstracts accepted for presentation at the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA) annual conference in May. Congratulations to everyone on their innovative work!

Discourse Titles:

1. What Comes Next?: Current Models of Transition in Cleft Care
2. A Systematic Review of Growth in Young Children with Cleft of the Lip and/or Palate
3. Relationship between Infant Feeding Experiences and Caregiver Quality of Life and Resilience: Results from a Mixed Methods
4. When is Malnutrition, Malnutrition?
5. Anesthesia outcomes following nasotracheal intubation in children with a history of cleft lip and palate presenting for dental surgery: A retrospective chart analysis.

INTRODUCING New Faces and New Smiles



Dr. Romeo, DMD

Dr. Romeo Luo is a fellowship-trained, board-certified oral and maxillofacial surgeon. After residency, he completed an additional fellowship specifically in advanced corrective jaw surgery (orthognathic surgery) and temporomandibular joint disorders

at the prestigious Carolinas Centers for Oral and Facial Surgery.

After dental school at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, Dr. Romeo pursued his Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery residency at Broward Health Medical Center. He is very passionate about bringing his specialized surgical training to serve cleft and craniofacial patients.

In his spare time, Dr. Romeo enjoys traveling and trying new restaurants with his wife, who is a local pediatric dentist. He also enjoys cooking, staying active, playing basketball, and going to the gym.



Heather Adkin, RN

Heather Adkin is a Registered Nurse with PennState Health Hershey Medical Center. She bridges the Clinic and the Medical Center with our Cleft Team patients to ensure they receive the best care before, during, and after surgery and other

procedures with PennState Health. We are thrilled to have her support and knowledge of the Medical Center bridging and complementing our compassionate, coordinated, and holistic care.



Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic

223 North Lime Street | Lancaster, PA 17602

(717) 394-3793 | www.cleftclinic.org

Gifts that Make Us Smile

A generous \$30,000 grant has been provided for the care of patients from Lebanon County from the Francis J. Dixon Foundation Fund, a charitable fund of the Greater Harrisburg Community Foundation, a regional foundation of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC).

The Gainer-Race Memorial Softball Tournament generously gifted the Clinic \$6,000 to support patient care. Their mission is to help kids be kids and their next event is May 30-June 1.

South Hanover Elementary School PTO dedicated their Candy Cane Fundraiser to the Clinic and raised \$3,000 to support patient care. This gift has been matched by a parent family foundation.

-LET'S SHARE SMILES IN 2025-

Follow our website! CleftClinic.org/events

Celebrating Smiles with PennState Health

April 4 from 4 to 8 pm we will display original art by patients and their family members, staff, and others who care about our mission at the Sehner-Ellicott-von Hess House (123 N Prince Street) during Lancaster First Friday. In addition to great art and an online silent auction of the art, we will have live music, beverages to help you sip and stroll, a children's art table, and goody bags of surprises donated by local businesses for the first 100 guests. Come share a great evening with us!



Lititz Pretzel Fest

On **April 26**, downtown Lititz will once again be the place to enjoy multiple savory and sweet pretzel treats. The Kiwanis Club of Lititz Area hosts this annual event and proceeds benefit local charities that support children, like the Clinic! Join us to eat our way through Lititz and support patient care.



Give Local York

Starting at **9 pm on May 1 through 9pm on May 2** is Give Local York, a community fundraising event. All gifts to the Clinic through this event support patient care and open additional funding for the Clinic. 10% of our patients live in York County, which means more than \$300,000 of our budget is dedicated to their care. Join us by making a gift and helping our patients have brighter smiles.



Day of Gratitude

Block your calendar now for **June 7 from 3 to 5 pm** to share a picnic with us at the Overlook Park Destination Playground Pavilion. We want to thank you for making our work possible.



ARE YOU ON SOCIAL MEDIA? We have an active Facebook page and are building our Instagram following. Please join us at facebook.com/lancastercleftpalateclinic and [@lancastercleftpalateclinic](https://www.instagram.com/lancastercleftpalateclinic).