



SMILE CONNECTION

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2025

A SUMMER FULL OF BRIGHTER SMILES

A Constant in THE CHAOS

“Miracle Baby.” That has been Elena’s nickname for 19 years, since her mother Laura was pregnant with her. A pregnancy rife with early complications resulted in weekly ultrasounds to monitor Elena’s growth and development and it was during one of those scans that Laura and Elena’s father were informed that their daughter appeared to have both a cleft lip and palate.

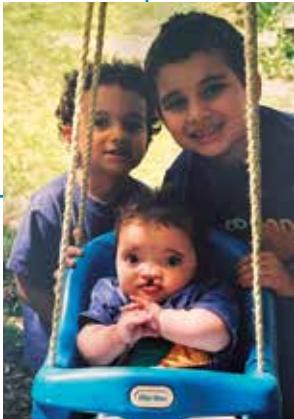
As they grappled with the ramifications of such a diagnosis, they received another crushing one. Cancer. Laura received some biopsy results only a few weeks before Elena’s due date and discovered that she had an aggressive form of cancer in her tongue, and neck. Two days later, Elena made an early and unexpected arrival.

“What an answer to prayer,” Laura reflects. “We thought we’d lost her during the pregnancy. Then she came early, right after my diagnosis so I could start treatment right away.” Laura had a PET scan the week of Elena’s birth and had surgery on her tongue and neck within two weeks. She began chemotherapy and radiation shortly after.

Elena needed special bottles due to her cleft lip and palate, and though feeding was initially a challenge, her medical team at Hershey was eventually satisfied that she was feeding well enough come home. Laura then took Elena to Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic where she became a patient of Dr. Mackay.

“We loved Dr. Mackay,” Laura shares.

Elena had a midline facial cleft and an open palate. Dr. Mackay wanted her to gain more weight before her first surgery. That first surgery was performed when Elena was six months old and it began the long journey of closing off her palate. Dr. Mackay called Elena his special girl and said she had “the mother of all clefts,” as she required several surgeries to build up and seal her palate, which was



completely open at birth. The cleft in her lip was closed when she was 9 months old.

From the beginning, Elena proved her courage and tenacity. She was seen and treated by numerous specialists at the Clinic. She has had braces, jaw surgery, and now just wears retainers. She will have one last surgery with Dr. Henry.

Elena, who was homeschooled until eighth grade, graduated high school in 2023 and the once Miracle Baby has become a Miracle Woman, whose tender heart and servant hands tended to her elderly grandparents while they lived with her and Laura. Laura’s father suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed on his left side and Elena helped care for him.

“She had a heart for her grandparents,” Laura says fondly of her daughter. “She’s sweet and thoughtful. I wish she would realize how awesome she is!”

Soon, Elena be taking on a new role as her mother’s temporary caretaker. Laura’s cancer treatments saved her life but damaged her jawbone and her bottom teeth, and she will be undergoing an extensive surgery to replace that bone. Elena will be on hand to help her recover, just as Laura has supported and cared for Elena throughout many surgeries as well.

Elena, who enjoys painting, puzzles, and playing with her cat, shares that she also “just likes helping others,” a sentiment most likely born from her own beautiful journey of growth and overcoming adversity, a journey that began at the Clinic.

“The staff have always been wonderful,” says Laura. “We loved Dr. Mackay and have loved Dr. Henry.”

“I don’t know what we would have done if we hadn’t had the connection to the Clinic,” Laura continues. “The Clinic was a constant in our crazy world and going there provided peace of mind and a sense of security. I knew that Elena was getting all the help that she needed.”

IT TAKES A TEAM

As we settle into our summer season, we are thankful for long sunny days and smiles from the simple pleasures of life. We hope that you are enjoying pool time, trips to the shore, and visits to the campground. This issue will highlight a few of our talented patient graduates who have braved nearly 20 years of medical and dental treatment while balancing school and extracurricular activities. We are so proud to share their successes with our community.

We are grateful for our second annual “Day of Gratitude” event on June 7th that provided a fun afternoon of excitement for our patients and supporters. Many thanks to Kiwanis of Lititz for donating free children’s books, Manheim Township Fire and Police Departments for sharing a fire truck and K9 demonstration, Boy Scout Troop 84 of Neffsville for a camping demonstration, CPRS Physical Therapy in Manheim for providing an obstacle course, Crystal Springs for providing water, GIANT on Lititz Pike for providing healthy snacks, and many others, including volunteers from our Development Committee and the Manheim Township Kiwanis Key Club.

On July 19th, we shared a wonderful evening of baseball with our crew as patients, families, and staff celebrated Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month. Please join us in thanking Steven Taveras, our summer intern from Franklin and Marshall College, for his hard work in organizing this event.

It takes a team to make it all happen - from Team Day to our community events. Thank you, and please join us in the future!

With gratitude,



Elizabeth L. Prada

Liz Prada, DMD, MPH
Executive Director and Pediatric Dentist



A LEGACY OF BRIGHTER SMILES

IN MEMORIAM: DR. MOHAMMAD MAZAHERI, MDD, DDS, MSC

On May 30, **Doctor Mohammad Mazaheri (Mo)** passed away, but his influence on the Clinic endures. Dr. Mazaheri joined the Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic in 1952 as a resident in maxillofacial prosthodontics and stayed until his retirement over 50 years later. He worked tirelessly to provide the very best care for his patients, advance research in craniofacial differences (over 100 published research articles and over 100 research presentations), and lead the Clinic and other organizations such as the American Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Association (ACPA). He leaves a legacy of supporting students, as he established the ACPA Mazaheri Young Professional Scholarship, and patients with a cleft, as he was the founder of the Happy Face Foundation, which is dedicated to the treatment of Iranian children with craniofacial differences.



Dr. Mo was the eternal optimist and an incredible mentor to anyone who showed an interest in cleft care. His energy was endless and he never shied away from a microphone. He will be sorely missed.

— **Thomas D. Samson, M.D., FACS, FAAP**

Dr. Mo was certainly a force to be reckoned with on the outside but really he was a very kind hearted individual once you got to know him. I really got to see how much he cared about his patients and only wanted the best for them.

— **Brenda Hohman**

The influence of Mo Mazaheri had in the development and operation of the Clinic and his care for his patients is known around the world. Dr. Mo will be greatly missed but never forgotten “In the Future to Come”.

— **David C. Leber, M.D., FACS**

My lasting memories of Dr. Mo I will forever cherish typify his caring and fun-loving spirit. When I was much younger, he came to LCPC in the 1950's to work with my grandfather, Dr. HK Cooper, and I recall on my visits to the Clinic, he used to give me rides on the “new-fangled” dental chairs with electric motors that went up and down. As I got older, and finished my education in the same field as my grandfather, father, and Dr. Mo himself, I recall ACPA meetings where Dr. Mo was revered for his depth of knowledge and experience, but simultaneously was the life of the party in social events, with his “dancing”.

— **Ross “Rusty” E. Long, Jr., DMD, MS, PHD**



Photo courtesy of Landis Homes



Celebrating BRIGHTER SMILES ALL SUMMER LONG

Summer smiles were abundant during our **Day of Gratitude** in June. Everyone had great fun watching and learning about a K9 unit, kicking a football, eating cotton candy, getting personalized balloon animals, and having their faces painted, among many other fun things to do. If you were unable to join us this year, we will share our gratitude again on June 6 in 2026.

We also raised awareness during **Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month** by enjoying a Lancaster Stormers game together. These events help our patients feel as though they are not the only ones with a craniofacial difference and they also help our community see just how amazing our patients are. One patient even threw out the first pitch!



More events are coming! We begin to accept art donations on October 3 for our spring Celebrating Smiles event and can't wait to see your creativity. DAFday (Donor Advised Fund day) happens on October 9, the Kiwanis Chocolate Walk is on October 11, and ExtraGive is November 21.

We look forward to sharing all these days with you.

We know you are with us in the journey to bright smiles. Our work on behalf of patients with craniofacial differences and/or

special needs is only possible because you care so deeply for our patients. Thank you for making their smiles possible and being part of their care team.

Deanna Meyler, PhD
Director of Development



ARE YOU READY FOR A NEW SUMMER SMILE?

Dr. Kristin Connors, DDS MDS, is accepting new orthodontic patients. Contact us today to schedule your complementary consultation and start your smile transformation! Fees support our Clinic mission and help our patients smile brightly.

(717) 394-3793 | frontdesk@cleftclinic.org



AWARD: YOUR GIFTS MAKE US SMILE – THANK YOU!

The Josiah W. and Bessie H. Kline Foundation has awarded the Clinic \$10,000 to support patient speech therapy sessions.

BRIGHT FUTURES, BRIGHT SMILES



We are thrilled to share that **Ava Hameloth** graduated from high school and will begin her college journey, pursuing an associate's degree in digital art. She hopes to get a job in the animation field. **Baxter**, her service dog, also received his "Bestest Boy" diploma.

Lena Hameloth graduated from high school and is pursuing a social media certificate through Pennsylvania College of Art & Design (PCAD). She hopes to be a social media manager to help businesses grow their online presence.





Lancaster Cleft Palate Clinic

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A SUMMER FULL OF BRIGHT SMILES

Looking Forward to Future Smiles



Celebrating Smiles accepting art | starting October 3

Celebrating Smiles is happening **March 6 from 4:00 to 8:00 pm** at the Sehner-Ellicott-von Hess House at 123 North Prince Street in Lancaster. WE ARE ACCEPTING ORIGINAL ART DONATIONS starting October 3 through January 15. Share your talent and help us raise funds for patient care. All original art is appreciated and children's art encouraged.

Scan the QR code for the
Art Submission Form



DAFday | October 9

Do you have a Donor Advised Fund? DAFday is a national day of giving through Donor Advised Funds. Please consider supporting our patients on this special day through your DAF!

Find us at dafday.com for easy giving.



Kiwanis Chocolate Walk | October 11

Eat your way through downtown Lititz on October 11 during the Chocolate Walk and support patient care. Proceeds from this event support children-focused charities, including our Clinic!

Scan the QR code to
get your ticket



ExtraGive | November 21

The Extraordinary Give is November 21 and we hope you will be part of raising critical funds for patient care on this special day of community giving. For 24 hours, we can all make sure children with craniofacial differences receive the care they deserve and open additional funds for patient care.



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.