

Amazing Staff for Amazing Kids!

By Hilary Daninhirsch

Based in Squirrel Hill, The Children's Institute is a school for children with special needs. Established in 1902, The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh is an independent and licensed non-profit organization whose mission is: To Heal. To Teach. To Empower. To Amaze. It serves more than 6000 children each year at seven campuses across Western Pennsylvania.

Many people know The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh as the place for amazing kids. But an amazing place for amazing kids needs to have an amazing staff, including its nurses.

Marie Fetsick has been a nurse for 25 years and has worked at The Children's Institute for most of her career.

"In high school, I knew I wanted to work with children and be in the medical field, so nursing clicked for me," she said.

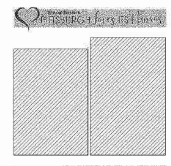
When Fetsick first started, The Children's Institute was called the Rehabilitation Institute, and it focused on rehab for children and adults. UPMC bought the adult portion of the Reha-

bilitation Institute, and The Children's Institute became its own entity. Now the only organization in the space is The Children's Institute, which no longer offers in-patient rehab but instead provides outpatient services such as speech and physical therapy. It also offers behavioral health services as well as family support services.

Some of children that are served by The Children's Institute may carry a diagnosis of autism, Down's Syndrome or a host of other physical conditions. The age range of the students at The Children's Institute is between 5-21.

Fetsick recently received her Level 1 school nurse certification, which consisted of taking four masters level courses at Eastern University. And although she is technically a school nurse, her job duties regularly go beyond what a traditional school nurse deals with in a typical day.

Fetsick, as school nurse, conducts vision and hearing screenings and treats kids who do not feel well, but her job brings about a degree of chal-





allenges, particularly as many of her children are unable to communicate what they are feeling.

"It's not a typical school where a kid can say, 'My stomach hurts.' A lot of kids are non-verbal, so we have to go by cues and behaviors. We also rely on our wonderful staff and aides; the kids can't always tell us what is hurting specifically. You really have to know the kids and use your assessment skills as a nurse to try to see what is going on to help them," she said.

"We have a lot of students that need daily medications or that need breathing treatments; care that specifically needs to be done by a nurse," she added. Occasionally there are emergency situations, such as children that have seizures.

One of the reasons that Fetsick is able to be successful at her job is the collaborative approach taken by The Children's Institute. "I certainly rely on other nurses; we have an

awesome team here. It really is a team concept," she said.

Although ideally most nurses have some level of innate compassion, there are days when it takes a heightened degree of patience to work this job. "It can be difficult when I'm trying to assess a student and they're not being completely cooperative. I definitely think it takes a different person to work here. You work here because you enjoy working here; it's very satisfying working with our students. You can have difficult days, but it is very rewarding."

In fact, even though it's not always easy, the most rewarding part of the job for Fetsick is interacting with the students themselves. And because many require regular sessions during the day with the nurse's office, she's gotten to know all 180+ students.

"I love our students; I love this population. I get to know the kids better than if I worked in a public school. I can walk down the halls and know every student," she said.