

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY | 2024



CHD Families
OF TUCSON

2024



Annual Report

PREPARED BY:
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



LETTER FROM THE BOARD

As we approach the end of the year, it is with great pride that the Board of Directors shares our annual report, highlighting the achievements and milestones of CHD Families of Tucson. This year has been one filled with challenges and triumphs, and we are grateful for the unwavering support and commitment to our mission.

Though connecting our community by providing emotional support has always been one of the foundational pillars of our organization, 2024 saw that commitment by truly bringing our vision to life. We focused on the aspects of our programs and events that bring our families together to really foster those relationships with one another. Instead of providing a cardiology panel for our annual Family Connections event in February, we chose to offer the museum space to just our heart families so they could share a meal and an evening mingling together while enjoying the fun atmosphere at the Children's Museum of Tucson- no doctors, no stigmas, just fun.

While we fully intend to invite the cardiology teams back in 2025 for another panel discussion, we couldn't help but take note of the overwhelming success of this year's event. This connection-centric approach made us realize some of our programs and activities could evolve to enhance the balance with our two other pillars of educational and financial support. Stay tuned as we begin plans to shift some of our annual programming and fundraising to an alternating-year format which will allow us to be more intentional in our focus and preparation so we can continue to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those affected by CHD in Southern Arizona.

As we look forward to the upcoming year, we remain committed to our mission and vision to provide ongoing support to families in need. We believe that by continuing to connect with each other and sharing our experiences, we can create a brighter future for those affected by congenital heart defects. We couldn't do it without you, however! Your support has been instrumental in making a difference in the lives of many. Thank you for being an integral part of CHD families of Tucson. We look forward to another successful year ahead!

SINCERELY,
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Stacy Lipinczyk



Caroline Orofino



Jessica Graves



Rachel Simmons



Becky Luvor



Kim Levin

CHAT WITH A CARDIOLOGIST: DR. OMAR MEZIAB

A major reason I became interested in Cardiology, and Electrophysiology specifically, is the seemingly constant technological advancements. As Cardiology providers, I think we take for granted how incredible the technology at our fingertips is at every visit. We somehow convert little stickers placed on the body into electrical signals that determine how the heart beats. We put a handheld plastic rectangle against a child's chest and receive real-time pictures of the heart with incredible detail. These technologies have been in use for decades and fine-tuning over time has brought us to where we are today.

While these technologies are standard in the course of Cardiology care, many patients aren't exposed to or are aware of the innovations in my world of Electrophysiology (or EP). This basically breaks down into taking care of heart rhythms that are either too slow or too fast. When abnormal heart rhythms lead to hearts beating too slow, the treatment for this sometimes ends up in the need for a pacemaker. This technology is also decades-old, but over time, pacemakers have become more and more sophisticated. They typically consist of metal wires on the inside of the heart that connect to a battery the size of an Altoids can. These can last for over 10 years before ever needing a battery change and can be monitored via Bluetooth on a cell phone. Even more impressive, the newest pacemakers (and the likely future of pacemakers) don't even have wires and are tiny devices the size of a AAA battery. These are placed in the heart via the blood vessels in the leg, and don't require the scar on the chest that the typical pacemakers do.

For the abnormally fast heart rhythms, there's even more innovation. If a fast rhythm needs to be permanently fixed, we can use catheters in the blood vessels to make a 3D re-creation of the electricity in the heart and treat the problem area. This ablation procedure involves either burning, freezing, or treating the problem area with electromagnetic fields. For patients with certain types of dangerously fast heart rhythms, an implantable defibrillator (or ICD) can be recommended to provide life-saving measures. While the standard ICDs are still placed on the inside of the heart like a pacemaker (or on the outside of the heart by a surgeon in particular circumstances), newer options allow for placing these devices under the skin along the ribs and side of the chest without ever needing to access the heart itself. Pediatric and Congenital Cardiology is constantly evolving, and scientific advances allow us to take care of patients in new and improved ways. It's exciting to have these tools at our disposal to treat our cardiac kids here in Southern Arizona, and I hope that families find comfort in knowing we are at the forefront of these ever-evolving technologies.



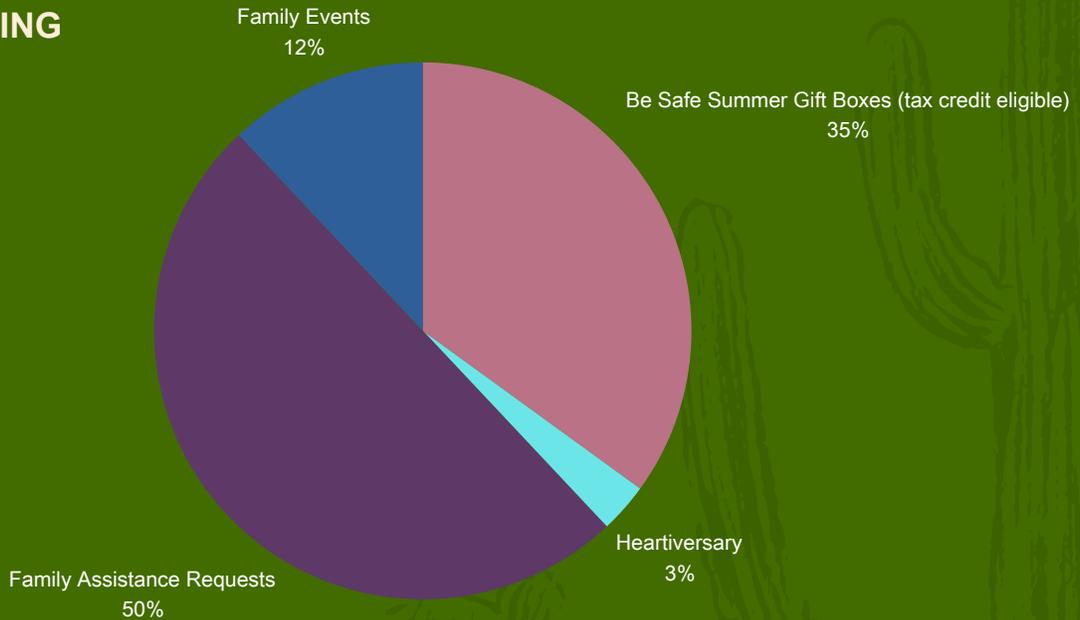
OMAR MEZIAB, MD
BANNER-UMC TUCSON PEDIATRIC CARDIOLOGY AND
CONGENITAL ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY
PHYSICIAN LIAISON TO CHD FAMILIES OF TUCSON

FINANCIALS

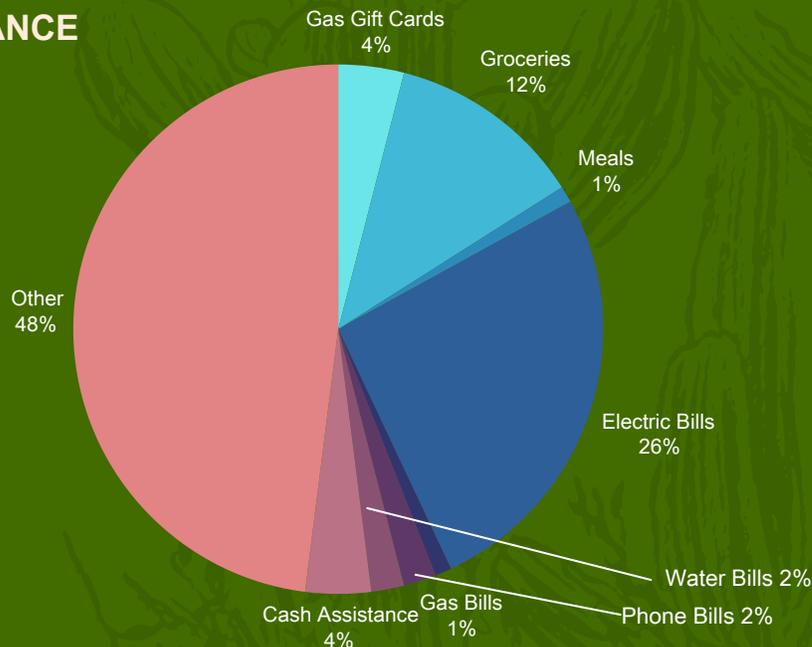
During the biggest giving year to date, CHD Families of Tucson spent over \$27,000 supporting our Southern Arizona heart warriors and their families financially, emotionally, and educationally. More than half of this was spent on family assistance, made possible only through CHDFT's Alan and Jan Levin & Family Assistance Fund.

Outside of family assistance, CHDFT's second biggest family giving was through our Be Safe Summer Gift Boxes where we give our heart kiddos essential items to help beat the tough Arizona heat (and this summer was no joke). We can never say thank you enough for the generous donors, without whom, these programs could not exist. Thank you for continuing to support Southern Arizona heart children and their families.

FAMILY GIVING



FAMILY ASSISTANCE



EVENTS & PROGRAMS

BE SAFE SUMMER BOXES

If you know CHD Families of Tucson, you know about our favorite annual tradition - our Be Safe Summer Boxes. This year, the Board of Directors and some generous volunteers assembled, packed, AND shipped out 96 boxes to our families across Southern Arizona. We'd like to extend an extra thank you to the Post Office on Oracle/Orange Grove who processed all 96 packages in one transaction! Included in this year's box were usual favorites such as sunscreen and oral care along with some specialty items like a Yeti Rambler water bottle and insulated CHDFT Lunch bag.



DREAM NIGHT

On September 14th, CHD Families of Tucson was invited to attend DreamNight hosted by the fabulous team at Reid Park Zoo. DreamNight is an exclusive evening for children with special health care needs or disabilities and their families to enjoy Reid Park Zoo free of charge and without concern for stigma or issues related to accessibility. Our heart warriors and their families had an amazing time viewing the animals on display, meeting their favorite special characters, and participating in various activities hosted by generous volunteers from our local Tucson community. They truly went above and beyond to make sure our heart warriors felt like VIPs for this magical evening!



HEART WALK

In May of this year, we joined the American Heart Association for the 2024 Southern Arizona Heart Walk at Reid Park. CHD Families of Tucson represented our corner of the cardiac universe for a morning of celebrating heart health, honoring survivors, and remembering loved ones affected by all types of heart disease. We saw old friends, met new ones, and were all around grateful for an opportunity to spread awareness about Congenital Heart Defects in our community.

HEART MOM SOCIAL

Sometimes the key to fostering meaningful relationships is simplicity. To celebrate our magnificent moms this year, we hosted a simple, stripped down event at Mercado San Agustin where we connected over coffee, pastries, and conversation. A scheduled two hour event stretched well into three and a half hours as these mommas swapped stories about their lives and experiences as Heart Moms.

BACK TO SCHOOL

While the above average summer temperatures (101° plus!) made it difficult to plan a gathering as an entire group, we still found a way to celebrate the back to school season for our families by pulling off a gift card blitz! Over 70 gift cards were emailed individually to help ease the burdens of basic necessities that come along with heading back to school.

FROM OUR HEARTS TO YOURS: THE EICHELBERGER FAMILY

August “Auggie” was born on August 16, 2023, with Tetralogy of Fallot. We found out about his CHD during pregnancy and followed closely with Dr. Blair from 20 weeks on. The outlook was good. It seemed like Auggie would only need to be monitored in the NICU for a short time, and then return to the hospital for his corrective surgery around 4-6 months old.

We could not have been more wrong. Auggie spent 82 long days in the hospital after birth. He experienced more in his first 12 weeks than most people experience in a lifetime: RVOT stent placement, acute respiratory failure and pulmonary edema, rhinovirus, necrotizing enterocolitis, widespread lower extremity thromboses, sepsis, and stroke.

Any one of those conditions might have taken his life, and there were many scary days/nights when doctors did not leave his room, but he pressed on. He won the hearts of his medical providers. His resilience was inspiring. His first social smile was while he was intubated!

August was discharged home on November 6, 2023. He truly thrived at home. He was in PT, OT, and feeding therapy. He worked so hard and was catching up on milestones! That was especially amazing because we just didn't know what impact his stroke would have on his life. Our days were filled with medical appointments, and it was the honor of my life to care for him in that way.

Auggie spent 3 beautiful months at home before his open heart surgery on February 13, 2024. While his medical providers and our family planned for his life after surgery, Auggie experienced complications that he could not recover from. He died in my arms with the sunrise on February 14, just 2 days shy of his 6 month birthday.

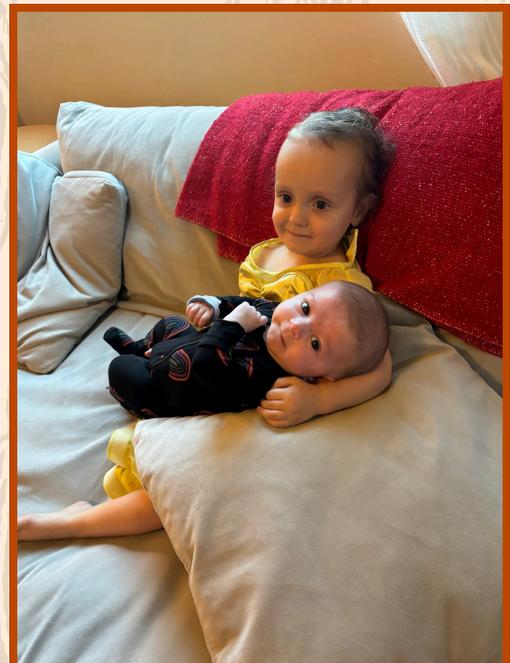


FROM OUR HEARTS TO YOURS: THE EICHELBERGER FAMILY

A few things about Auggie we will always remember:

- His sister nicknamed him Auggie Doggy.
- He had the longest eyelashes.
- He had the silliest laugh, and his smile was infectious. It changed his whole face into a ray of light.
- He adored his sister! Any time she looked at him, he'd squeal with joy. She still adores him just as much. She paints him pictures, collects special rocks for him, and names every stuffed animal she owns, "Auggie Doggy."

We are very grateful for the support that CHD Families of Tucson provided, both during Auggie's life and after his death. Auggie was only on earth for a short time, but his impact on family, friends, and community was great.



THANK YOU

TAX CREDIT INFO:

**CHD Families of Tucson
is a qualifying Charitable Organization (QCO CODE 22013).**

If you donate to CHDFT, your donation is a dollar-for-dollar tax credit, so the donation will come right off of your Arizona state taxes! Any Arizona taxpayer can donate to CHDFT and take advantage of this tax credit.

Your gift will help keep the lights on, water running, air conditioning going, provide groceries, and more, for Southern Arizona children with congenital heart defects and their families going through difficult times due to their CHDs.

To claim this credit, use Form 321*.

Best of all? You can donate to a qualifying charitable organization, like CHDFT, in addition to donating to a qualifying foster care organization, or any public school!**

**CHDFT does not provide tax advice. Please consult with your own tax advisor.

***The maximum qualifying charitable organization credit allowed for 2024 is \$938 for married filing joint filers and \$470 for single, heads of household, and married filing separate filers.**

Your AZ Tax Credit eligible donation can be mailed to:

CHD Families of Tucson
PO Box 91324
Tucson, AZ 85752



Want to donate right now? Use your smartphone or mobile device to scan this code. You will be directed straight to our secure online donation page.

You can also visit us at:
www.chdtucson.org/donate/

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL HEART COMMUNITY.
GIVE TO CHD FAMILIES OF TUCSON.**

CHD Families of Tucson