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# The Pulse

pediatric home service

Fall 2012

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## Great care starts with great people

### How PHS hires caregivers

*Many of us at PHS are parents too, and we only entrust our kids to the most qualified, skilled professionals who have that rare blend of expertise, heart, and soul. This article is the first in a four-part series on how PHS ensures a safe care plan for each child.*

The Pulse spoke with Todd Ericson, Managing Director of Human Capital, Anna Dassinger, Recruiter, and Sara Collison, Human Resource Generalist, about the PHS hiring process.



PHS has an extensive interviewing, screening, and evaluation process to ensure we get just the right person for each position.

### Who do we need? Finding the right fit.

The process begins with Pre-Recruitment, in which the PHS Senior Management Team reviews managers' requests for new or replacement associates. This phase includes:

- Requisition:
  - Investigate market data for salaries and competitive wages
  - Create an interim plan for the department
- Selection Process:
  - Talk with managers about the qualities, characteristics, skills, and experience they're seeking; consider the culture of the department
  - Establish the hiring team; coach supervisors prior to interviews
  - Decide applicant sources (internal postings, media, educational institutions)
  - Determine specific assessments for applicants, writing samples, and/or presentations

"We always ask the manager if he or she wants to hire someone out of the given pool of applicants to fill the position immediately, or wait until we find the right person, if necessary. And we're always interested in finding the right person, not the immediate person," Todd says.

### Let's interview

PHS conducts up to three interviews with potential hires, all to ensure each new employee is a good fit for the department and the company. PHS also provides candidates with a company overview and benefits information so the potential hire can assess how he or she will fit in with PHS. The interview process typically includes these steps:

- Review resumes
- HR will conduct phone interviews, looking for experience, general personality, salary expectations, scheduling conflicts, and other factors
- Utilize a grading system to make a subjective process more objective
- Conduct in-person interviews with those who pass phone interviews; the first interview is fairly value-based, to see if candidate is a potential good fit
- Invite interviewees to complete assessment(s), conduct second interview, which includes high-level PHS associates
- For select candidates, conduct a third interview, usually in a more social, causal setting that includes others in the department



For more on hiring, take a look at page 2

## PHS Services

- Respiratory Therapy
- Infusion Therapy
- Hourly Nursing
- Infusion Pharmacy
- Clinical Support Services

### Pediatric Home Service (PHS)

is an independent pediatric homecare company that provides specialized health care services to medically-fragile, technology-dependent children — in their homes, with their families.

We recognize and understand the different needs of infants, children, and adolescents.

We ensure continuity of care by working together with health care professionals, payers, and family caregivers.

*The Pulse* is published quarterly by Pediatric Home Service for clients, professional partners, the health care community and other friends of PHS. We welcome your suggestions and story ideas. If you have comments or questions or would like to be placed on the mailing list, please contact:

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## Great care starts with great people

How PHS hires caregivers

*continued from the front page*



PHS is always looking for potential new employees who have that rare mix of compassion, professionalism, and pure soul.

### Joining the team

Clinicians and field nurses are consistently in our patients' homes, so we take the responsibility of hiring qualified, trustworthy and reliable staff members very seriously. Some employment is contingent on completing some of our own education and training classes. When PHS offers someone a position, it is conditional based upon the candidate passing many screenings, including but not limited to background checks (down to the county level), drug tests, past employers check, and net study with MN Department of Health, which gives clearance for candidates eligible to work with patients.

### Welcome aboard

Once hired, the PHS focus is on providing new employees with everything needed for a smooth start and rewarding career in helping kids thrive. ■



## Why Voting Matters

### Exercise your right to vote

Many choices affecting our lives are made at the local level

By this time, you may very well be reading this newsletter as a brief escape from the deluge of political messages that are a given with any presidential election. With all of the attention paid to our federal election, it can be difficult to appreciate the importance of your vote at home in the concurrent election of our state leaders.

Yet it is our elected officials in the state Senate and House of Representatives who decide and develop the state laws, policies, and programs that have the greatest impact on our daily lives.

Minnesotans are fortunate to live in such a progressive state. Minnesota has been a national leader in providing home and community-based services, recognizing long ago the preferred option of health care at home. While we have several pioneers of this movement in the state legislature, there are many more who are eager to serve and eager to learn.

PHS recognizes the importance of state government, and we are an active participant in state legislation and regulation.

- We meet frequently with state leaders, both at the Capitol and at state agencies.
- Our top priorities are to educate and advocate for the benefit of home based health care services.
- We work diligently to prove that homecare is more than just a commodity.

As a highly valued and highly valuable component of the health care continuum, homecare requires skilled health care professionals to provide quality care and ethical business leaders to preserve limited health care funds. As an organization that provides services that are often funded by the state, PHS must also continue to seek just compensation for the level of care and service that you have come to expect and that every child deserves.

*For more on voting, take a look at page 7*



# Message from our Medical Director

## Dr. Roy C. Maynard

Winter is coming, and so are viruses

Childhood immunizations have likely contributed more to the health and welfare of children than any other medical advancement. Recognizing the positive impact of immunization programs is crucial to reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with communicable infectious diseases.

As winter arrives, so does the respiratory viral season. For most winter viruses like RSV (respiratory syncytial virus), parainfluenza, adenovirus, rhinovirus, bocavirus and human metapneumovirus, there are no active vaccines. Passive immunization in the form of Synagis® is available for RSV immunoprophylaxis, but this monthly and expensive therapy is generally reserved for high risk preterm infants.

### Who's at risk?

During the winter, both strains of influenza A and B may circulate. Generally, influenza is considered to be a problem for the very young and the very old. Influenza accounts for 3,000 to 49,000 deaths a year, with an average mortality of 23,000 deaths per year. Influenza A is a highly mutagenic virus with the capacity to alter its pathogenic potential — as in the case of swine or avian flu, which caused pandemics in non-immune populations. In the 2009 H1N1 epidemic,

however, 90 percent of the hospitalizations and deaths were in people younger than 65 years of age. Fortunately for the general population, influenza shots have been available since 1945 and a nasal spray vaccine since 2003.

### Available vaccines

A vaccine is defined as a biological preparation that improves immunity to a particular disease. Different types of vaccines are made in an attempt to offer the best protection against the disease with the fewest potential side effects.

Among common childhood vaccinations, attenuated viral vaccines include the MMR (measles, mump, rubella) and chicken pox vaccine. These vaccines contain live but weakened virus to promote immunity after inoculation. The Flumist® or LAIV (live attenuated influenza virus) is a nasal spray that is believed to offer immunity against influenza comparable to the flu shot. The former is approved for healthy people ages 2 through 49 years of age. Pregnant women and individuals with underlying medical conditions such as asthma should not receive Flumist®.

The influenza shot is a subunit vaccine made up of inactivated influenza viral particles and one cannot acquire influenza

from the shot. The vaccine is manufactured from virus grown in chicken eggs. Previously, because of contamination of the vaccine with small amounts of egg protein, influenza vaccination was avoided in patients with a history of egg allergy.

Current studies have supported recommendations that most patients with egg allergy do not need skin testing and may safely receive the influenza vaccine in a medical setting that has the potential to treat any adverse reactions. Only individuals with a history of life-threatening reactions to eggs should avoid flu shots. Estimates are that one influenza-related death is prevented for every 4,000 vaccine recipients, and that when all ages are considered, the vaccine is protective 60 percent of the time.

### Who should get flu shots?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends influenza vaccination for all people, including children and adolescents age 6 months and older. Special efforts should be made to immunize children 6 months of age and older with chronic diseases, out-of-home providers of high-risk children, all health care personnel, and women who are pregnant, planning to be pregnant, or have recently delivered. ■

## C'mon online!

Join the PHS online community. Post pictures, share stories, give tips, comment on our blog and connect with other families facing similar challenges. Lend support and help celebrate the achievements of children who overcome tremendous medical challenges to live full and happy lives at home.

### Here's where you'll find us:

 PHS Thrive blog at <http://www.pediatrichomeservice.com/blog/>

 Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/PediatricHomeService>

 Twitter at <http://twitter.com/PHSKidsThrive>

 YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/pediatrichomeservice>

**On the Sharing Care beat**

PHS making a difference



Becca, Aubry, Kelsey, and Joel at HopeKids Golf Tournament.

**HopeKids Golf Tournament**

The second annual Coleberry Tournament benefiting HopeKids took place at Edinborough Golf Course in Brooklyn Park, raising about \$67,000 to benefit the Minnesota chapter. HopeKids is an organization that provides events and services for families who have children facing life-threatening illness or a medical condition. PHS Sharing Care volunteers helped set up and tear down, partnering with volunteers from across the Twin Cities area.

**Want to donate to Toys for Tots?**

Throughout the month of December, PHS will be collecting Toys for Tots. Readers who would like to make a donation to be added to the PHS toy bag are invited to drop off donations at the PHS building or to send them with any PHS driver or clinician.



**HopeKids Festival**

Sharing Care volunteers participated in the 6th Annual HopeDay Festival, hosted by HopeKids MN, in September. We painted faces and caught some great prizes at the PHS fishing pond with the kids. This festival marks the end of this HopeKids season and is the organization's largest event of the year. See a photo slideshow from the event on the PHS YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/PediatricHomeService](http://www.youtube.com/PediatricHomeService).



Claudia and Karletta at HopeKids Festival.

**Blood Drive Reminder**

PHS's bi-annual blood drive is coming up on November 29 at the PHS office, located at 2800 Cleveland Ave. N., Roseville, MN. Keep in mind that the blood drive is not only for employees. We'd love to have patients, families, and caregivers join in. Visit: <http://allstarclub.mbc.org/mbc/mobilesch/sc.php> (sponsor code 3134) to register for the event.



PHS employees enjoy the music at Hope Rocks.

**Hope Rocks**

PHS volunteers had a great time at the annual Hope Rocks Festival in September benefiting Faith's Lodge. PHS is proud to support Faith's Lodge as a sponsor for the fourth year. If you are interested in learning more about Faith's Lodge and how it supports families dealing with the loss of a child or those with a chronically-ill child, please visit the website at [www.faithslodge.org](http://www.faithslodge.org).



**Help us GO GREEN**

Small actions can make a big difference when it comes to protecting our environment. If you'd like to help PHS GO GREEN, contact Lori Murray at [lamurray@pediatrichomeservice.com](mailto:lamurray@pediatrichomeservice.com) to indicate you would like to receive product alerts, *The Pulse* newsletter, or PHS satisfaction surveys via email rather than in the mail.

# Hot Topics

## We take your concerns about equipment and supplies seriously

The biomedical department weighs in

What happens when a parent or caregiver calls PHS with a concern about a product or piece of equipment in the home?

**We do everything we can to ensure our equipment is functioning safely and properly. When we do receive a concern:**

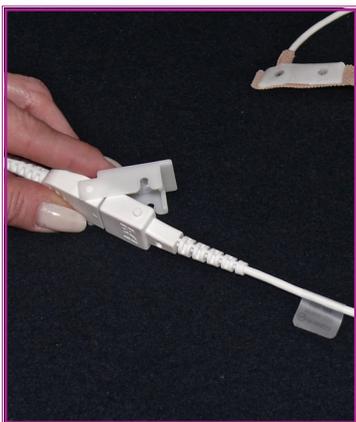
- We take it very seriously knowing that properly working equipment is critical for medically-fragile children.
- We also understand that having a piece of equipment that isn't working is an added stress on our families. We try to make the repair or replacement process as seamless as possible by bringing a rental to your home while we evaluate the piece of equipment.

PHS tracks product issues to identify any potential trends or patterns, then we can report design flaws and consistent complaints to manufacturers and work with them to fix the problem.

Tracking and trending equipment and supply complaints helps us differentiate between malfunctioning equipment and user errors, the latter indicating a need for additional caregiver training, revised education materials, or product alerts.

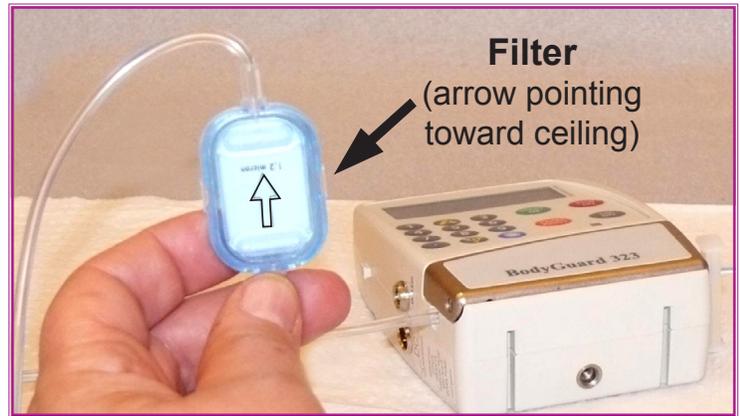
### Here's what happens:

- When a complaint occurs, the equipment is brought to our biomedical department where thorough testing is conducted per manufacturer specifications and attempts are made to replicate the problem. Additionally, the history of the piece is checked for any similar complaints or trends in malfunction.
- If the issue can't be verified and resolved, it goes out to the manufacturer. If the manufacturer can't verify the issue, it will be sent back to PHS and the family. If they can verify it, the manufacturer will fix it and return it to PHS who takes it back to the family.



The biomedical department encourages families to save their defective disposables, clean them, pack them up and send them back to PHS. We can better troubleshoot and resolve issues when we have the problematic supply.

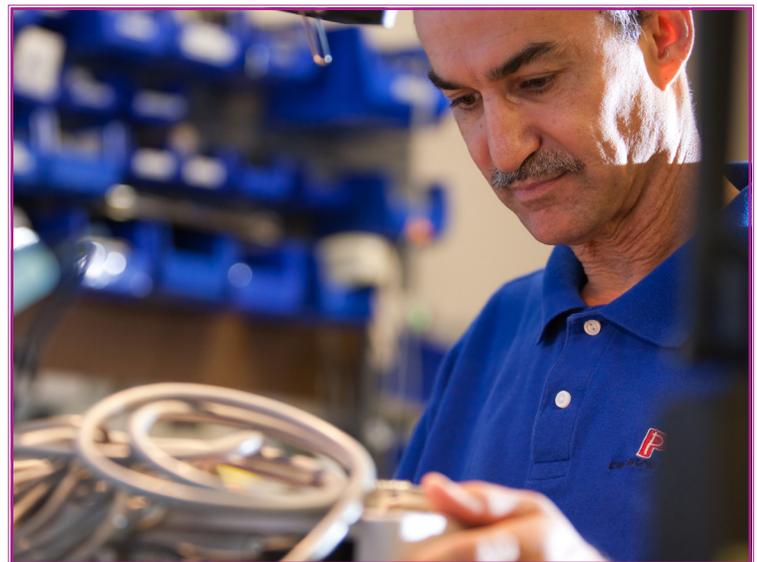
- Tracking and trending helps to identify what may have caused a certain piece of equipment to have issues in the past, such as user error, situational or environmental issues (a bag being lower than the pump and causing it to feed slower), or the equipment itself.
- MedWatch — PHS submits a MedWatch form to the FDA and the manufacturer whenever we become aware that a device or medication may have caused or contributed to complications with one of our patients, or may have created the potential for complications. The manufacturer must report back to the FDA regarding a



Environmental or situational problems can cause issues – items in the house, feeding bags hung too high or low, etc. When parents are open to talk about the issue, biomedical staff can get a good picture of the set up and what might be causing the problem. This helps PHS create more detailed information in educational materials to help families avoid factors that can lead to equipment issues.

problem submitted through MedWatch, therefore there is more responsibility on the manufacturer's end to follow up on the product complaint (versus if PHS sends a complaint only to the manufacturer).

PHS tracks reported concerns both by product and by patient. This allows us to identify concerns with a specific product line as well as to identify specific patient uses or treatments that may not be compatible with a certain product. ■



PHS biomedical staff often work with the manufacturers to evaluate real-life situations that they don't necessarily foresee or consider. Because children and adults will interact with their equipment differently, the way it functions and performs will be affected. Although manufacturers may say 'that piece of equipment isn't supposed to be handled or used that way', the reality is that children move and play with their vent or food pump in ways that the adult population doesn't. PHS wants to ensure the manufacturer understands that.



# Staff Spotlight

## Meet Anna

Finding all the right people to take care of PHS kids

Anna Dassinger doesn't create treatment plans or administer therapies, but she performs a critical job when it comes to taking care of PHS kids. As a recruiter in the company's human resources department, she hires employees to fill all kinds of positions, from hourly nurses to pharmacists to billing representatives and more.

The people she looks for and recommends for hire are those she believes will be committed to PHS and its mission to

provide the very best care for medically-fragile children in their own homes.

Anna, who has a degree in HR from St. Cloud State University, has been with PHS for about six and half years. From the day of her first interview, she knew it was a special place. "While I was hoping I would get a second interview, I actually turned down another job offer because my first interview with PHS was so great. As I was waiting to be interviewed, people walking by were happy and talking to each other," she recalls. "I knew I wanted to work here."

Part of her job is to help other PHS employees feel the same as she does. "A critical component of my job," she says, "is to do everything I can to take care of the people who are taking care of our kids." That includes helping new hires through the orientation process and throughout their tenure at PHS.

The best part of her job, says Anna, is "contributing to something that has such a positive impact on

people." She adds, "I can't get over how great my co-workers are. They are like family. Many of them attended our wedding."

"Our" is a reference to Anna and her husband, Jason, also a PHS employee. Her best moment on the job: the day he stopped by her desk to ask her out to lunch. And, she adds, "I'm proud to say that my brother also has been working at PHS for two years."

Anna's family also includes a sister in San Diego, nieces, a nephew, and her parents. Anna hails from Silver Lake, Minnesota, a town so small it has no stoplight.

When Anna isn't working, you may find her scuba diving or beach combing, sewing, eating ethnic foods, watching old movies or the Minnesota Vikings, or reading Jane Austen or Terry Goodkind's Sword of Truth series. She also likes relaxing on her couch and snuggling with her three cats, Mica, Izzy, and Moxy.

Avid travelers, Anna and Jason take a trip out of the country every year. Next up on the list: Germany in 2013. ■



Anna scuba diving.



# Kids Being Kids

## Falling in love

with Parker!



At 10 months old, PHS kid Parker loves being outside, especially with his older sisters Norah, age 6, and Lily, age 3. The big sisters also help Parker with his therapies and keep him entertained. Parker's entire family emphasizes time in parks and outdoors, providing all of them with as many experiences as possible. It helps balance out his medical appointments and home therapies. Together, Parker and his family are thriving at home.

We're on the lookout for photos of "kids being kids" to consider using in future issues of *The Pulse*. Photos can be of any kid activity, from drawing a picture to skiing to playing with pets. Submit photos via email to [kkhalena@pediatrixhomeservice.com](mailto:kkhalena@pediatrixhomeservice.com). If we choose your photo, we will contact you.



# Thriving at Home

## Look out, college

Allison plans her bright future, mom breathes (fairly) easy



Allison, right, with her mom.

Homecoming, hanging out with friends, planning for college: Part of high school senior Allison's life. She is a straight-A, honor roll student at the School of Environmental Studies in Apple Valley, and absolutely loves it there. She's even taking a college-level Animal Science course this year through the University of Minnesota, and looking forward to a career in environmental studies and animal science.

As her mom, Kim, says, "She plays violin with the MacPhail High School Chamber Orchestra, volunteers in the mission program at our church, and helps tutor kids in math at a nearby learning center."

Life hasn't always been this bright.

Allison was born with Congenital Central Hypoventilation Syndrome (CCHS). As she grew, CCHS' symptoms began to rob more and more of her breath, limit her oxygen intake, and steal her ability to grow and learn.

### Cue to breathe

Just like Allison's brain, her lungs are perfectly normal in their function — as long as her diaphragm gets the signal to expand and contract. It now does so, thanks to two, surgically implanted pacemakers that quite literally spark each breath of Allison's life.

Like many kids with respiratory issues, Allison has relied on support from PHS to thrive in many ways. Before and in-between her surgeries, PHS helped keep her infection-free, and provided ventilation technologies, respiratory therapy and training for her mom and dad that allowed her to stay at home.

"We've had very few medical issues," says Kim, "but when we've had them, PHS has been there to help us get through."

### College-bound with more responsibility

Now, Allison is planning to attend college, preferably out of state. More than other young adults, Allison will have greater responsibilities.

"We'll have a combined team effort in her health care," Kim says. "Allison does a lot of her own care right now: she is the expert. We've given her more responsibility, and she's handled it well.

"She plans to live in a residence hall and fully participate in all the activities associated with a typical college freshman. We are preparing to send a service dog with her to college instead of a nurse. Allison looked at schools in Montana, Washington, Chicago, Colorado, Iowa, and Minnesota. Colorado State is her first choice, then Gustavus Adolphus," Kim says.

We're cheering for you, Allison. Make all your dreams come true. ■



Allison will return to the comforts of home when on break from college next year.

## Exercise your right to vote

Many choices affecting our lives are made at the local level

*continued from page 2*

### Get involved

Whether it is health care, education, community outreach, or otherwise, think about the programs and services that your family considers important. Speak with providers, schools, advocacy groups, and others that impact you and your family's quality of life to hear their concerns and priorities with the state.

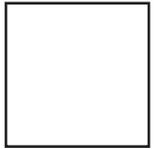
### Know who represents you

If you haven't done so already, find out the candidates running in your district by visiting: <http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/candidates/>. Ask them about topics that are important to your family. Educate these men and women on the programs that allow your child to thrive at home and your family to be active in the community.

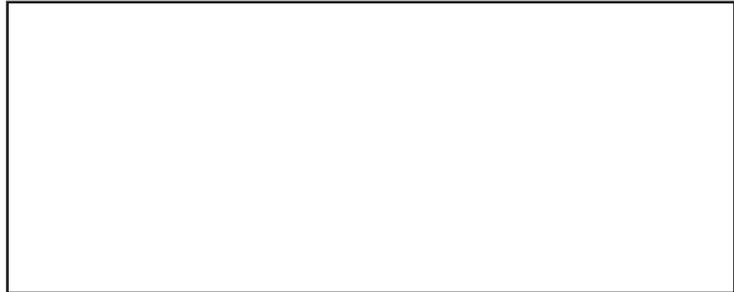
### Remember, your vote counts

Don't forget the importance of your vote right here in Minnesota. The next time a candidate knocks on your door, help them understand the unique challenges and amazing opportunities your family experiences on a daily basis. Ask that candidate what he or she will do to protect and promote what is important to you, and what he or she will do to deserve your vote. ■

*If you would like to learn more about PHS's legislative activities, please contact Cameo Zehnder at [ckzehnder@pediatrichomeservice.com](mailto:ckzehnder@pediatrichomeservice.com).*



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PHS has earned the Joint Commission's  
Gold Seal of Approval™



# The Pulse

news for our health care partners

It takes great people

Your vote does count

Handling equipment and  
supplies complaints

Allison is off to college

HopeKids and Hope Rocks  
in action