

FEBRUARY 2018

## St. Jude Family, Guest and Volunteer Services

# Companions make lunchtime easier

*This is the second article in our series about programs offered by St. Jude Family, Guest and Volunteer Services that directly support patient families.*

**N**avigating the bustling lunchtime crowds in Kay Kafe can be a little tricky for anyone. Trying to do so while pushing a wheelchair, holding a tray and keeping track of a small child or two can be stressful.

With suggestions from families, staff and St. Jude Family Advisory Council members, the Family, Guest and Volunteer Services staff developed the Kay Kafe Companion Program in 2013 to make these stressful situations a thing of the past.

Volunteers, known as Kay Kafe companions, are stationed at the cafeteria entrance to help patient

families with their needs during the peak lunch hours of 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The companions, who can be easily spotted in their bright yellow smocks, are there to help you find your way through Kay Kafe.

The program began with one lunchtime volunteer in the Kay Kafe on Wednesdays. Now, two companion volunteers are in the cafeteria at lunchtime, Monday through Friday, helping with whatever families need. Trained to look for caregivers who are struggling, the volunteers carry trays, help families get through the checkout line, reserve tables, return

trays and alert Food Service staff when a spill happens or condiments need to be restocked.

Kay Kafe companions also relay nutrition requests and special orders to the staff, and they often explain the cafeteria's layout and food options to new families. The Kay Kafe companions tackle simple problems, yet they make a huge difference.

One parent said: "It was the busiest day I've ever seen. There were a ton of spills, and it was chaotic. The volunteer in the yellow vest came over to help me and my two daughters. I was so happy, I almost cried. Where have these volunteers been all my life? And how can I let someone know just how happy I am they are here?"

One Kay Kafe Companion volunteer held a child so the mother could get her tray and personal belongings together. The mom said, "I'm so thankful you all are here!"

"This volunteer position sees little turnover, because the companions are well-trained and fully engaged in their roles," said Tricia Spence, manager of Volunteer Services. "They love helping the families, and it truly shows."

## Airport security help for patients

The Transportation Security Administration, or TSA, wants to help you get through airport security in a timely way with less hassle. They offer a service called TSA Cares that can make plane flights easier for travelers with disabilities, medical conditions or other special-assistance needs, including those carrying a medical device through the security screening.

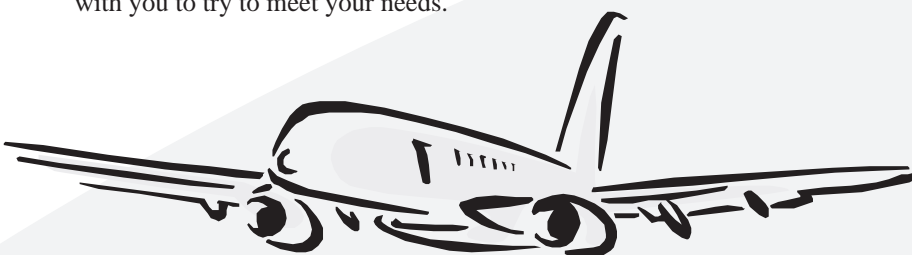
If you call TSA Cares before going to the airport, they can arrange for a passenger support specialist to meet you before the checkpoint, then that person will walk you through the security screening. Sometimes the passenger support specialist might even do the screening in private if the passenger is anxious or needs extra help. These individuals are specially trained to help passengers with disabilities and medical conditions.

To arrange for a passenger support specialist to meet you, call TSA Cares 72 hours before your flight. Dial 1-855-787-2227 weekdays from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Central Time or weekends and holidays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time, or email [TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:TSA-ContactCenter@tsa.dhs.gov). Spanish speakers are available, and automated information is offered in 12 languages.

If a passenger support specialist is not available, you may ask for a supervisory TSA officer at the checkpoint. If you forget to call ahead, you can still ask for a passenger support specialist when you arrive at the airport, and they will try to find someone who can provide this service.

TSA also offers a "TSA Notification Card" for individuals with disabilities or medical conditions. You can fill out this card and hand it to the TSA officer before going through the security screening. It doesn't exempt you from the screening, but it can help make the process smoother. These cards and other TSA information cards are available in the Linda R. Hajar Family Resource Center on the second floor of the Patient Care Center and in the St. Jude Travel Office.

If you need in-flight assistance or wheelchair assistance from the curb to the flight, please contact your airline before traveling. Generally, airlines will work with you to try to meet your needs.



## Mail room moves

The St. Jude Mail Service Center, also known as the mail room, will relocate Friday, February 9, from the 505 Building to the first floor of the Barry/Longinotti Building. This is the building next to Tri Delta Place. On the day of the move, there will be no transactions. Business will resume Monday, February 12.

Patient families can pick up mail in Patient Services weekdays from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. If you want to send packages, you can do so in the Mail Service Center. You can send packages and letters at regular postal rates, and they can offer you discounted FedEx rates.

If you have questions about the Mail Service Center move, call Ricky Anderson at 901-595-3333.



## Talking about Medicines

### Checking drug levels

By Shane Cross, PharmD, Pharmaceutical Services

St. Jude staff members perform drug-level tests to measure the amount of a certain drug in the blood. These tests are needed because some medicines can become toxic (harmful) if the level rises too high. Others will not work as well if the level is too low. In many cases, knowing drug levels allows your doctor to prescribe the most effective dose of medicine for your child while preventing harmful side effects.

Timing is important when it comes to drug levels. One common type of drug level is called a “pre-dose” or “trough” level. A blood sample for these levels needs to be taken before a patient takes a morning dose. So, for certain drugs, patients should wait to take their morning doses until after staff members take blood samples. However, the timing is not the same for all drugs. For example, levels for enoxaparin (called “anti-10a” levels) need to be taken four to six hours after a dose has been given.

Be sure to check with your child’s doctor, nurse or pharmacist for the exact details when your child needs a drug-level test. Afterward, you also can ask them to explain the results. Drug levels help the staff know if changes need to be made to your child’s dose of medicine.

### It’s not too late to get a flu shot

Flu season is still in full swing. The season started earlier than in past years, and it has been more severe, spreading to most of the country. Influenza, “the flu,” is a virus that causes symptoms like fever, chills, cough and body aches. It can easily pass from one person to the next. In many St. Jude patients the disease can be severe.

These are the best ways to prevent flu infections:

- Clean hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand cleaner.
- Avoid contact with those who have flu symptoms.
- Avoid crowds during flu season.
- **Get an annual flu shot.** Yes, this is still important in February.
- Take anti-viral medicines after exposure to people known to have the flu (under a doctor’s advice).
- Limit the number of visitors your child has at St. Jude and in housing.
- Discourage family members from coming to the hospital if they have flu symptoms (cough, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat, body aches, chills).

Having all members of the family vaccinated helps provide a circle of protection around the patient. It is one way to keep the virus from coming close to your child. St. Jude provides the seasonal flu vaccine to all patients, staff members, adult caregivers and patient siblings who are 3 years old or older.

The free flu shots for caregivers and siblings are offered Monday through Friday from 1–4 p.m. in the Patient Care Center Assessment and Triage area.

If you have questions about the vaccine, talk to your doctor or your child’s primary clinic staff.

*St. Jude Parents* is published on the first of each month by Family-Centered Care Services and Biomedical Communications. Your questions and comments are important to us. **We want to print advice and tips from St. Jude parents to other St. Jude parents.**

To share your ideas or to receive this newsletter by email, please call or email Alicia Huettel, RN, MSN, at 901-595-5453 ([parents\\_newsletter@stjude.org](mailto:parents_newsletter@stjude.org)) or Lois Young ([lois.young@stjude.org](mailto:lois.young@stjude.org)). To subscribe to an online version of this newsletter or to learn more about *St. Jude Parents*, visit [www.stjude.org/parents-newsletter](http://www.stjude.org/parents-newsletter). St. Jude is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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ATTENTION: If you speak another language, assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-866-278-5833 (TTY: 1-901-595-1040).

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-866-278-5833 (TTY: 1-901-595-1040).

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262 Danny Thomas Place  
Memphis, TN 38105-3678