

SickKids Foundation

Volunteer Humanitarian Award

1. How long and in what capacity have you known the Nominee?

Both Andrea Hoover and Caron Irwin have known Ashley for approximately two and a half years. Andrea is the Child Life Specialist on the Medical Short Stay Unit (4C) and Caron is the Entertainment and Donations Coordinator for the Child Life Department. Our positions are closely linked and we often work together on providing events and activities for the patients, as well as the distribution of donations hospital wide. Ashley has been eager and always makes herself available to help both of us in our roles when we work together and when we work in our separate capacities.

Ashley continues to be a valuable part of the team on 4C as she has been a volunteer there for 6 years. All the staff on 4C have comfort knowing that Ashley comes every Thursday afternoon, and they know that she will provide exceptional care for the patients and families. Patients who are regular visitors to 4C notice when she has to be absent for her shift – she is an integral part of the team! On a day when 4C is not as busy Ashley also offers a hand in the delivery and coordination of administrative tasks for the out patient clinics. She will prepare sticker packages and distribute them’ she restocks craft supply cupboards and delivers treasure box items that have been donated.

Ashley is not a scheduled volunteer of Caron’s but she always makes her self personally available to Caron when she is needed for help with events or donor administration. At the end of each month Ashley comes in and helps Caron complete 20-30 donor thank you cards. She is efficient and thorough at inputting the address and completing the mailings. She is also Caron’s right hand “women” for many events. Caron can call her a week before an event and if Ashley is available she will come in and help. She will help with all aspects of events – set up, advertising, facilitating and clean up.

2. How has the Nominee provided exceptional support and attention to families? (These values include the ability to engender a caring, supportive and welcoming environment for families, as well as understanding, respect and support the pivotal role parents play in the lives of their children and support both as appropriate)

Ashley demonstrates a compassionate approach with children of all ages. She embraces different cultures and promotes diversity by supporting parents in a non judgmental manner and support family –centered care philosophy.

When with patients Ashley has the ability to make families feel very trusting in terms of leaving their children with her. Ashley does her shift on 4C in the afternoon, when she arrives she makes a point to visit each family. She does this so that they are aware that she is available to provide parents the opportunity to go get lunch, coffee or take a break. She is aware that parents might be tired or need a break and by providing this support parents feel content leaving their child with someone they know and can trust. This break gives parents the opportunity to take time for themselves which helps refresh them for the rest of the day.

Ashley notices when families are lost in the halls of SickKids. She takes the initiative to stop them and ask if she can help them find where they are going. She is very respectful, professional and has a calm demeanor; she is also known to walk families right to their destination.

This holiday season the Child Life Department hosted a “Photos with Santa” event. Ashley helped with this event. This event was an opportunity for patients and families to get their photos taken with Santa. Ashley would always notice when the patient’s IV pole would be captured in the photo. Because she recognized that this photo was special to the families and an opportunity for them to do something that they would normally do outside of hospital. She would move the IV pole so it wasn’t in the picture insuring that the families walked away with a memory of meeting Santa not being in hospital.

3. How does the Nominee make the hospital experience easier for patients and their families? (These values include the ability to communicate in a supportive manner with patients and families; present a caring attitude; appreciate the emotional impact of illness and hospitalization on the child and family.)

Every time Ashley comes to volunteer at SickKids she makes a point of learning about the daily events that Child Life has organized. She always wants to make sure that the patients and families are aware of what is going on in the hospital the different activities they can take part in to make their day better.

The patients on 4C are restricted to the unit because of their treatment plans. Ashley seeks out the opportunity to bring the special event or activities to 4C. This provides the patients with the opportunity to still participate even though they can’t make it down to the Bear Theater, or the location where the event is taking place. An example of this would be when we did a Home Depot building workshop, Ashley was confident enough to bring a few Home Depot employees and the building materials into the 4C playroom so the kids on 4C could have the same experience that the kids who came to the event in the Bear Theater had.

One of the biggest challenges with hosting events in the hospital is promoting them and making sure that patients and families know what is going on. Whenever Ashley is helping Caron out with events her first priority is to walk around to every in-patient room and hand out flyers to

make sure that everyone knows what is going on. Ashley also takes the initiative to make herself aware of the patients who can't come down to the event and makes a point of bringing components of the event up to the patient. A perfect example would be when a patient on the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit (8B) who loved Build-a-Bear could not participate in the event because she could not make it down to the Bear Theater because she was in isolation. Ashley recognized that the patient would be missing out so she took the time to put all the necessary materials in a Ziplock bag and brought them up to the patient in their room so she could have her own private Build-a-Bear event.

4. What differentiates this individual or team apart from other SickKids volunteers?

Ashley has been volunteering at SickKids for over 8 years, she started at the age of 16 and has been a consistent volunteer ever since. The amount of time that she has given to the hospital is one of the many attributes that Ashley has that differentiates her from the other SickKids volunteers. It is obvious by the number of years that Ashley has given to SickKids that she is dedicated, but she also shows dedication each and every time she comes into the hospital to help out.

Last June the Child Life Department hosted the first ever SickKids Prom. Ashley arrived at 11:00AM to help Child Life with the set up. We were transforming the drab SickKids Rotunda into a trendy night club lounge. She worked hard with the team all afternoon, hanging fabric, moving in furniture and she diligently hung many piece of ribbon from the ceiling. After hours of hard work the space had been completely transformed and Ashley was the only volunteer that stayed for the entire 6 hour set up time. After the set up was complete Ashley decided to stay longer and helped out at the event. She wanted to see all the kids enjoying the magical night that we worked so hard to create. The Prom lasted until 10:00PM and Ashley offered to stay and help clean up. She made it known to Caron that she would be willing to help out with Prom 2010.

Ashley's years of service as a volunteer have given her confidence and the ability to take initiative every time she comes to volunteer. When she arrives on 4C for her shift she takes the time to organize the playroom. She also creates a craft idea and puts all the materials out for the kids to complete the craft. When kids have not completed their activity or craft and it is time for them to go home, Ashley has been known to put the project in a safe place so the child and complete at their next hospital visit. On 4C there is one incident that sticks out in Andrea's mind when Ashley made a huge impact in the life of a little builder. A young boy who visits on a weekly basis for all day treatment is a HUGE Wally fan. Ashley recognized this interest and offered the idea of creating his own personal Wally. They embarked on this project which ended up taking much longer than expected to create. The patient's treatment was finished for the day and the Wally was not finished yet, so Ashley let the boy know that she would find it a safe home in the hospital until his next visit. This project went on for another couple of weeks and every week Wally would go back into his safe place and would be waiting for the patient when

he arrived for his visit. The patient looked forward to each afternoon when he could spend time with Ashley working on his special creation. After 4 weeks of diligent, fun creating Ashley and the patient had finished making Wally – every so often Wally comes to the hospital with the patient to see Ashley and all his SickKids friends.

5. Demonstrate how the Nominee partners with staff to support patients and families.

Over the past 8 years Ashley has volunteered in a number of different areas throughout the hospital. In all of these areas Ashley has direct interaction with patients and families. Ashley became a volunteer at SickKids when she was 16 in 2002 as part of the summer program. She had her first volunteer experience on the Multi Organ Transplant Unit (6A). She returned to 6A the next summer as well as added the General Surgery Unit (5A/B) to her volunteer schedule. Then she began as a full year volunteer on the Medial Short Stay Unit (4C) in 2004, where she continues to volunteer once a week. She began volunteering with the Entertainment and Donations Coordinator in 2008 on an as needed basis. In 2009 Ashley added a second shift to her weekly volunteer schedule in the Emergency Department, and then a third shift on the Infectious Disease Unit (7B). Ashley also spends her extra time helping out in the Volunteer Resources office. Currently Ashley’s volunteer schedule consists of one shift on 4C, 7B, ED, and Special Events as well as helping a day a week with projects in Volunteer Resources. Basically Ashley is donating her time to SickKids to support our staff and most of all the patients and families everyday of the work week.

The vast amount of experience that Ashley has makes her the most diverse volunteer at SickKids. This is one of her greatest assets because she knows how to work within and relate to a variety of different families and health care teams throughout the hospital.

Even though Ashley has only been volunteering in the ED for couple of months when we asked Sandy the Child Life Specialist in ED to recount an experience she had one to share immediately. Sandy asked Ashley to accompany her into a procedure for a facial laceration to help support her role with the patient and family. The laceration was quite graphic and Ashley’s approach was naturally calm and she immediately interacted with the patient and engaged them in an “I Spy” game. This helped keep the patient calm and distracted allowing the team to set up for the procedure and do the procedure with conscious sedation. Sandy also commented on Ashley calm demeanor in her approach to assisting families in the ED. During every shift Ashley makes a point to introduce herself to each patient and family and asks the “what can I do to help you”. The staff appreciates her natural ability to do this with no need for recognition. And families are grateful that someone is taking the time in a busy, face pace environment to see how they are doing and to find out what they need. What a wonderful example of a SickKids volunteer showcasing family-centered care!

Ashley is well known to the Child Life Department and is considered an integral member of the team. So much so when there is an event that Child Life needs help with she is the first person we call. This holiday Ashley helped with a CHUBB employee engagement event, where 30 employees came in and do holiday crafts with patients through out the hospital. During the holidays Child Life is stretched very thin because of the many holiday donations and events that take place on top of their regular clinical work. Caron needed someone to help prepare and facilitate the volunteers for the event. Ashley was the first person that came to mind to help with this. Caron trusted Ashley to have each volunteer sign in and fill out the necessary paper work as well as have her walk around during the event and check up on the volunteers, both responsibilities that a staff member would normally have. Ashley did a fantastic job, so much so that the organizer from Chubb emailed and thanked Ashley for all her support and professionalism and mentioned that she was integral to making the event a success.

6. Why should the individual or team you are nominating receive a Volunteer Humanitarian Award?

It is hard to find a meaningful way to show our appreciation to someone who has given so much love, passion and dedication to volunteering at the hospital. Andrea and Caron often offer to treat Ashley to a coffee, give her a token of thanks during the holidays or write a note of gratitude for the wonderful work that she has done. Often these material gifts and notes of thanks do not feel adequate. We also are constantly trying to figure out how we can get the hospital to employ Ashley because we feel that this would be the best way that we could say thanks and recognize her commitment to SickKids. Andrea and Caron have come to realize that finding Ashley a paid position at SickKids is out of their hands. We feel that the best way we can say thanks is by nominating her for this very honourable and important award.

Humanitarian means being personally active and engaged in providing care for the wellbeing of others. We can't think of a better word to describe Ashley. She arrives for her shift always with a smile and the enthusiasm to make a difference. You would never know if Ashley was having a bad day, not feeling well or wanting to be anywhere else then at SickKids. It is hard to describe in words on a paper how much we appreciate Ashley and how important we feel it is for her to win this award. We trust that the examples we have provided will give her ample opportunity to be recognized by your committee.

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Re: Ashley Gelleny

I have worked on the Paediatric Medicine Program for more than 19 years as a social worker. I have had the opportunity to meet with children and families that Ashley Gelleny has provided volunteer services to. All the reports and discussions have always been positive and have highlighted her warmth, kindness and reliability. Specifically, parents are touched by how she is able to engage with patients of all abilities and developmental needs. Many parents and children request her specifically and look forward to her visits. Her involvement often makes a difficult admission more pleasurable. The interaction she has with the children is definitely important to them and very meaningful.

Ashley has provided over 1,000 hours of volunteer service to the Hospital for Sick Children. This is a remarkable accomplishment and demonstrates her truly compassionate character. It is my pleasure to endorse and support any recognition that she may receive for all her wonderful service to the children and Hospital.

Thank-you.

Sincerely,

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This letter is to recommend Ashley Gelleny for the Humanitarian award. Ashley is a committed volunteer at the Hospital for Sick Children and has currently volunteered for over 1000 hours. She has worked in a variety of places and settings at the hospital and is always ready for a new and challenging environment to work. One of the areas that she currently works in is the General Pediatrics area. We all look forward to the mornings that she is here. She is wonderful with all patients and families including our complex care population. This population consists of children of all ages who have multiple developmental delays. These children are usually non-verbal and typically have issues with cognitive and physical development. She is extremely warm and attentive to this population and never shies away from spending time with these children. It takes a special person to be so comfortable with these particular children and they can be quite challenging to work with. I know that there are many families who are very appreciative of the time that Ashley spends with their children. Ashley is a wonderful example of a Sickkids volunteer as she embraces different cultures and promotes diversity by supporting parents in a non judgmental manner which demonstrates that she supports our family centered care philosophy.

Ashley is a volunteer who goes above and beyond her role. She is always willing and excited to volunteer in any extra activities along with her current weekly commitment. Ashley was a big part of our Christmas season where she volunteered a large amount of time to help sort our Christmas donations. She also worked along side various social workers to create special presents for families in need. I have also seen Ashley help out on various volunteer resource projects. She is always reliable and extremely punctual. We can always rely on Ashley to volunteer when needed. I can easily say that Ashley is an integral part of the Sickkids family. We are very lucky to have a volunteer like Ashley.

Sincerely

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