



FITNESS FACTS

Exercise Program Helps Kids Get Fit

(NAPSA)—Exercise, games and fun should all be part of the experience of being a child. For children with special needs, however, these types of experiences are not always available. That's one reason the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Erie, Pennsylvania developed a wellness program to help patients improve their overall fitness.

"The members of the Myelodysplasia Specialty Care Team decided that our patients needed something extra to help them achieve some fitness goals," says Peg Harakal, MSN, CRNP, the hospital's myelodysplasia coordinator. "Laurie Hudson and Teresa Emerson from our physical therapy department came up with the idea for a fitness program here at the hospital."

Myelodysplasia refers to a group of genetic bone marrow disorders, and the Myelodysplasia Specialty Care Team was developed to insure that each patient received the best possible care. Every month, a Myelodysplasia Multidisciplinary Clinic is held at the hospital to address the unique needs of these patients.

The 10-week strengthening and conditioning program is two, one-hour sessions per week. Children with myelodysplasia and those with cerebral palsy attended.

Says Hudson, the children have a great time.

"Each participant has an individualized weight training program and performs other activities including wheelchair mobility," she explains. "We also do medicine ball exercises, activities to improve upper body strength, boxing and wheelchair basketball, which the kids love."



Shriners' patient, Nicole, enjoys some exercise as part of the fitness program at the Erie Shriners Hospital.

Kris Knost, registered dietitian at the Erie Shriners Hospital, does a program for the kids on proper nutrition.

The hospital staff also has a swimming program for children with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis to help them improve movement and reduce pain.

The Specialty Care Team members are looking at ways to expand the concept and come up with new ideas to help the children with day-to-day issues.

For more information on Shriners' network of 22 hospitals that provide medical care and services totally free of charge to children with orthopaedic problems, burns and spinal cord injuries, write to: Shriners International Headquarters, Public Relations Dept., 2900 Rocky Point Dr., Tampa, FL 33607, or visit the Web site at www.shrinershq.org. Treatment is provided to children under age 18 without regard to race, religion or relationship to a Shriner.

If you know a child Shriners can help, call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States, or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.