

Inspirational Ideas

A VOICE THAT WOWS THEM WHEREVER HE GOES

(NAPSA)—When Timmy Kelly is around, music can be heard in the central activity area at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital, where patients, staff and families gather to hear the talented youngster belt out Broadway tunes. One day in January, he astounded the crowd with surprise songs dedicated to Randal R. Betz, M.D., chief of staff, during his surprise birthday celebration.

An outgoing 9-year-old, Timmy has been a patient at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital since he was 18 months old. He was born prematurely at 26 weeks, diagnosed with mild cerebral palsy and retinopathy of prematurity (both retinas were detached).

He spent more than four months in intensive care after coming into the world. At birth, he weighed slightly less than two pounds. Today, though, he is a burst of sunshine whenever he returns to the hospital for additional treatment.

His most recent visit to Shriners was for surgery on his hamstrings. Releasing the hamstrings allows him to walk better and straighter. His follow-up therapy sessions are special treats for everyone, because he never leaves without singing a song or two. After hearing him carry a tune, an employee commented, "This kind of therapy is beneficial for all of us."

Timmy started taking voice lessons about one-and-a-half years ago after attending his first Broadway performance. He saw Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, starring Andrea McArdle. After the show, Timmy had the opportunity to meet McArdle backstage, where he sang for her. Once she heard his voice, she recommended that Timmy take lessons with her voice coach in Philadelphia.



Recuperating from surgery, Shriners' patient Timmy Kelly serenades Randal Betz, M.D., on his birthday.

Timmy's personal appearances have taken off. One of the highlights has been singing the national anthem at the home opener of the Camden Riversharks baseball team at Campbell Field in New Jersey.

He also auditioned to sing at the home games of the NFL Philadelphia Eagles and was selected as an alternate from a pool of more than 400 people. Besides that, he recently participated with the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital staff on radio station WNWR (1540-AM) during the taping of a special needs program.

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.