

Education for Every Child



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BKD offices collaborate with Riley Children’s Foundation to benefit hospital school program.

Inside the cancer center classroom at Riley Hospital for Children at Indiana University Health (Riley), baking soda, bowls and miscellaneous supplies are scattered about the tables. The kids could tell you what that means: It’s Friday and they get to make “slime.”

Each year, roughly 1,500 patients receive education during hospitalization through the Riley School Program, which is the second largest hospital education program in the country. On Fridays in the cancer center, patients make slime, learn a new activity or participate in a community partnership-focused activity that might have second graders and high schoolers working together. One of the traits that makes Riley unique compared to other hospitals is they see patients for schooling the day after a child is admitted.

Sara Twining, a senior associate in Indianapolis, has had the honor of volunteering with Riley and working with Kristin Wikel, the Riley School Program manager. Kristin explains the freedom and flexibility to see kids the day after they’re admitted help minimize disruption from the child’s normal routine, support the child’s and family’s education plan and build partnerships with the student’s public or private school.

“Without the Riley School Program, some kids might not finish school or would seriously fall behind. Everything Kristin is doing and all we’re doing at BKD to support Riley is directly to benefit the school program and support education at the hospital,” says Sara.

Trusted advisors provide audit services and volunteer opportunities

Riley Children’s Foundation has received audit services from BKD and has been a long-time client of BKD National Not-for-Profit (NFP) Group. Giving back to Riley is an important Community Engagement Council (CEC) initiative for BKD’s offices in Indiana, located in Indianapolis and Bloomington. Sara sits on the CEC for Indianapolis and also is thoroughly involved with the community in general, serving as a deacon for her church and helping with the youth group. When working in BKD’s NFP sector, she explains, opportunities for service aren’t hard to come by.

“I’m passionate for working in areas that impact youth. I’ve always been active with my church, but I’ve been given so many more opportunities to get involved with the community since coming to BKD.”

In February 2019, the **BKD Indianapolis office** set aside several days for BKDers to come into the training room and assemble supply kits, which aid in the school program’s efforts. The kits contain basic school supplies, like pencils and scissors, but different things go into specific bags depending on the children they’re going to. The Indianapolis and Bloomington offices assembled 295 kits to be used by patients in the program.

Another BKD volunteer event, a school supply drive held in July 2019, resulted in 257 items donated to Riley. Between the two Indiana offices, 140 items and \$385 were donated. Associate Ramses Aguayo, who also sits on the CEC, coordinated the event at the Indianapolis office and used the monetary contributions to purchase supplies.

“I was in charge of setting up the supply drive, collecting donations and delivering the supplies to the teachers in the hospital,” says Ramses. “Education is a vital part of any child’s life, so being a part of this organization is truly rewarding.”

BKD Foundation gives hospital a green-light future

Currently, only 11 staff members make up the Riley School Program team, and one teacher typically covers 1 to 48 students, or two units, a day. The school year runs from July to June, with an eight-week summer break. Inpatient teachers have served almost 400 kids this year alone, from July to October, and outpatient teachers have served nearly 200.

One of the four in-house classrooms at Riley resides inside patient rehab, where individuals benefit from intensive therapy every single day, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy and school.

“The entire patient rehab program is very intense and highly specialized. Kids have to receive school every day in the rehab unit, and we currently have one teacher running the entire unit. She not only provides education for the entire unit, but administers testing, attends all of the team conferences, speaks at other schools and educates families,” says Kristin.

Near the end of August 2019, the Riley Children’s Foundation received a \$50,000 check from **the BKD Foundation** to support the Riley School Program. The funds will go toward bringing in additional support for Riley’s patient rehab unit.

One of the school program’s staff tracking measures is a red-light/green-light system where staff members mark their own light depending on how they’re doing.

“Our rehab teacher has been in the red for so long, meaning she’s unable to get her work done during the day or has too many patients or too many meetings. Using funds to help give her support will be beneficial on many levels for our staff and children,” says Kristin.

A commitment to community, health and education

The Indianapolis CEC encourages community involvement and recognizes employees for their contributions, and participating in the CEC has positioned Sara as a valuable resource for community engagement. She’s taken initiative to extend invitations to volunteer events to coworkers throughout the office.



BKDers Sheryl Macke, Bob Munson, Courtney Blocher, Jill Hardesty and Debbie Wellin volunteer with Riley teachers during STEM session at Riley hospital late October 2019.

“It’s helped me get others included in things they may not have had a reason to otherwise. It’s helped encourage interaction and connections with people I work with but might not see on a daily basis,” she says.

Moving forward, BKD will have volunteers assisting Riley with their science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum. Twice a month, the teachers and their students venture into the Riley Simon Family Tower, a nine-story inpatient building, for lessons. The STEM sessions are coordinated by Indianapolis Children’s Museum and Riley School Program teachers and bring additional volunteer opportunities for BKD.

After the first session, one Riley teacher remarked, “It was an incredible experience to implement these STEM activities and see the joy in our patients today. I was so impressed with the flexibility and positivity present in every individual, which is a sign of incredible leadership and an effective team—and I’m so grateful for our partnerships with the Children’s Museum and BKD.”

Giving back to one of the nation’s leading children’s hospitals has been an exciting journey for those involved throughout BKD.

“It’s hard to put an exact number on how many BKDers get involved,” says Sara. “Different people participate in the events each time. I would hope it’s touched a lot of people in Indianapolis and Bloomington.”



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