

Disney Characters Make the Rounds with a Special Dose of Magic

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Feb. 3, 2012 – Drawing wisdom from Mary Poppins, a dedicated team of Disney Cast Members is using a dose of Disney magic much like “a spoonful of sugar” to help the medicine go down.

Throughout the year, Disney’s Animals, Science and Environment team ventures into local hospitals to spread cheer at the Walt Disney Pavilion at Florida Hospital for Children and Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children.

Accompanied by all sorts of exotic animals on these special visits, Disney animal keepers and education instructors bring the joy and wonder of wildlife to young patients who get a therapeutic benefit from being able to focus on the fun at hand.

Special visitors make the rounds as well; Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Pluto, Donald Duck and Chip ‘n’ Dale have all been known to appear toward the end of the program.

“When Mickey Mouse walks into the room, you don’t feel like you’re in a hospital anymore,” says Gabriel Burns, a Cast Member who travels along on many of these journeys. “It’s really incredible. Pluto, Chip ‘n Dale and other Disney characters have the unique ability to help the kids forget what’s ailing them.”

“I’ve seen Pluto lay on the floor next to a 4-year-old cancer patient during his chemotherapy because the young boy typically holds his Pluto plush doll on the floor during his treatments,” Burns says. “The child was smiling, and his mom was crying because her son was happy.”

Disney has a rich heritage of compassionate support of children that can be traced back to the early days of the company. Walt Disney frequently visited children in hospitals and guided company giving toward supporting children in need.

This tradition continues today through fulfilling wish trips and accommodating children who are affected by life-threatening medical conditions. While granting Disney-related wish requests remains a key initiative at Disney Parks, many Disney wishes are fulfilled in hospitals when illness prevents a child from leaving.

From sending a child’s favorite Disney character to visit at their bedside, to hand-delivering a Disney movie to enjoy with the family, opportunities that extend the magic of Disney to children in hospitals are as abundant as a child’s imagination.