

ABOVE: Andrew Maung smiles as he views a Lego replica of the new Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. His mom, Vivian Tsuei, did med school rotations at Children's when it was in Oakland. OPPOSITE PAGE: The view from the 40th Street Bridge, with Lawrenceville in foreground, includes the 10-story John G. Rangos Sr. Research Center. The center (behind parking garage) can house 70 principal investigators working in genomics, cellular imaging, developmental biology, neuroscience, and other fields related to pediatric medicine. (More photos of Children's on p. 14.)

"I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS A HOSPITAL"

TOURING THE NEW CHILDREN'S

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JOHN ALTDORFER

A late-spring drizzle paints the city streets gunmetal gray as Karen Roche rests on a sofa in a quiet corner of the lobby of the new Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC. In just a few minutes, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine alumni from as far back as the Class of 1950 will join this 1975 graduate for their first look at the showcase hospital's sprawling 10-acre campus in Pittsburgh's Lawrenceville neighborhood.

"I can't wait to see everything," she says in anticipation. "It's going to be such a change from the Children's I remember."

Now a plastic surgeon in Pittsburgh, Roche cherishes the memories of physicians who mentored her nearly four decades ago and the young patients she cared for at the old Children's, just a few yards down Cardiac Hill from where Pitt Stadium once perched above Oakland. Yet, her most intense recollection of the place is a night she spent there as a mother, before her days as a medical student.

"My son had hernia surgery at the other Children's," she says. "He was 3 years old, and there were maybe two rooms where a parent could stay with a child overnight. I was an undergrad at Pitt then, but I knew enough to ask for one of those rooms.

"Now there are places for parents to sleep in all the rooms. This place seems more like home than a hospital."

After the tour group enters a soaring four-story atrium where giant, multicolor, neon-light dragonflies and butterflies flutter on the walls, Albert Rolle (MD '65) pauses to reflect. The Miami native is a veteran of the Korean War, where he gained experience as a surgical technician before enrolling in the medical school. He's now retired after 30 years of general surgery practice near Washington, D.C.

"The Children's Hospital in Oakland was wonderful for its time," he says. "There was no better place in the area for kids who needed the best medical care." Still, he points out, the Children's of his day was, architecturally, an institutional workplace, designed to accommodate the needs of doctors and nurses.

"What you notice about this place is that it was created for kids and their families."

The shift of focus is obvious to even the youngest tour participants. Born just a few weeks after the new Children's opened in May 2009, Sophie Maung immediately locks her big, dark eyes on the blue, green, yellow, and purple discs of a mobile that hovers over the hospital's lobby. They look like a fleet of playful spaceships. Tucked in her mother's arms, Sophie peeks at stuffed Dr. Seuss and S*esame Street* characters sitting on pint-size chairs in the library and at fish swimming through glass tubes that join a series of aquariums in a waiting room. Throughout the nearly 90-minute walkabout, she remains quietly interested in the surroundings.

"We're taught in medical school that distractions help take away some of the anxiety for parents if their kids are calm during a hospital stay," says Sophie's mom, Vivian Tsuei (MD '00), who is a general pediatrician in New Haven, Conn. "My little girl got that right away."

For Bill Werner (MD '75), a retired radiologist in St. Mary's, Pa., the tour is a journey to a place that no longer exists as he remembers it. After completing a diagnostic radiology residency at St. Francis Hospital, he accepted a pediatric radiology fellowship at the now-shuttered DeSoto Street site. In 2002, when it became clear that St. Francis was closing, UPMC entered into a contract to purchase the Lawrenceville property rather than construct a new pediatric hospital in Oakland as it had planned. Part of St. Francis was razed to make way for the new Children's. At one point, Werner crosses a line that connects his past to Children's present—a metal strip in the floor that demarcates the remaining section of St. Francis that was integrated with the current structure.

Whatever their links to days gone by at the old Children's Hospital, the alumni share the opinion that this tour is more than a trip down memory lane.

"There's no nostalgia here," says internist Marvin Levick (MD '55) in front of a mural that traces in words and photos the 120-year history of Children's Hospital in its many incarnations and locations.

"I can't believe this is a hospital. It almost feels like a camp. And that takes away a lot of a parent's pain of having a sick kid." ■







ABOVE: Exterior view of patient rooms from 45th Street. The private rooms include beds for parents and amenities like Internet access. RIGHT: Youngsters captivated by the bubble fountain in the Emergency Department. The hospital's ED and trauma center have 41 beds; Children's is the only Level 1 pediatric trauma facility in the region.





FAR LEFT: Fish tanks, red wagons, and popcorn help ease stress in the third-floor ambulatory waiting area. LEFT: Butterfly wall.



LEFT: A four-story atrium on the sixth floor, where giant neon butterflies and dragonflies flutter along the walls, serves as a town square for families. RIGHT: Staff and patients' families stream through the hospital entrance.

