



Contributor

My Infertility Journey A Benefis Pediatrics Provider's Story

“After Josh and I had been married for four years, we started trying to have a family. But as we watched friends easily conceive over the course of a year, we started wondering what was wrong with us.”

Sara Goroski

The ability to conceive was never something Sara Goroski and her husband, Josh, ever thought they would have to worry about, and never did they imagine it would take years to start their family. While journey of infertility is a private one, Sara is graciously sharing her story with others as someone who believes in the vitality of a Women's & Children's Center, better serving patients like her and her daughters.

Sara and her children will not only receive Women's Health and Pediatrics care at the new center; it will also become home to Sara's medical practice within Benefis Pediatrics. **For a while, seeing new babies all the time was incredibly painful for Sara.** Now, she shows us that we can find strength in our vulnerabilities. Here is her story:

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“After Josh and I had been married for four years, we started trying to have a family. But as we watched friends easily conceive over the course of a year, we started wondering what was wrong with us. We turned to Kelly Timmer at Benefis for help, and even though we went in feeling discouraged, she gave us hope.

We held onto that hope through nearly 20 emotional fertility treatments that led to two pregnancies, and two devastating miscarriages – one at 16 weeks, and one at 8 weeks. To be a pediatric provider and see new babies almost every day...it was heartbreaking returning to work after my miscarriages. We grieved and felt alone; we didn’t know anyone else who had gone through the same thing.

IVF – in vitro fertilization – became our only option if we wanted to have a family. The IVF process is not easy. It’s a long and trying journey, and the worst part is, there are no guarantees.

We got pregnant on our first try with IVF. We had our beautiful baby girl, Charley, in March of 2015. That was four years after starting our infertility journey. Charley turned our hope into belief, and we got pregnant again through IVF and had another baby girl, Alana, this past February.

I look forward to watching my girls grow up and develop and seeing what they become. Every day, they surprise me with the things they do. I look forward to teaching them things and helping them explore new things in the world around them. I look forward to seeing them develop relationships with friends.

The existence of a Women’s & Children’s Center would have made the infertility process more comfortable for me, and for Josh. Hopeful parents-to-be must travel out of town for IVF, but because Benefis coordinates all care before and after the procedure, we spent years being cared for by Kelly Timmer and the Benefis Women’s Health team.

Notably, during pregnancy my women’s health provider would have been able to walk down the hall and talk to my child’s future pediatrician about my pregnancy and any potential issues. That collaboration promotes better overall care for the families in our community.”

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Sara Goroski





Women's & Children's Center Donor Match Program

At Benefis Health System, we are embarking on a journey to build an outpatient Women's and Children's center to serve the families of northcentral Montana.

Innovative, full of possibility and potential – this new center and the younger people of northcentral Montana have these qualities in common, and we want to work together to achieve something great.

As the Benefis Women's and Children's Center capital campaign kicks off, we are challenging some of the younger members of our community to contribute to the project through a Donor Match Program.

Every dollar up to \$100,000 donated by those aged 21-40 will be matched, effectively doubling the impact of dollars given by young professionals. There is no minimum donation to participate in the Donor Match Program; any amount makes a difference.

For those who give a cumulative \$500 towards the match between now and December 31, 2020, the donor's name will also be featured on a special Young Professionals Donor Wall in the new Benefis Women's and Children's Center to inspire future generations.

This is an especially compelling option for aspiring philanthropists who are determined to start a positive habit – in this case, the habit of giving.

"I made my first donation when I was an intern," recalls a twenty-something Benefis Foundation donor. "It's empowering to know I'm part of positive advancements in our region. With the Women's and Children's Center, I get to see my investment come to life in the form of both the building and the lives touched by it, and all those people are my friends, family, and neighbors."

Now, Benefis Foundation is making it easier than ever to become a donor – contributions may be spread out over several months to reach your cumulative donation. Online, you can designate a set amount to be debited from your bank account at the same time each month. It's giving, simplified.

Start contributing now, and monthly contributions of approximately \$28/month would add up to \$500 by the end of 2020.

To join other young professionals in the Women's and Children's Center Donor Match Program, visit Benefis.org/DonorMatch.



More than \$650,000 Raised at Mayfaire for Benefis Women's & Children's Center

A new fundraising bar was set at Mayfaire 2019, which raised more than \$650,000 for the new Benefis Women's and Children's Center. Northcentral Montana is that much closer to accessing a state-of-the-art center focused on the care and comfort of its children and their caretakers.

Currently, our women's and children's services are spread across multiple buildings on separate campuses. This makes it challenging for families to navigate multiple appointments, creating boundaries that go beyond convenience – this physical separation creates boundaries for kids and their caretakers to achieve optimal wellness.

The distance blocks the ability to achieve synergies in care across the related services, necessary for the best possible health outcomes. **This dedicated center will truly change the way women and children in our community access care, and the way they view the care they receive.**



Notably, this year marked Benefis Foundation's 20th Mayfaire. Over the years, Mayfaire events have raised more than \$5 million to improve and enhance healthcare services throughout northcentral Montana. The Mayfaire charity golf tournament at Meadow Lark Country Club drew 58 teams of golfers. Ultimately, a team from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Montana won the 2019 Mayfaire Cup.

At this year's gala, The Surf City Allstars entertained the crowd with a tribute to The Beach Boys, and mobile bidding was introduced for the silent auction. Bidders were instantly notified if they were outbid, which created lively competition between guests. It also allowed supporters to bid remotely if they were unable to attend the event.

More than 60 area businesses generously supported Mayfaire and the Benefis Women's and Children's Center. **Thank you to all sponsors, donors, and volunteers who made Mayfaire 2019 a smashing success.**



To support the new Benefis Women's and Children's Center, please donate online at Benefis.org/Foundation or use the enclosed giving envelope.



Shirlee Thiebes' Legacy Lives Through Gift of Life Insurance

It was early in Shirlee Thiebes' service as a founding member of Benefis Foundation Board of Directors when she attended a meeting where she learned about the benefits of gifting life insurance.

Shirlee was passionate about helping members of her community receive the best healthcare possible, and the option to gift a life insurance policy made it easy for her to fulfill her desire to help.

After a long and wonderful life, Shirlee passed away in January 2019. Her gift of life insurance is helping Benefis to continue the legacy of providing care to all, which was so important to her.

Shirlee knew the many advantages of donating life insurance.

- Life insurance offers the donor the ability to make a significant ultimate gift that might otherwise be unattainable.
- As a donor, your legacy lives on through your gift of life insurance, and you enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping others.
- During your lifetime, you can continue to support programs and services that are important to you and your family, just as Shirlee did. Your personal assets remain intact and your family will not suffer a loss of capital; you just need sufficient funds to keep a policy in force, or you can donate a paid-up policy.
- The premiums you pay may be tax-deductible. Gifts of paid-up policies qualify for special tax advantages in Montana through the Montana Endowment Tax Credit.
- Gifts of life insurance are paid promptly and are not subject to delays of probate.
- Gifts of life insurance come in many forms and are easy to arrange. Benefis Foundation staff is happy to discuss this type of gift with you and your insurance agent.

Shirlee wanted her gift to support any area of need in providing care to our communities, but gifts can be designated to specific services of the donor's choice, such as Benefis Peace Hospice of Montana, Benefis Sletten Cancer Institute, or they can establish or support one of the many healthcare-related scholarships administered by Benefis Foundation.

To learn more about donating life insurance,
contact Benefis Foundation at foundation@benefis.org.

Camp Francis is Always There for Me: In the Words of a Camp Francis Alumni

Katie Schweitzer spent eleven summers at Camp Francis, and this summer she's going back for number twelve. Here's why.

"When I lost my brother, I was a scared 10-year-old who was so lost in grief but afraid to let it show – I didn't want to upset my parents more than they already were. I was scared that if I didn't seem like the strong big sister, my family would fall apart. **Once I had bottled up those feelings for so long, I started to worry about what would happen if I let them out.**

Going to camp taught me that it is okay to feel, and taught me healthy ways to deal with grief. Most of all, it gave me a place to cry and be sad in a protected environment, and I learned it was okay to show my sadness around my family.

From the time I was a camper, I had always wanted to become camp nurse. I was a teen volunteer for four years, a cabin leader for five years, and in 2018 I was finally able to reach my goal of being camp nurse. This will be my twelfth year at Camp Francis!

I go back to Camp Francis every year to see the lifelong friends I have made, to feel connected to those I have lost, and to give others the same hope that Camp Francis gave me as an 11-year-old who had just lost her brother. It allows me to cry and deal with things that have happened over the past year and be present in the moment. I come out of that week every year refreshed and ready to take on another year.

I think camp is so successful because it blends being a kid and having fun with tackling how to face intense emotions. There is always time for kids to play, and just be kids with others who are going through similar situations. It takes into account how children grieve differently than adults. They need time to process and just let loose. Camp helps kids stop being overwhelmed by grief and start the healing process.

If I picture my life without Camp Francis, I think I would have been a very troubled teenager. I have realized that most kids we see at camp with behavioral problems are acting out because they have no idea how to cope with such overwhelming feelings of grief. I feel as though I would have acted out and coped by using unhealthy practices without the skills I have learned over the years.

There comes a point where you are unable to compensate anymore and just have to find an outlet, good or bad. **I don't see myself being able to apply myself enough to become a nurse without Camp Francis."**

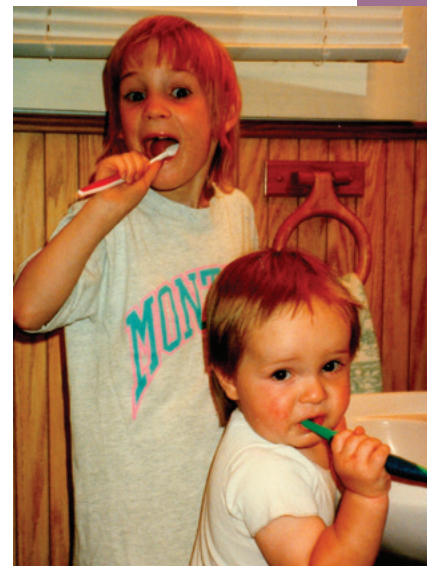
“ Camp Francis has taught me lifelong skills of how to handle grief and to not turn to unhealthy practices. This still rings true and every year I take away another lesson and perspective to help me live life to the best I am able. ”

Katie Schweitzer

“ Camp helps kids stop being overwhelmed by grief and start the healing process. ”

Katie Schweitzer

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Katie Schweitzer pictured with her brother who passed away when she was 10-years-old.

QUESTION FOR KATIE:

How have you seen philanthropy at work over your years at Camp Francis?

"The easier question to answer would probably be where haven't I seen philanthropy during camp. Everyone who has been involved in this amazing program has come with the desire to help these kids get to be kids again. It is such an amazing thing to witness these scared, grieving, and shy kids arrive on Sunday, and then watch them blossom over the week as they make new friends, have fun, and learn it is okay to feel and cry.

The best part, for me, is the final day when the campers' families pick them up and get to see the dramatic changes in these children. I have had many families express how truly thankful they are for this camp and everyone behind it, because they finally get to see parts of their kids that were temporarily lost while overwhelmed with grief. I feel so honored to have been a part of this program and to have met the people who volunteer a week or more of their professional and personal lives to help improve the lives of grieving children."

“ This one week a year helps me to get through life with hope and be able to look forward to tomorrow. ”

Katie Schweitzer

Katie is one of **108 active volunteers** who offered their time and talents to make the Children's Bereavement Program a success in 2018.



GRIEF SUPPORT FOR KIDS WHO NEED HELP NAVIGATING THEIR FEELINGS

Camp Francis is a five-day camp for children ages six to twelve who are grieving the loss of a loved one. This special camp is a free service to families made possible through donations to the Children's Bereavement Program, offered through Benefis Peace Hospice.

Over the course of five days in the Little Belt Mountains, children begin to open up so the healing can begin. The ways you can help vary, from sponsoring a camper or donating to helping buy items on the campers' wish lists.

YES, I'll support children from my community grieving after losing a loved one!

Please accept my gift to the Children's Bereavement Fund:

- in the enclosed giving envelope
- as an online donation given today at Benefis.org/Foundation