With enthusiastic assistance from a pair of young honorary guests, the ribbon was cut last month on The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Speech & Audiology. The new 6,000 square foot Center is home to the Hospital’s comprehensive inpatient and outpatient speech, hearing and language services, as well as dedicated assistive technology rooms.

> continued on page 3
Dear Friends,

Here we are, one year since the opening of our magnificent new $65.3 million inpatient building, and what a year it’s been. Our inpatient census has soared, and we’ve accommodated our growth with a comprehensive staffing plan. We’ve received tremendous feedback from our patient families, as well as from the physicians and clinicians who refer patients to us. We were even able to assist in caring for several medically complex children displaced following Superstorm Sandy. Our vision for our new facility has been fulfilled, and we are already looking to the future of children’s healthcare with an eye on how Blythedale can best serve the unique needs of children with complex medical conditions.

As you see from our cover story, we just cut the ceremonial ribbon on the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Center for Speech and Audiology. This state-of-the-art Center, solely dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of wide-ranging speech pathology and audiology issues, and the provision of assistive technology therapies, will serve not only our inpatients, but the community at large, as well.

We take pride in every undertaking, and feel deep gratitude to all who have helped us improve the journey for countless children. We look to 2013 with optimism and enthusiasm, and hope you will continue to join us on this very gratifying path. Best wishes to you and yours for a healthy and prosperous new year.

Sincerely,

Larry Levine
President and CEO

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Feeding Therapy... Juliet’s Story

When Juliet turned one, much to her parents’ dismay, she suddenly lost all interest in eating. This was of particular concern to her physician father, who was well aware of the serious complications associated with chronic feeding disorders.

Following a lengthy testing process, Juliet was diagnosed with eosinophilic esophagitis (an allergic inflammatory disorder), characterized by abdominal pain, vomiting, refusal to eat and failure to thrive.

Once a diagnosis was in place, Juliet, who had associated eating pain for most of her life, needed to re-learn how to eat. Her parents were greatly concerned by her weight loss, and according to her father, Dr. Eric Weinberg, they knew that time was of the essence, in order to prevent Juliet from needing to be fed via a gastrostomy tube inserted directly into her stomach.

With a handful of frustrating experiences under their belt (such as a therapist telling them to “just relax and she’ll eat”), Dr. Weinberg and his wife researched the subject, and found Blythedale’s Speech Therapy department.

“Blythedale immediately recognized the diagnosis and knew what had to be done,” he said. Juliet’s feeding therapist, Gina DiSalvatore Longarzo, implemented an initial protocol where Juliet was able to watch her beloved Sesame Street DVDs when she was eating. Juliet quickly learned that to watch the DVDs, she would have to continue eating. A small step, but one the Weinbergs implemented at home with immediate success.

Juliet has seen Gina for two years on an outpatient basis, and while Juliet’s food refusal was deeply ingrained, according to Dr. Weinberg, “Gina is always one step ahead, changing things up and reassuring us. She taught Juliet to self-feed and use utensils, and today, Juliet eats great meals and is back on the growth chart.”

“Nothing compares to the stress level of watching your child waste away,” he said. “Gina literally changed our lives.”
New Center  
(continued from page 1)

Designed to serve the wide-ranging needs of children ranging from birth through age 19, the Center features thematic treatment rooms, areas for small and large group therapy, and state-of-the-art equipment, including assistive technology rooms specifically designed for speech and occupational therapies.

The Center is named in honor of The Stavros Niarchos Foundation, which made a generous $500,000 gift to Blythedale this year.

“We are very grateful to The Stavros Niarchos Foundation for making this great moment possible,” said Blythedale Board Chair Owen Gutfreund, during a ceremony to commemorate the opening of the Center. “What we see now is that state-of-the-art speech and audiology facilities, match the exceptional level of care provided by our therapists.”

Patients receive services on an inpatient, outpatient and Day Hospital basis, for comprehensive care ranging from high-tech nutritional support and feeding therapy, to more common speech and hearing evaluations and treatments.

Blythedale offers the largest cadre of hospital-based pediatric therapists in New York State. There are currently 24 expertly trained speech therapists on staff at Blythedale.

“Our therapists combine their enormous clinical skills with the utmost compassion, making sure that each child’s unique needs are met,” said Blythedale President and CEO Larry Levine. “We are very proud to be able to provide these comprehensive services to the greater metropolitan region, in this extraordinary new facility.”

The ceremony to officially open the new Center for Speech and Audiology was attended by representatives of The Stavros Niarchos Foundation, local officials, Blythedale Board members, staff and patient families.

> continued on page 6
The Dreyfus Golf & Tennis Classic for Blythedale, held this fall, was a great success, raising $225,000 for Blythedale’s Parent Transportation Program. “We are grateful to the dedicated sponsors and players for the success of this event,” said Larry Levine, Blythedale President & CEO. “Helping families throughout a child’s hospitalization through the Parent Transportation Program is absolutely vital to our mission.” The event marked the 16th annual installment of the fundraiser and was held on the elegant grounds of Sunningdale Country Club in Scarsdale. The Classic featured a full day of golf, a putting contest, raffle, auction and dinner. Stanley Cup Champion Mike Richter returned to serve as the event’s Honorary Chair and auctioneer, along with Event Co-Chairs Carmine Lippolis and Dan Kortick, and committee members Andrew Castellano, Kevin Coffey, Merwin Haskel, David Osborn, Tom Purcell, Heidi Schwartz and Leslie Weissman.

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For more information, please contact Christina Caras at (914) 831–2512 or christinac@blythedale.org.
In the Spotlight
Blythedale’s Early Childhood Center

Blythedale’s Early Childhood Center (ECC) provides a specialized program to children (from birth through age five) with complicated medical needs who are inpatients and Day Hospital patients at the Hospital.

More than 100 children attend Blythedale’s enriching and vibrant program daily. Approximately half of these children are current inpatients at Blythedale, while the balance is comprised of children who come to Blythedale daily to participate in the program. Infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children receive highly individualized attention in the program’s five classrooms, through an educationally based curriculum that includes art, music, reading, free play, and massage therapy.

This unique Center will be a primary beneficiary of the second phase of the Hospital’s extensive capital improvements and renovations that are now underway and scheduled for completion in late 2013.

The program will expand with new classrooms to serve more students in the coming years. According to Maureen Desimone, Blythedale’s Chief Operating Officer, Blythedale has an immediate need for another preschool classroom, while a second classroom for infants is also a priority.

“Our patients typically need a variety of therapies throughout the day, so having an Early Childhood Center within the Hospital makes that possible.”

Depending on each child’s specific needs, physical, occupational and speech therapy services may be provided in the classroom, to facilitate attainment of appropriate developmental goals.

While a wide variety of diagnoses are seen in the ECC, ranging from complications of premature birth to spectral disorders such as autism, Blythedale’s highly trained staff provides customized care designed to help each child reach their maximum potential.

The ECC depends on charitable donations to fund the vast majority of the program’s operations, and we are thrilled to recognize our growing family of supporters:

- Neuberger Berman Foundation
- Entergy Charitable Foundation
- Macy’s
- CVS Caremark Corporation
- Wal-Mart Foundation/Sam’s Club

Creating a Legacy for Blythedale

We are pleased to announce the launch of our Planned Giving program and The 1891 Society. This exclusive group of donors follows the tradition of generosity and compassion that began in 1891 when a group of charitable women created programs to improve the health of children, forming the beginnings of Blythedale as we know it today. The 1891 Society includes individuals who have made their intentions to leave a legacy gift to the Hospital known, as well as deceased members of our community who included Blythedale in their estate plan.

In October we launched this new program to inspire donors to make Blythedale a part of their legacy, and to recognize the members of our community that have already done so.

Planned gifts are a wonderful way for a donor to leave a legacy and support Blythedale in perpetuity. There are many opportunities available, including a bequest under a will, a gift under a trust, through a life insurance policy or retirement plan, or by setting up a charitable remainder trust or a charitable lead trust. We encourage you to speak with your tax or financial advisor if you are considering a planned gift.

At Blythedale, every gift helps to ensure that the Hospital can continue to offer the exceptional level of care that medically fragile children deserve. Making a legacy gift to the Hospital helps to ensure this level of care far into the future.

For more information on our Planned Giving program and The 1891 Society, please contact our Director of Individual Giving, Carey Dalton, at 914-831-2513 or careyd@blythedale.org.
Stephanie Halpin, mother to four-year-old Brett, spoke of the extraordinary difference Blythedale made in their lives, enabling Brett to advance from being diagnosed with a spectral disorder to preparing for kindergarten with his peers next fall.

“Blythedale has truly given Brett a gift,” she said. “He now has a solid foundation and the opportunity to grow and develop into so much more than he would have. I can’t imagine what our lives would be like without the support of Blythedale. There is not a day that goes by that I am not thankful for the care and direction we receive here.”

For more information on Speech and Audiology services at Blythedale, please call (914) 831-2560.

More than 100 local Girl Scouts, under the direction of Troop 2746 from Chappaqua, participated in a full-day workshop designed to provide attendees with an inside look at the services provided to patients of Blythedale Children’s Hospital. The girls rotated through hands-on sessions with physical, occupational, and speech therapists, as well as nutritionists and specialists who work with the visually impaired. This year marked the sixth year that Troop 2746 coordinated the on-site event, as part of the organization’s requirement to earn the “Challenges to Opportunities” badge, developed by the dedicated Chappaqua troop. “We are very proud to partner with Troop 2746 on this important initiative,” said Director of Community Relations Lena Cavanna. “This is a very impressive group of young ladies, and it is truly heart-warming to see their sensitivities to the unique needs of others expand as a result of participating in this workshop.”

Maria’s Extraordinary Journey

When 11-year-old Maria flew to New York City from Venezuela for surgery for a life-threatening seizure disorder, her family had no idea that an unpredictable storm would ultimately bring them to Valhalla, NY and Blythedale Children’s Hospital. Maria’s surgery took place in New York City in mid-October, but less than two weeks later, she was evacuated, along with countless others, as the result of rising flood waters from Superstorm Sandy.

Following evacuation from a second NYC hospital, Maria was transferred to Blythedale. She was one of several patients admitted to the Hospital in the wake of the storm, as the result of hospital closures and widespread power outages.

Nearly a month later, Maria is fully immersed in multiple therapies at Blythedale, and is working with her therapists to regain mobility. Her family is grateful to Blythedale, for helping Maria achieve so much over the last month. The family hope to be home, in Venezuela, by Christmas.

Meet Rita Erlbaum Kotorac, CCC/SLP, Director of Speech Pathology and Audiology

Rita Erlbaum Kotorac’s career spans more than 30 years in Speech-Language Pathology. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the State University of New York at Albany, and master’s degree from New York University. She has extensive experience in the field of pediatrics, with ongoing specialized training in feeding therapy.
Child Life Department Grateful for Dedicated Supporters

For the past seven years, The Starlight Children’s Foundation has provided support to Blythedale’s Child Life Program by providing staff support, resources for direct patient care activities, and donations of their famous Fun Centers. This fall, The Foundation joined forces with SHARP, and donated a new Fun Center to Blythedale. Our patients were thrilled! These mobile entertainment centers support programming in the Teen Lounge, and can also be used bedside for individual or small group use. Starlight continues to enrich the lives of our patients and we are truly indebted to The Foundation for their generosity through the years.

On September 24th, the Child Life Department welcomed ARTWORKS, The Naomi Cohain Foundation, to Blythedale. Founded a decade ago, the ARTWORKS mission is to provide creative arts experiences to those coping with chronic and life-limiting illnesses. Founder and Executive Director Daniela Mendelsohn arrived with a special art cart, part of The Foundation’s Surprise! Supplies! Program, which brings mobile art carts to Child Life programs to support patients and their siblings. The launch of this project was attended by staff and children, eager to see our new resources and meet the ARTWORKS team. “This expansion of our three-year partnership with ARTWORKS will allow for increased outreach and patient support, and showcases the generosity and important mission of this New Jersey-based non-profit,” said Child Life Coordinator Lisa Levinson. “We are beyond grateful for our collaboration.” Pictured left: ARTWORKS Katherine Kelly, Kristen Begley and Daniela Mendelsohn present art supplies to Blythedale’s Child Life department and patients.

Blythedale Children’s Hospital was thrilled to again receive a generous donation of free toys from the Mattel Children’s Foundation, as part of a partnership between the Children’s Hospital Association and Mattel, Inc. The Toy Donation Program was launched in an effort to bring joy and comfort to hospitalized children, and the mission was clearly accomplished when the toys arrived on the scene at Blythedale for use in the Hospital’s Child Life Program, Therapy Village, Therapeutic Recreation program, and Early Childhood Center. “Our long-standing relationship with Mattel and the Children’s Hospital Association has offered our Child Life program access to materials we otherwise couldn’t attain,” said Child Life Coordinator Lisa Levinson. “The arrival of this donation is always exciting for patients, families and staff. It’s heartwarming to be able to draw attention to this partnership, and highlight such generosity and care.”
Over the River & Through the Woods

Visiting relatives over the holidays? Make sure the homes you and your children are visiting are as safe as your own. In addition to the risks of holiday decorations, younger children may be at risk if they are visiting and playing in a home that isn’t child-proofed.

Remember, the more family and friends around, the more risk that a child may become unsupervised for a short but dangerous period of time. Ensure a safe visit by asking questions when you visit someone else’s home. There is no need to be embarrassed – your hosts also want to make sure that their guests have a very safe and wonderful time at their home.

In addition to looking around a home for potential dangers, ask:

• Are there small objects such as hard candy or nuts in easily accessible candy dishes?
• Are there gates on the stairs?
• Are medications, poisons and household cleaners stored out of reach of curious little ones?
• Are there guns in the house? Are they stored unloaded in a locked box with the bullets locked separately?
• Do your hosts have a pool? Does it have a fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate? Can children get to the area where the pool is located?
• Will they be serving food that contains something to which your child is allergic?

Happy Holidays!

For more information, please contact Lena Cavanna at (914) 831-2410 or email her at lenac@blythedale.org.