A Road That Makes All The Difference.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth —

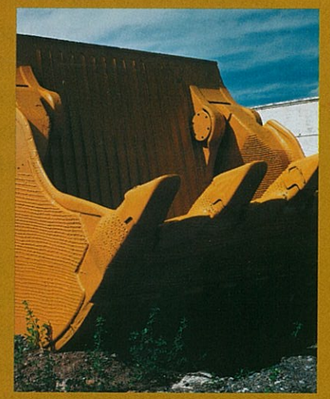
—Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost

The corner of Interstate I-30 and Hulen is, to say the least, well traveled. So, it's understandable that the community would question Lena Pope Home's recent decision to break ground for a new 225,000 square-foot retail complex on the busy corner. But the answer to the community's questions is not about traffic. It's about another road less traveled; a road that will make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of children and their families.

"Today's society is producing children with more needs than ever before and, as a result, the community faces tremendous social services needs," said Ted Blevins, executive director for Lena Pope Home. "Meeting these needs is a challenge, and we've had to ask ourselves, 'What are we going to do about it?'"

In a courageous move toward meeting this challenge head-on, the Lena Pope Home Board of Directors voted unanimously to lease 21 acres of its property to a Dallas-based developer for $30 million. The 60-year contract is expected to generate approximately $100 million in revenue for Lena Pope Home. "We had a choice. We could either let the land sit there, or convert it to earn money for the services that are so desperately needed," said Blevins.



According to Blevins, it takes approximately $35,000 a year to raise an abandoned child. This figure alone does not include the cost of caring for a child with medical, social or emotional problems. "There are approximately 1,200 children under our care. If just one-fourth of these children has any kind of medical or emotional problems, imagine the financial needs," said Blevins. "Most people just aren't aware of what kind of expenses are involved."

Story after story of children helped by services offered by Lena Pope Home will more than convince members of the community that the decision to lease the land was the right thing to do, according to Blevins. For example, the story of a 13-year-old rape victim whose depression became so severe she was unable to function. Lena Pope Home paid for the clinical services and medication she needed for recovery. Another young girl came to Lena Pope Home suffering from an "attachment disorder." After exhausting all local services and treatment, Lena Pope Home flew the girl and her foster family to Colorado for special therapy, costing close to $7,000 per week. Today she shows significant signs of improvement.

Because community needs far exceed the current tax dollars and donations that are available, and because the market was ripe for development, the time is right to lease the land, according to Blevins. "Why not take the resources we have and put them to work for these children?" asked Blevins. "Green grass and trees are nice, but next to a child's life, there's no comparison."

The decision was made to lease rather than sell the property in order to preserve the integrity of the area. Because Lena Pope Home continues to own the land it will be able to maintain control of the quality of materials, tenants and overall development. In regard to traffic flow, the developer, Strode Property Co., is working directly with the city transportation department to ensure the safety of the busy corner. Their plans include the addition of a new turn lane and a new turn signal to assist with traffic flow on Hulen.

Because of the significant increase in revenue, Lena Pope Home estimates being able to provide care and services for approximately 10,000 children by year's end. Plans for a new first offenders program and a truancy program are underway, as well as new services designed to connect children with significant adults who can teach, shape, love and guide them.

"It would definitely be easier not to reach out to more children and to remain more financially secure," said Blevins. "We could do a decent job with just a few kids. But what it really comes down to is how many times are we going to have to say 'no,' and how many times will we be able to say 'yes' in response to the hundreds of calls we receive each year."

Building Regional Relationships

To Enhance Care for Children

By Julie Gayle

Moving can be inconvenient, especially for a family of five. Patty Thibault and her husband, Joe, took on that task under the most unbearable of circumstances during the spring of 1999. Their 6-year-old son, Tony, was sick and physicians were unable to identify the problem.

While the family packed their home in Missouri for a move to Texas, Tony was in a nearby intensive care unit, where physicians tried desperately to determine why his bone marrow was shutting down. Bone marrow generates the body's blood cells. With a moving van parked in the family's driveway, Tony was released from the hospital, and the family dealt with the news that their son would need a specialist when they reached their new home in Frisco. Tony was referred to pediatric oncologist Paul Bowman, MD, medical director of the Cook Children's Hematology & Oncology Center in Fort Worth.

The drive from Frisco to Cook Children's took Patty more than two hours. "As I was making the long drive, I remember wondering to myself how we were going to manage everything," Patty remembers.

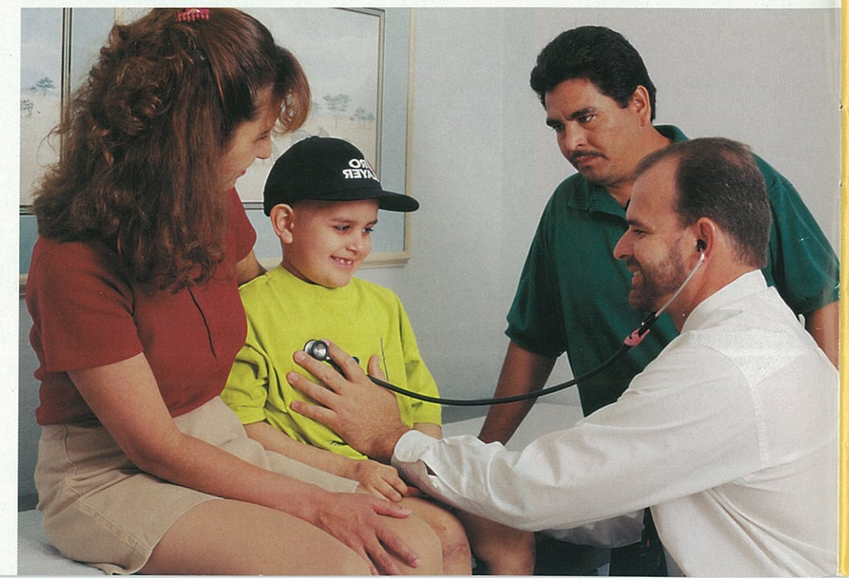
The family was elated to learn Tony could be treated in the Hematology and Oncology Clinic at Cook Children's Lewisville Specialty Clinic, which is located just 20 minutes from the Thibaults' home.

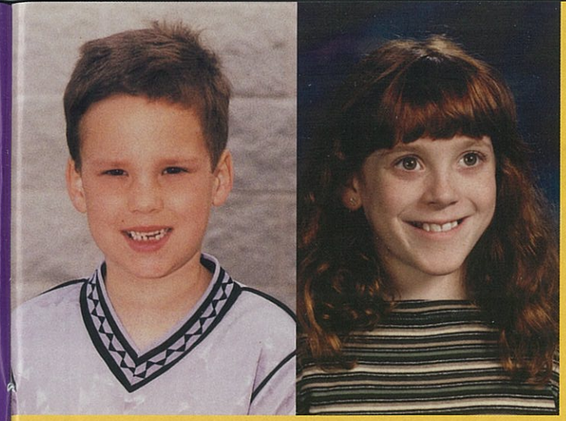
Tests revealed that Tony had leukemia, which took the entire family by surprise. "It's something that happens to other people's children, not mine!" Patty recalls thinking. Under the watchful care of Dr. Bowman, Tony immediately began chemotherapy at the Lewisville clinic. "At one point, Tony was seen twice a week, and I can't imagine what life would have been like if we had to travel all the way to Fort Worth each time," Patty says. "We were really trying to keep life as normal as possible for our two other boys, and without the clinic, that just would not have been possible."

The Lewisville clinic is one of 17 Cook Children's specialty clinics designed to bring pediatric specialty care to areas with populations not large enough to support such services full-time. Physicians representing 15 different specialties make monthly visits to clinics located throughout North and West Texas.

The idea for specialty clinics began more than 20 years ago, when Cook Children's specialists began visiting surrounding communities, getting to know physicians, sharing their expertise and developing more comprehensive services. As relationships between specialists and referring physicians strengthened, Cook specialty clinics emerged in areas where these relationships existed and needs were the greatest.

Below: Dr. Bernini examines patient Aaron Corralez, 6, at the Cook Children's Specialty Clinic in Midland.





Above: Tony Thibault and Kasey Brown

Today, Cook Children's has freestanding specialty clinics in Lewisville and Midland, and specialty clinics in areas like Waco and Wichita Falls that are offered in conjunction with local medical organizations.

On a First-Name Basis

Eva Jo Warner is 7 years old, and she is on a first name basis with every member of Cook Children's Waco Specialty Clinic, according to her mom, Kim Price. Born with cerebral palsy, Eva Jo has undergone several surgeries, including hamstring surgery last July at Cook Children's in Fort Worth. From the family's home in Waco, it took Kim about two hours to drive to the hospital.

Transportation can sometimes be a problem for Kim, a single mother of three, so the Waco clinic provides the family needed follow-up care, without the stress of traveling and missed school and work days. "We've been able to work most appointments around my kids' school," Kim said. "The Waco clinic is just 15 minutes away from our home."

Eva Jo's Waco pediatrician referred her to Cook Children's pediatric orthopedic surgeon Gary Douglas, MD, who has performed Eva Jo's surgeries at Cook Children's Medical Center and sees her monthly in the Waco clinic. The clinic has helped the family maintain a normal routine at home, Kim explained. "Eva Jo is always happy to visit the clinic," she said. "They are such a nice group of people, always making sure we are comfortable and understand everything that is happening."

The Heart of the Matter

Kasey Brown, 11, has an extremely busy year planned. In addition to earning straight A's in school, her days will consist of gymnastics, orchestra, book club, art club and a baton twirling class. It's a far cry from the way the Wichita Falls fifth grader spent the last two years.

Kasey has supraventricular tachycardia, an electrical imbalance of the heart that causes a rapid heart beat. Because of the condition, Kasey missed a total of 29 days of school during the past two years. But thanks to a procedure performed in May at Cook Children's Medical Center, Kasey can now spend more time twirling a baton and less time in the doctor's office. Thanks to Cook Children's Wichita Falls Specialty Clinic, located just minutes from her home, routine follow-up care will take very little of Kasey's valuable time.

Kasey's tachycardia was diagnosed in 1997 by the family's Wichita Falls pediatrician, who referred Kasey to Cook Children's pediatric cardiologist Richard Readinger, MD. Kasey was seen every three months, sometimes at Cook Children's and sometimes in the Wichita Falls Specialty Clinic. Her case was eventually turned over to pediatric cardiologist Christopher Case, MD, who performed radiofrequency catheter ablation (RFCA). The procedure, performed in the heart catheterization laboratory, involves pinpointing the abnormal electrical current that is causing the rapid heart beat and destroying it with bursts of energy.

Today, Kasey can do just about anything. For that, the Brown family is forever grateful. The family is also quick to acknowledge the important role Cook Children's specialty clinics play in the lives of so many children. "I know there are some families who just don't have the means to take off to Fort Worth for the care they need, and in many cases, they would really be stuck if it weren't for these clinics," said Georgia Brown, Kasey's mother. "Cook Children's is providing more comprehensive opportunities to care for our children."

Positive Results

Specialty clinics are a win-win situation for both families and the medical center, explained Dr. Bowman, who chairs the Cook Children's Regional Relations Committee. "For patients and families, the clinics meet needs locally, which means fewer days of missed school and work," Dr. Bowman says. "The clinics are good for the hospital because communities are more inclined to think of Cook Children's when referring patients." For specialists, such visibility results in a larger number of patients, which helps doctors maintain expertise.

Cook Children's Specialty Clinics are located as far west as Amarillo and El Paso and as nearby as Arlington and Denton. All share a common purpose; to bring quality pediatric specialty care closer to home. For families of children requiring specialty care, this means less emotional strain and less time and money spent traveling. For children like Tony, Eva Jo and Kasey, it means more time with big brothers, more time practicing cartwheels and more time for getting on with life.▲

Below: Cook Children's Specialty Clinic in Midland, Texas.