

## 2009 Ambassadors for The Children's Hospital

Each year, special Children's patients are nominated to serve as ambassadors in our community to share their stories of hope and perseverance with the rest of us.

The seven children chosen to be 2009 Children's Ambassadors are living proof that The Children's Hospital, with a focus on specialized care for kids and teens, can make all the difference.

**Michelle Gaffney** - age 14  
*Boulder, Colorado*

**Michelle Gaffney** knows what it's like to spend a lot of time at The Children's Hospital. Diagnosed with severe scoliosis in 2006, she wore a brace 22 hours a day and had to give up playing softball and piano. In 2007 and 2008, she underwent four different surgeries to straighten her spine. Today her treatments continue, but they haven't dampened her spirit. Determined and optimistic, she is now the principal pianist with the Boulder Youth Symphony. The more she visits Children's, the luckier she feels, she says. As a way to give back and help other kids at Children's she made 130 pillows from donated supplies and distributed them as part of a project she called, "Comfy Kids".



**Katarina Hartzler** - age 13  
*Colorado Springs, Colorado*

On a school trip to France in 2007, **Katarina Hartzler** collapsed – she was suffering complete heart failure. She was rushed to a Marseilles hospital where French surgeons placed her on life support for two weeks before implanting the Berlin Heart – a German pediatric device known as a "bridge to transplant". They then contacted Dr. Francois Lacour Gayet at The Children's Hospital to arrange transport to the U.S., and with the help of teams in Marseilles and Colorado, Katarina became the first Berlin Heart patient to make a transatlantic journey. The trip was a success: she received a heart transplant at Children's eight weeks after French doctors implanted the lifesaving device. A true miracle, she has since recovered fully and is back to being a normal teenager.

**Alexander Viles Montee** - age 12  
*Pueblo West, Colorado*

An accident left **Alexander Viles Montee** badly burned by a gasoline and wood fire in December 2007. Burns covered 9 percent of his body surface; he made two trips to Children's operating room to repair his damaged skin. Now he wears a pressure garment on his left leg which allows him the mobility to take on many of the activities he did before. From football, to hunting with his grandfather, dad, and brother, Alexander hasn't let his accident hold him back.





**Benjamin Patterson** - age 12  
*Denver, Colorado*

**Benjamin Patterson** was seven months old when he was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. In the 12 years since, he has received therapy from the Hearing, Speech and Learning Department and Children's Center for Gait and Movement analysis to work past his physical challenges. Now a sixth grader, Benjamin confronts his challenges head on: he loves ski with the Handicapped Ski Program at Children's, plays tennis and baseball and enjoys hiking with his family.

**Lars Skoric** - age 7  
*Basalt, Colorado*

**Lars Skoric** is a healthy kid, and when you see him, you would never think he's had so much as a cold. But Lars was born with pneumonia and from his first hours was oxygen deprived. Thanks to the intervention of Children's nurses and doctors, Lars survived pulmonary hypertension, renal failure, and extremely low blood pressure to become the creative, athletic and caring child he is today. Though he had limited contact with other people and constant supervision for his first two years, Lars has no long-term residual effects from his illness and needs no additional therapy or treatment.



**Rose Vu** - age 9  
*Lakewood, Colorado*

**Rose Vu** is outgoing and wise beyond her years. She was diagnosed with leukemia when she was three years old. She was treated and relapsed, then treated again. She has been in her second remission for two and one-half years, and everyone who knows her draws hope from Rose herself that her leukemia will never return. Upbeat, with a sense of humor that is unmatched in most 9 year olds, Rose has endeared herself to Children's staff in the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders.



**Tanner Waterman** - age 10  
*Windsor, Colorado*

Tanner Waterman was riding an all-terrain vehicle with his grandfather in 2008 when he had an accident: the ATV flipped, pinning Tanner beneath. He was admitted to Children's with multiple internal injuries that required immediate operation – the kind of injuries most don't survive. Luckily, Children's specialists from six different departments and various therapies were able to keep Tanner alive. Two weeks later he was recovering. Though he still can't play contact sports, he is now back to school, and back to being a 10 year-old boy.

