In the late 1940s, the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority, led by Atlanta attorney and civic leader Hughes Spalding Sr., recognized the need for a hospital to serve Blacks/African-Americans who were limited in their choice of providers. The proposed hospital also would serve as a training facility for Black/African-American doctors at a time when no such hospital existed in Atlanta.

In 1952, Hughes Spalding Pavilion officially opened. At a cost of $2 million, the building was financed with both public and private funds, including a donation from well-known author and activist Margaret Mitchell. With more than 130 beds originally available, area adults and children viewed the 3-acre downtown site as their primary destination for quality healthcare and services.

For more than 35 years, the Hughes Spalding Pavilion served the city’s healthcare needs as a general hospital, receiving few improvements during that time. This changed in 1983 when a nearby building was added to the structure, eventually becoming the hospital’s Primary Care Center.

In 1989, the Hughes Spalding Pavilion closed. Three years later, Grady Health System reopened the facility as Hughes Spalding Children’s Hospital—an 82-bed, freestanding facility dedicated to serving Atlanta’s downtown pediatric population.

The newly established children’s hospital offered the same emergency and inpatient services as before, while adding necessary services such as primary care and rehabilitation therapy. Because the hospital accepted uninsured families regardless of their ability to pay, families in need often turned to the Emergency Department for primary care. Ultimately, the primary care and specialty clinics managed more than 30,000 annual visits, providing services ranging from immunizations to acute care follow-up.

Hughes Spalding continued to grow and expand. In 1999, the hospital opened an on-site dental clinic, eventually managing dental care services for approximately 300 patient visits each month. The hospital’s surgery unit was next, reopening in 2000 to offer round-the-clock surgical care and services. Then, in 2004, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and Grady Health System jointly announced plans for Children’s to provide pediatric services at Hughes Spalding.

Volunteers were as essential to the success of the Hughes Spalding Pavilion as the vital community supporters and donors.