Bennett spent his first six weeks of life in and out of the Emergency Departments at Children’s. Before he was 9 months old, he had undergone three heart surgeries. Now 8 years old, he has had five heart surgeries, more than 20 hospital admissions and countless other surgeries and procedures to treat his congenital heart problems and related health issues. The family just celebrated the fourth anniversary of his last heart surgery, which took place just 7 weeks after his younger brother, Wilson, was born.

Through it all, the Harper family has forged a deep relationship with Bennett’s doctors and nurses, as well as with Children’s as an institution. They support and give back to Children’s not just through the Annual Fund, but also through volunteering. Since 2012, Valerie has been a member of the Children’s Family Advisory Council, a guiding team of patient parents who help improve the Children’s experience, making recommendations on everything from hospital menus to billing to patient rooms.

“The quality of care is of utmost importance, but when your child has an extended admission, the quality of the rocking chair is also important,” Valerie said. “Although the child is the patient, it is a family experience.”

For the Harpers, that experience has been nothing but positive. Bennett’s visits are less frequent these days, but he still asks to spend the night when they go to the hospital for tests or procedures.

“He’s been here so much that he knows and loves everyone, which is a testament to the quality of people who work here,” Valerie said. “That’s the biggest thing we feel sets apart a place like Children’s and makes it such a great, comfortable place for our boys. We’re so grateful to have such a wonderful resource in Atlanta that we want to give back in whatever way we can, both financially and with our time.”

Supporting families by supporting Children’s

As a native Atlantan, Valerie Harper has been connected to Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta for almost her entire life. Growing up she was a Children’s patient, so when she and her husband, Judd, welcomed their first child, Henry, they knew exactly where to take him when he needed stitches. When their second son, Bennett, was diagnosed in utero with DiGeorge syndrome, a chromosomal disorder that affects several body systems, they realized they needed Children’s more than ever.

“We knew that he was going to need surgery soon after he was born, so we went ahead and met with several of the cardiothoracic surgeons at Egleston,” Valerie said. “They were so helpful in making sure we understood what was going on with his heart without making any promises.”
Annual Fund societies

By joining one of these societies, you are investing in the future of Children’s. While giving is its own reward, an annual gift of $1,000 or more qualifies you for special opportunities.

The value of your support

In 2015, Annual Fund donors helped support children in countless ways. Here are just a few:

**A 5-year-old went from having more than 40 seizures a day to being seizure-free, thanks to an epilepsy surgery.**

**A 14-year-old returned to the field playing varsity football after his broken arm healed.**

**We performed 80 transplants, setting a new hospital record.**

**A high school student returned to the volleyball court after a Project S.A.V.E.-trained teacher used an automated external defibrillator (AED) to save her life.**

**An invitation to join Hope’s Circle or Will’s Club, the leadership giving societies for women and men, respectively**

**A subscription to Small Wonders magazine and recognition on the annual giving wall at Children’s**

**An invitation to Morning Rounds, a special behind-the-scenes tour of Children’s**

**An invitation to the annual Children’s Circle of Care reception**

**Invitations to educational programs such as What’s Up, Doc?, a breakfast with top clinical leaders at Children’s**

**Volunteer opportunities at the Fun Factory, a hands-on arts and crafts experience with Children’s patients**

**Recognition at the exclusive Circle of Care level online, in publications and on donor walls**

Visit choa.org/annualfund or call 404-785-GIVE for more information about our Annual Fund societies.