

Shands For Kids


**Children's
Miracle Network**
the alliance of premier hospitals for children

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Alex Wood to represent Shands Children's Hospitals and Florida in the Champions Across America program

Each year a child is selected from every state in the U.S. and each province and territory in Canada to represent the 17 million children treated by Children's Miracle Network hospitals. For 2008, a child treated at Shands Children's Hospital at the University of Florida was chosen to represent the state of Florida.

Champions Across America presented by CO-OP Financial Services is a Children's Miracle Network program that honors remarkable children who have triumphed despite severe medical challenges. For their courage, tenacity and perseverance, the children have been selected as ambassadors.

These young ambassadors will travel to Capitol Hill and The White House in Washington, D.C., to share the message that their lives—and the lives of millions of children just like them—are better because of the tremendous work of children's hospitals. They will also spread the word by participating in the national television production of the Children's Miracle Network Celebration at Walt Disney World.

Nine year-old Alexander Wood, who in September 2006 was the state's first child to be implanted with a Berlin Heart mechanical device, received a heart transplant in February 2007. From Orange Park, Alex suffered from idiopathic dilated cardiomyopathy, a weakness of the heart muscle possibly caused by a virus. Last fall, his condition worsened and he was at risk for organ failure. The transplant team implanted the Berlin Heart biventricular assist device, sized specifically for children and designed to boost a failing heart's ability to pump until a donor organ became available. This kind of VAD extends mostly outside the body and connects to the heart via tubes implanted in the patient's chest. The device is connected to a portable, computerized unit that allowed Alex some mobility in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Shands at UF.

The UF medical team and Shands administration worked hard to obtain approval for Alex to receive the Berlin Heart, which kept him alive for more than four months. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not yet approved the Berlin Heart, but the agency allowed UF and Shands to move forward on a one-time, compassionate use basis. The UF Institutional Review Board and Shands officials also had to approve the procedure. Alex was the 68th child in the United States and Canada, and one of only 200 internationally, to receive the Berlin Heart.

Alex attends Fleming Island Elementary School. His mother works in registration at Orange Park Medical Center. "I want to thank all the people in our community who have been supportive," said Elizabeth Wood, Alex's mother. "Finally, Alex got his heart."



Alex with his surgeon - Mark Bleiweis, MD, UF College of Medicine.

This is a periodic publication produced and funded by Children's Miracle Network at Shands Children's Hospitals. The purpose of this publication is to inform our readers of the latest developments, improvements and advances at Shands Children's Hospitals, Children's Miracle Network and our SAFE KIDS program. For further information, please call 352-265-7953 or 1-800-284-6472. Or check out our Web site at www.shandskids.org

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