



Father ,Danny Martin, with his four children who all work hard to embody their family motto: "No Martin left behind."

FAMILY PROFILE

'No Martin Left Behind'

A 'Adrian Martin is the youngest of Danny Martin's four children, including 12-year-old Jeremiah, Bre'anna, age 10, and Ta'lor, 7. The family is close knit, speaking to each other in loving tones amid playful banter as they sit around their kitchen table. Dad Danny repeats their family motto along with his children, a message of support, inclusivity, and encouragement: "No Martin left behind."

While A'Adrian lies quietly in the front room of the home Danny shares with his children and his mother, her father explains how they became connected with Noah's Children. A'Adrian was accepted into the program in 2017, he says, following a severe brain injury

at birth, leading to life-threatening hemorrhaging and later a diagnosis of cerebral palsy.

"The part of her brain that was damaged controls motor function," Danny says. A'Adrian needed a tracheotomy to help her breathe and swallow, and she now requires round-the-clock monitoring and care. Danny says that, in her short life, his daughter has had a battery of surgeries, the most recent one a procedure to correct hip dysplasia. Although A'Adrian is non-communicative and cannot walk or sit up on her own, Danny says, "I know she is in less pain now."

Cerebral palsy is a blanket term for a group of childhood neurological disorders stemming from atypical

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Welcome to the Team!

We are pleased to announce three new staff members: **Rebecca Evans**, who serves as our Counselor, **Paris Randolph**, our Patient Services Representative, and **Jennifer Agee**, our Registered Nurse.



Rebecca has been working with bereaved families since 2011, and joined the Noah's Children team in June of this year. She earned a bachelor of science

degree in psychology and a master of science degree in counseling, both from Longwood University. Rebecca is currently completing a residency in counseling, working to obtain licensed professional counseling certification.

Through a wide range of prior experience as a professional grief counselor, serving at local nonprofits such as Full Circle Grief Counseling and the Virginia Home for Boys & Girls, Rebecca specialized in offering "comprehensive, professional grief support for children, adults, families, and

communities and schools," she says. Additionally, Rebecca has worked in the "mental health field as an individual therapist, crisis worker, in-home therapist, and case manager, utilizing traditional therapy techniques and trauma-informed care along with art- and music-based therapy."

A married mother of four, Rebecca enjoys music, photography, and the furry friendship of her three miniature schnauzers, Astrid, Gunnie, and Perle.

It has been a little less than a year since **Paris** joined the Noah's Children



team. She is a certified nursing assistant, and previously worked at Virginia Commonwealth University's dietary department as well as a role in the environmental services

department at Bon Secours.

Paris says she is "the friendly voice you hear when you call the office," and she was drawn to the mission of Noah's Children because she empathizes with the families the

organization supports. A mother to a young daughter, Paris says family is her passion. While she doesn't enjoy jogging, she does like listening to podcasts.



Jennifer joined Noah's Children in October 2018. In addition to a bachelor of science in health administration from James Madison University, Jennifer holds a

bachelor of science in nursing from Walden University. Jennifer came to Noah's Children with 11 years of NICU experience. She feels especially drawn to Noah's Children because the organization "meets the patients and families where they are, both in their journey with their child's diagnosis and in what location they need support, be it in the home or at clinic visits."

Though her husband, two children, and two cats keep Jennifer busy, she says she enjoys "reading, trying new recipes, planning trips, and game nights with my family and friends."

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brain development or brain damage according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Although there is no known cure for cerebral palsy, supportive care including medical treatment and therapies can help to optimize a child reaching their own unique potential. A'Adrian receives physical therapy each week, and Danny hopes her communication will improve.

"We understand that it's all tentative because every child is different," says Danny. "But with her continued therapy, she has already improved in ways our family notices. I would love for her to be able to communicate on demand however she can."

The whole family pitches in to make sure A'Adrian is included in their activities. "We roll the ball to her and read to her," says Bre'anna. "I

know that if I keep working with her, she will get better and better." Big brother Jeremiah tries "to comfort her and make sure she's comfortable—never give up on her."

While the siblings are looking out for their little sister, Danny says Noah's Children helps him look out for all of his kids.

"They have been an absolute blessing to us, from the support to advice to just being there with us in a very difficult situation," says Danny. "[Noah's Children] volunteers come and help my other little ones with their homework. They make sure everybody has what they need, even if that is just for somebody to be an ear and listen to them."

The holidays can be both a joyful and stressful time for any parent. For parents of seriously ill children, the

holidays can be an especially trying season. Danny, a single parent who works as a truck driver, says Noah's Children made sure his children had a happy holiday this past December, bringing gifts and plenty of Christmas cheer.

When it comes to medical care, Danny stresses to parents: "You are your child's best advocate." He acknowledges that caring for a child with needs like A'Adrian's is challenging and requires a huge amount of personal sacrifice and guidance. "But don't leave everything to the doctors," he adds. "Try to do everything in your power to help your child live their best life. And as you strengthen your bond with your child, you'll be able to sense their needs better, so you can communicate with the medical team better. Never, ever give up."

Coming Full Circle

For the last 21 years, the impact, compassion, and exemplary leadership of our founder, Dr. Bob Archuleta, have made Noah's Children what it is today. His holistic approach brings families hope, comfort, and dignity. Parents and siblings, in addition to the young patients, find care and the resources they need in times of uncertainty and overwhelming decisions. On behalf of Noah's Children staff and volunteers, the network of medical professionals he brought together, volunteers, and the families impacted through the years, we say thank you to Dr. Archuleta and wish him all the best in his retirement from Noah's Children.

Dr. Kelly Lastrapes began her role as our new medical director in March 2019. In a sense, it is a position for which she has been preparing most of her life, inspired by her personal and professional connection with our founder.

"Dr. Archuleta was my pediatrician, so we've had a longstanding relationship since I was a child," says Dr. Lastrapes. "I knew at eight years old that I wanted to be a pediatrician, just like him. He encouraged my interest in medicine and healing people from the very start."

Dr. Lastrapes has another tie to Noah's Children too: her mother, Alexis Kennett, was one of the organization's first volunteers. "I truly have a lifelong connection with Noah's Children and its work," says Dr. Lastrapes.

A native of the Richmond area, Dr. Lastrapes attended Monacan High School in Chesterfield, and completed her undergraduate studies at the College of William & Mary. There, she met her husband, Matthew, who hails from New Orleans. The couple lives in Midlothian with their daughter, Emma, who begins kindergarten this year.

After undergrad, Dr. Lastrapes began medical school at Virginia Commonwealth University. She completed her pediatric residency at Children's Hospital New Orleans and lived in that city for four years. It was during her time in New Orleans that Dr. Lastrapes solidified the focus of her medical career: pediatric oncology and hematology.

"The amount of time and the intensity spent with patients in oncology really made me grow to love what I do," she says. "I realized that, despite our best efforts, there is still so much suffering by children and their families. I knew I had to do something about that." She furthered her studies and experience through a pediatric palliative care fellowship, also at VCU School of Medicine.

Her holistic approach to caring for her patients aligned perfectly with the mission and work of Noah's Children, says Dr. Lastrapes. "We treat our patients and families as whole people. We help families address and heal not



only physical suffering, but also mental and spiritual suffering. It is powerful work."

As she steps fully into her work at Noah's Children, Dr. Lastrapes will maintain her role as an assistant professor of pediatric hematology at the Children's Hospital of Richmond at VCU, specializing in palliative care. Her goal is to help Noah's Children continue in its mission while also "expanding education, awareness, and availability of palliative care," she says. "I think one of the most critical parts of my work here will be to educate medical professionals and the community about palliative care because there's sometimes a negative view of it due to misinformation." Under her leadership and guidance, Dr. Lastrapes hopes Noah's Children will continue in its dedication to "being a source of support and encouragement for our patients and their families throughout their entire journey."

Volunteer Opportunities

We thank the compassionate, caring, and giving individuals who support and encourage the families in our Noah's Children program through joyful and difficult times. Our volunteers consist of individuals, churches, civic and community groups, businesses, and youth! Last year our volunteers donated 1,775 hours of their time, talents, and voices to bring awareness to our organization's mission to support children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions and their families.

If you are interested in volunteering with Noah's Children, visit our website at www.noahschildren.org and view opportunities under the "For Volunteers" banner.

Donate to Noah's Children

Giving to our Noah's Children Fund means you are a part of bringing compassionate palliative and hospice care to Central Virginia children, currently at no charge to our patients or their insurance companies. Noah's Children has accomplished so much over the years because of friends like you. On behalf of the staff and families we serve, thank you!

If you are interested in donating to continue the organization's mission, please visit our website to donate online, or mail donations to:

**5008 Monument Avenue, 2nd Floor
Richmond, VA 23230**

Upcoming Fall and Holiday Events

Fall Family Fun Day: Sibling Edition Holiday Gift Wrapping

Sept. 28, 2019, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

We invite our families out for a fun day of games, food, and other activities at this year's Fall Family Fun Day, Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. All Noah's Children families are welcome to attend the event. There will be a special emphasis on celebrating, recognizing, encouraging, and supporting siblings! Because we believe siblings are superheroes, we invite them and their families to dress up in their favorite superhero costume. Don't be shy: we'll award prizes to the best-dressed superheroes! In addition to food trucks, games, a rock-climbing wall, inflatable bouncy houses, and a large slide, we'll also offer sibling and parental support resources. Come have fun and celebrate the superhero sibling in your life. Register online: <http://www.noahschildren.org/events/sibling-day-out-1>



Dec. 16, 2019

Last year, we provided 216 of our patients and families a catered Thanksgiving meal and 161 individuals or 52 families with gifts through our Holiday Adoption program.

If you are interested in adopting a family for the holiday by purchasing a gift for the sibling or patient, please contact our Community Liaison at www.noahschildren.org

If you are interested in helping to wrap the purchased gifts on

Monday, December 16, 2019, please register through the following link: <http://www.noahschildren.org/volunteer-events/holiday-gift-wrap-event-1>

IN MEMORIAM

We honor the memories of the special children who have died as Noah's Children patients since our last newsletter. These extraordinary children were an inspiration, and their lives will be forever remembered.

www.noahschildren.org

5008 Monument AV, 2nd Floor
Richmond, VA 23230
804-287-7700

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5855 Breomo RD, Suite 409
Richmond, VA 23226

OFFICE

