

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



**MEND IT FORWARD
20 YEARS IN. BUILDING WHAT LASTS.**

BECAUSE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER WE LEAVE MATTERS.



MESSAGE FROM THE E.D.

As the past year came to a close, we reflected on what this community made possible.

In 2025, more than **405 children received critical surgical care through Mending Kids across 22 missions.** These were children who otherwise would not have had access to the procedures they needed to survive, heal, or live without pain. Each one represents what is possible when people choose to show up.

At the same time, our work continued to evolve beyond individual missions. We worked side by side with medical teams around the world, providing hands-on training that builds local capacity and supports long-term sustainability well beyond any single trip. This is where our work is headed, and where it must go. **Not just showing up, but building what continues when we leave.**

This year, we convened colorectal specialists in East Africa for a regional training designed to reach providers across multiple countries at once. We supported septostomy training in Hong Kong, strengthening the ability to deliver life-saving cardiac interventions in real time where they are needed most.

Closer to home, our Hometown mission focused on children with special needs and high sensory challenges who require full sedation to receive even basic dental care. For many families, safe options simply do not exist.

Being able to say yes to these children remains one of the most meaningful parts of our work.

The need is not slowing down. Neither are we.

Looking ahead, our focus is clear. We are deepening our work in places where we have already invested, including **Ghana, Tanzania, and Nicaragua**, where the opportunity is not just to provide care, but to move the needle. This means expanding local capacity, strengthening training pathways, and supporting teams as they take on increasingly complex care independently.

At home, we will continue to grow our Hometown Mission, reaching children in Southern California who face barriers to care that too often go unseen.

As we enter our 21st year, we remain focused on reaching children who continue to fall through the cracks, while strengthening the systems that will care for them long after we leave.

Thank you for being part of this work and for helping us reach the next child who is still waiting.

Together, we are Mending Kids.

With gratitude,



ISABELLE FOX
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Our Mission

Mending Kids provides free life-saving surgical care to sick children worldwide by deploying volunteer medical teams and supporting communities to become medically self-sustaining. Since 2005, we've mended over 6,000 children from 78 countries, including the US.

Our mission extends beyond borders, reaching thousands more through our hands-on training and exchange of knowledge, making our impact immeasurable and everlasting



“All children, regardless of where they live, their ethnic background, religious affiliation, or ability to pay, deserve access to quality surgical care to help save and mend their lives. We believe that an organization sometimes has to stretch its resources in order to go where others don’t and take care of children that others can’t.”

2025 BY THE NUMBERS



400+
children treated

22
surgical missions

19
countries traveled

16,000
volunteer hours

\$2.5M
in-kind support

6,000+
children served since 2005

OVERSEAS MISSIONS



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEADING INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING:

- Dr. Alex Chan, Philippine Heart Center
- Dr. Andre Panossian, Huntington Hospital
- Dr. Ayal Willner, MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center
- Dr. Beth Rymeski, Cincinnati Children's Hospital
- Dr. Darren Berman, Children's Hospital Los Angeles
- Dr. Evan Zahn, Cedars-Sinai Guerin Children's
- Dr. Francis Fynn-Thompson, Boston Children's Hospital
- Dr. Jason Frischer, Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
- Dr. Jenny Zablah, Children's Hospital Colorado
- Dr. Lia Jacobson, UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital
- Dr. Michael Womack, St. Luke's Boise Medical Center
- Dr. Nam Nguyen, MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center
- Dr. Namrata Varma, MemorialCare Long Beach Medical Center
- Dr. Robert Bernstein, Shriners Children's Portland
- Dr. Salvatore Agati, Bambino Gesù Hospital

REGIONAL MISSIONS: PHILIPPINES

In 2025, Mending Kids continued its partnership with the **Philippine Heart Center** to bring life-saving heart care to children across the Philippines, reaching more families and changing more lives than ever before.

Together, the team completed **nine** regional missions, bringing specialized cardiac care directly to children in communities where that care is often out of reach. For many families, traveling to Manila for treatment simply is not possible, so these missions give children the chance to receive the care they need closer to home.

This year, **119** children received life-saving treatment, surpassing the number of children served the year before. It was also a **milestone** year, with the team completing its first-ever mission to Palawan, expanding access to children in even more remote areas. This is what scale looks like when strong local partners lead: more children reached, more communities served, and stronger systems of care built for the future.

One of the children helped this year was **Haila**, a little girl whose journey reminds us why this work matters. In October 2024, the team traveled to Cotabato City hoping to repair her heart, but her condition was too complex to safely treat there. Instead of giving up, the team arranged for Haila to be flown to the Philippine Heart Center in Manila so she could receive the specialized care she needed. In February 2025, after a life-saving procedure, Haila returned home with a **healthy heart** and a **brighter future**.

Stories like Haila's show the true impact of these missions. Every child treated represents a family given hope, a future made possible, and the chance for a healthier life.

Along the way, local doctors and nurses were trained by the Philippine Heart Center visiting team, helping strengthen pediatric cardiac care in the regions and ensuring that the impact of each mission continues long after the team has gone home.

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2025 IN-KIND DONATIONS: \$2.5M+ SERVICE HOURS, CONSUMABLES, AND DONATED FLIGHTS

In-kind support is what makes this model work. With donated surgical team services and critical medical supplies, we are able to deliver care and training to more than 400 children each year on an operating budget of roughly \$1 million. If we had to fund these services and supplies at market rates, our annual budget would be several times higher, closer to \$5 million. This is especially true in cardiac care, which represents a significant portion of our work and carries some of the highest costs. The reported value of in-kind contributions reflects internal donor valuation and does not capture the full market cost. In reality, the value of these services, supplies, and expertise is substantially higher. This is what allows us to do more with less, reaching more children while continuing to build local capacity, while remaining strong stewards of every dollar entrusted to us.



INDIVIDUAL SURGICAL CARE

29 Patients
11 Countries

Not every child can wait for a mission. We connect patients to care when and where it's available.

This work is often made possible by our monthly donors, who allow us to say yes when timing matters most.

Countries include Antigua and Barbuda, Mexico, Nigeria, Jamaica, Cameroon, Honduras, and others.



MILESTONES



20 YEARS

20 years of Mending Kids, marking two decades of delivering surgical care and building sustainable programs worldwide.

EXPANSION OF SPECIALTY CARE PROGRAMS

In Ghana, the cardiac program has nearly doubled its capacity while reducing mortality. In Tanzania, with only eight certified pediatric ENT surgeons serving 60 million people, we are working to train two more within two years, increasing capacity by 25%.

SEPTOSTOMY TRAINING INTEGRATION

Septostomy training is now being delivered at major cardiac conferences, expanding access to this lifesaving procedure.

VIETNAM

On the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, launched a new program in Vietnam led by refugees and children of refugees returning to deliver surgical care and train local providers.

IDENTIFIED GAPS IN ACCESS TO CARE

Identifying gaps in care has led to the expansion of our Hometown model, particularly in dental care for children with special needs.

HOMETOWN MISSION

Last year, we returned to MemorialCare Outpatient Surgery Center in Long Beach for our first **Hometown Dental Surgery Mission** focused on children with special needs who require full sedation to receive even basic care. While services exist, access often does not. Long waiting lists can take years, and many patients age out before they are ever seen.

This mission was made possible by **MemorialCare Outpatient Surgery Center**, which opened its outpatient surgery center to our team, creating a space where this level of coordinated care could happen.

The patients we treated had severe disabilities and significant sensory challenges. For many, sitting in a dental chair and tolerating a routine exam was never an option. Some families had spent years navigating referrals and waitlists, only to face further delays.

Families traveled from across Southern California, managing complex medical needs and significant logistical hurdles just to access care. In a single day, with the support of the California Dental Association and XDR Technology, and alongside a team of more than forty medical volunteers, patients received comprehensive treatment under general anesthesia.

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Care included full dental exams, radiographs, cleanings, fillings, extractions, and additional evaluations, including ENT and airway procedures where needed. Phlebotomy was also performed to establish baseline data, giving families and providers a point of reference for future care.

This work prevents long-term complications, reduces pain, and restores a level of stability that had been out of reach.

This is **care** that can't wait.



STRENGTHENING CARE ACROSS BORDERS



Uganda became the hub of a focused colorectal training program spearheaded by the Colorectal Center at Cincinnati Children's Hospital and led by our board member, **Dr. Jason Frischer**, now Division Chief at Le Bonheur Children's Hospital. Mending Kids supported this effort by bringing together **42 pediatric surgeons** and surgical nurses from across the region, including Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, and Ethiopia, in partnership with local institutions.

Over several intensive days, participants engaged in hands-on training and peer collaboration, building technical skills and confidence in bowel management for children with complex colorectal conditions. This work focused on improving quality of life before and after surgery, ensuring children can live healthier, more stable lives even when surgical care is not immediately available.

What made this effort meaningful was not just the knowledge shared, but what happens next. Each provider returned to their home institution better equipped to care for patients, train others, and strengthen local systems.

This is how the work extends. Not just through the children we reach directly, but through the providers who carry that training forward, reaching far more patients in the months and years ahead.

KEYLA

When we first learned about **Keyla**, she was a little girl in El Salvador whose heart was failing. Her skin had turned blue from lack of oxygen, and time was running out.

Advocates reached out asking if we could help, but no hospital in the United States would take her case. Her condition was considered too complex, and pro bono care wasn't materializing. Without the imaging needed to make a treatment plan, and without the funds to cover surgery in the U.S., there was no clear path forward.

Months later, our team, led by **Dr. Jenny Zablah** from Children's Hospital Colorado and supported by the **Edwards Lifesciences Foundation**, traveled to El Salvador for a training mission. We reached out to Keyla's family, hoping to finally get the imaging that could determine if surgery was possible.



Her mother traveled from out of town to meet us, but after years of being told her daughter's condition was hopeless and that there was no help in El Salvador, she was terrified.



She didn't want to let us proceed because her family hadn't had a chance to say goodbye, in case Keyla didn't survive the procedure. It was a heartbreaking delay. With every week and month that passed, Keyla's condition worsened. Still, we promised we would come back, and eight months later, when the stars aligned, we did.

By then, Keyla was deeply cyanotic, but this time her mother said yes. Our team performed the diagnostic cath and another procedure to buy her more time. As the team watched, her lips went from blue to pink.

Keyla's journey is far from over. Mending Kids stands for: caring for children when others can't, fighting for those considered too complex, and giving them the best chance at life — and a brighter future.



SURGICAL OUTREACH PROGRAM HOSPITALS

- Arabkir Medical Center, Yerevan, Armenia
- Benjamin Bloom Children's Hospital, San Salvador, El Salvador
- Bicol Medical Center, Naga City, Philippines
- Bicol Regional Hospital and Medical Center, Bicol, Philippines
- Bugando Medical Center, Mwanza, Tanzania
- Cagayan Valley Medical Center, Cagayan, Philippines
- Children's Surgical Center, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- Corazon Locsin Montelibano Memorial Hospital, Bacolod, Philippines
- Cotobato Regional and Medical Center, Cotobato City, Philippines
- Dr. Paulino J. Garcia Memorial Research & Medical Center, Cabanatuan City, Philippines
- Hoa Khanh Children's Hospital, Nha Trang, Vietnam
- Hospital General Pediátrico Acosta Ñu, Asunción, Paraguay
- Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra, Ghana
- Manuel de Jesús Rivera, La Mascota Children's Hospital, Managua, Nicaragua
- Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital and Medical Center, Ilocos, Philippines
- Mbarara University Hospital, Mbarara, Uganda
- MemorialCare Long Beach Outpatient Surgery Center, Long Beach, California
- Moore Center, Guatemala City, Guatemala
- Mulago National Hospital, Kampala, Uganda
- Ospital Ng Palawan, Palawan, Philippines
- Trust Fund For Specialised Medical Care-Cardiac Centre, Pamplemousses, Mauritius
- Western Visayas Medical Center, Iloilo City, Philippines

INDIVIDUAL SURGICAL CARE

- Jakaya Kikwete Cardiac Institute (JKCI), Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- Manipal Hospital, Bangalore, India
- Narayana Health, Bangalore, India
- Shriners Boston
- Shriners Chicago
- Shriners Dayton
- Shriners Galveston
- Shriners Greenville
- Shriners Honolulu
- Shriners Ohio
- Shriners Philadelphia
- Shriners Southern California
- Shriners Springfield
- Shriners St Louis



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- Wynn Foundation

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- NuMed for Children
- Susie Haleblan



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- Skaggs-Ulene Family Trust
- The David and Vickie Smick Foundation
- The Heart-Firestone Family Fund
- The San Francisco Foundation

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OUR MENDERS

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MENDING KIDS**

Our Board provides strategic leadership and oversight as we grow.



95-4394305



21255 Burbank Blvd, Suite 120
Woodland Hills, CA 91367



hello@mendingkids.org



mendingkids.org



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