

Video Transcript: Fiddlesticks and Pancakes

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Every year in the fall there is a breakfast that's called "The Fiddlesticks and Pancake Breakfast" that is for all of our patients and family members. Fiddlesticks is the mascot of the Pittsburgh Symphony; it's a big, giant cat who plays the fiddle, and there's always several musicians who come with Fiddlesticks, and Fiddlesticks walks around and plays while the kids are eating pancakes, which is kind of fun! But kids really got into that; they loved interacting with the big cat, the mascot, and really enjoy that every year, so now we always try to book it ahead and make sure that some performers from the symphony are there.

There was one year in particular; we had two string players, two violinists, Sylvia and Shanshan. They weren't quite sure what was going to happen during breakfast; they had brought some Baroque music, and they brought some kids' tunes and a few other things, and they set up a music stand and they started playing. And it wasn't very interactive, but let me tell you, the kids don't let you not be interactive. There were a few kids who were very into conducting, and they started testing out what they would do if they started conducting. And Sylvia and Shanshan went right with their lead, and they would respond to the children. So if the kids were conducting fast, they'd play fast, and if the kids were conducting slow, they'd play slow! Of course it helped that Sylvia and Shanshan were very in tune with one another, and they were able to follow one another despite what the kids did.

Fiddlesticks interacted too; he'd conduct, he'd dance, and it was just a really fun, memorable experience. I think especially so because kids in the hospital often do not have any control, or they have very little control over their lives while they're here. It's not intentional; it's the way it is. You know, you have to be in bed by a certain time, you have to be hooked up to an IV at a certain time, you have to get a test at a certain time. So giving the kids control and letting them conduct was really special.