

Back to Their Roots for the Kids

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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[The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis](#) trace their roots to Germany where they cared for children in orphanages. Children continue to hold a special place in the Sisters' hearts as part of their OSF HealthCare ministry.

Almost Home Kids at [OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois](#) in Peoria is the most recent addition to that ministry.

[Almost Home Kids at OSF Children's Hospital](#) is just the third facility of its kind in the nation, and the first one purpose-built through generous donations. The home is a bridge between hospital and home and provides community-based transitional care in a home-like setting for children from newborns to 22-years old with complex health needs, training for their families, and respite care.

Children receive 24-hour medical and nursing support from skilled pediatric nurses. The home is able to accommodate 12 children with a maximum length of stay of 120 days. Respite care is offered from 24-hours to two weeks. It looks like a house with community living spaces which allow typical, family interactions.

Not surprisingly, the Sisters and personnel from the Motherhouse – where the Sisters live – wanted to do something special for the children and staff for Christmas.

It was quite the sight as the Sisters and their staff visited bearing gifts, including items off the Almost Home registry, then sang carols for and visited with the children and AHK team.

Ben Thang, who celebrated his second birthday last month and was the first child admitted to Almost Home Kids after it opened, enjoyed being the center of attention, spending time sitting on Sister Judith Ann Duvall's lap. Sister Judith Ann is Major Superior of the Order and Chairperson of the OSF HealthCare Board of Directors.

Ben particularly liked a life-like seal that responds to touch and sound and encourages interaction from a child. The seal was a gift from the Sisters last year, before the home opened. They enjoyed watching Ben laugh and play with it, and even tried it out themselves!

The \$8.5 million home was built entirely from private donations and will serve as a prototype for future AHK sites around the country. Community donations will continue to provide support for the Peoria location. Wish lists and registries have been established through [Target](#) and [Amazon](#) where donations can be made.