



Prom and Convocation 2013

We are always busy with activities in Pediatrics and this spring was no exception. This edition of News9 celebrates special times and creates lasting memories as we highlight two of our favorite annual events, Prom and Convocation.



Pediatric Prom

Prom is one of the most anticipated and exciting events of the year in Pediatrics. By early spring patients, staff, and family members are practicing dance moves, guessing who will be this year's staff Prom King and Queen, and planning their outfits for the occasion.

Two weeks before the event, our specialty shops, "Promingdales" and the "Men's Shop" opened to patients and family members. Here, promgoers chose from glamorous gowns, sparkly dresses, suits, tuxedo t-shirts, bow ties, and funky socks; stylish enough to satisfy even the most demanding *fashionista*.

On the day of Prom, Pediatrics was transformed into a glittery pre-party scene as the Recreation Center bustled with activity and excitement. Make-up artists, personal shoppers, and face painters prepared the partygoers with any and all last-minute needs — and an expanded Promingdales and Men's Shop now included jewelry and accessories for the girls and stick-on ties and sequined bow ties for the boys.

The Prom Limo led the procession of guests down to the West Dining Room where the party began in earnest. A colorful balloon arch welcomed patients, families, and staff into the celebration of



the season! Food stations lined the back half of the room while the dance floor took over center stage.

Party King's DJ played all of the latest pop hits, issuing an irresistible invitation for guests to get on the dance floor. Partygoers were soon swinging and swaying to the music and laughter and singing were heard throughout the halls.

Everyone enjoyed ice cream and cupcakes as they waited for the announcement of this year's Prom King and Queen. Inpatient Nurse Leader Shelley McKay and nurse Tom Seghini were crowned to enthusiastic cheers and then graciously greeted their court of princes and princesses.

Guests continued to enjoy yummy treats, take photos on the prom thrones, and dance through the day. It came too soon, but finally the DJ was playing the last song, dancers took their final twirls, and another Prom brimming with smiles, joy, and laughter was over.



Overheard at the Prom...



"I couldn't sleep last night because I was so excited to be here with my friends from the hospital!" – **Eight-year-old girl to her doctor**



"My daughter has insisted on changing into her dress at least four times a day for the past week. She simply can't get enough of it. She has been waltzing around the hospital hallways with a homemade crown on and singing about going to Prom." – **Mom of four-year-old leukemia patient to another mother**



"I have been looking forward to being able to come to the Prom because I was not able to go to my own at my high school due to treatment. Now I feel great and am ready to party!" – **18-year-old boy to Child Life specialist**

"I love the cupcakes and ice cream!" – **Sibling of a patient**

"I'm so appreciative that we simply get to enjoy this special day with friends and family." – **Parent to nurse**



"I look forward to the Prom each year because it is one of the only days that we get to see our patients outside of Pediatrics simply being kids and young adults. It is such a joy to see them have a great time and just dance!" – **Doctor to another doctor**

"All the patients and families are having such a great time. I wish we could bottle the energy from today and reuse it each and every day!" – **Child Life specialist to Child Life specialist**



Special Coverage!

Fox 5 NY was here to report on Prom and WABC-TV featured Convocation on their evening news shows! Clips can be seen on our website mskcc.org/pediatrics

Convocation

Pediatrics is especially proud to celebrate our current and former patients receiving their high school diplomas or GEDs at our annual high school graduation. The seventh annual Convocation recognized more than 80 patients with 30 in attendance along with their families.

Proud parents, family, friends, and staff welcomed the graduates into the auditorium set up in the West Dining Room for what was a moving and emotional ceremony. This year's Convocation was full of firsts for us here at the hospital, with a ceremony that included special performances and illustrious guests.

We were excited to welcome, for the first time, members of the New York City Department of Education including Chancellor Dennis Walcott, Deputy Chancellor Corinne Rello-Anselmi, and Gary Hecht and Barbara Joseph, Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, District 75, respectively. They joined the Hospital Schools' Principal Mary Maher, in award presentations.

Master of ceremonies, Dr. Nancy Kernan, welcomed the graduates and guests and introduced graduating senior Will Shore who sang the national anthem. An accomplished singer and performer, his voice kicked off our ceremonies in momentous style.

Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center's President and CEO, Dr. Craig Thompson, offered opening remarks and recognized all the people who work together to get our patients back to home and school.

The first graduate speaker, Saul Tbeile, referred to one of his favorite quotes by Vivian Greene, "Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain" to talk about his experience in overcoming serious illness while still in his early teens.



Chancellor Walcott then greeted the graduates and audience. He congratulated the graduates on their many accomplishments and thanked the hospital for including him in such a unique ceremony. Immediately after, Mary Maher and Dr. Richard J. O'Reilly, Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics, joined Chancellor Walcott on the stage to begin the presentation of graduate certificates and awards.

Our second student speaker, Alexandra Capellini, congratulated her classmates and spoke about how, rather than allowing cancer to define her, her experience with illness shaped her character in important ways. Dr. O'Reilly provided the keynote address, telling graduates that through their experiences they have come to represent courage, hope, and love. He also reminded them that "you are awesome!" He then introduced Cecilia Gigliotti, another graduate with an impressive musical background. She sang, "For Good" from the Broadway musical, *Wicked*, and didn't leave a dry eye in the house.



Memorial Hospital Physician-in-Chief Dr. José Baselga closed the ceremony with a reflection on attending his first pediatric Convocation ceremony and encouraged the graduates to continue pushing through life and be everything that they can be.

The class of 2013 was presented to the audience and the graduates joyously processed through the West Dining Room to the strains of *Pomp and Circumstance*. The celebration continued at a luncheon reception in the Pediatric Recreation Center.

A few words from our speakers...

“The normalcy of growing up and achieving milestones, like this one today, are exciting for you and your family and at the same time are enormously satisfying for us. Today is a glorious day for us to celebrate. Thank you for being here and allowing us to share this with you.”

– Dr. Nancy Kernan



“As graduates, you belong to an exceptional club; it’s not a club you joined willingly. You didn’t sign up for membership. You overcame obstacles your classmates at home never faced, and we recognize your success. The new adventures that you undertake in the coming years will bring new challenges and successes, but as we celebrate today, we know you are up to the task. Everyone in the audience is privileged to be here and to share this moment with you. Congratulations!”

– Dr. Craig Thompson

“Vivian Greene is quoted as saying, “Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass... It’s about learning how to dance in the rain.” I can think of no quote that relates to all of us here today like this one. On the road of life, everyone takes the same general path. You go to elementary school, then middle school, and finally high school. The details may change, but the general path always remains the same. All of us here today on stage have taken a detour on that road of life. That detour we all took led us here to Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. Here is where we learned to dance in the rain.”

– Saul Tbeile



“I like to be in the presence of our students who have significantly different challenges in life but who managed to succeed. That what this is about: Succeeding in life, meeting those hurdles, challenging those hurdles, and then moving on to that next step. To the students – congratulations, we are proud of you, but we are not just proud of you, we think the world of you. You are an inspiration. Not just to me, not to the individuals who are sitting there, not to the individuals who are sitting before you, but you are an inspiration to all of us in society. No matter what the challenge may be, there are those that are able to meet that challenge and succeed. Congratulations and the best of luck to you.”

– Chancellor Dennis Walcott



“Priorities changed at Sloan, but with this change came our own profound growth and maturity. We can say we lost our innocent view of the world while we were here. We faced life-threatening circumstances within our own bodies. Yet I would never consider my cancer battle as having dampened any bit of my faith in the good in the world, in our community, in the human capability to be resilient, strong and well-intended. When I left the doors of Sloan following my last round of chemo, I left with this profound understanding that the world was better and I was better because people like MSKCC patients, families, doctors, and nurses existed. We were taken care of here; our families were taken care of here. Social workers, caregivers and teachers each played their own role. What I learned is that there is so much reward, so much meaning, and so much value in giving more of ourselves.”

– Alexandra Capellini



“Kids, this is a little bit to you: You have faced life-threatening crises, overcome the worst fear of man, many actually facing down death, and in so doing, you have become courage. You have encountered despair, and have chosen to go forward despite the risks, and in so doing, you have become hope. You and your families have joined in the extraordinary, often painful, always time-eating test of endurance marked by bouts of severe illness, endless worry, shared highs and lows, and constant caring for each other. In so doing, you have together become love. We as doctors, nurses, and all the support staff here at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center see this exceptional enduring example as that best that humanity is capable of on a daily basis. We count ourselves lucky and privileged to know you.”

– Dr. Richard J. O’Reilly



“I think that you have now the inner strength to be able to pursue your dreams like nobody else. As you move on, invest in the pursuit of your dreams, of your happiness, of your objectives, and continue to never take no for an answer. Never put yourself down or feel that you cannot make it; you know better than that. Basically, you know what to do. You have showed this fortitude and inner strength, and that is something that is so important in life. I wish you a very, very, very happy life. Go on, and be everything you can be.”

– Dr. José Baselga



Reflections from Our Grads and Parents

“Thank you for being there MSKCC! Bringing our daughter there for treatment was the best decision we have ever made. All the attention to detail yesterday made us feel so special and helped to validate our journey through a very difficult and scary time. Thank you to the staff for continuing to care for us!” – **Molly (Megan’s mom)**



“Thank you for a truly memorable day. What an amazing experience for our family. I think Will felt truly celebrated.”
– **Mara (Will’s mom)**



“Graduating this year is a huge milestone for me. Never take a single day for granted. We all learned life can change any second the hard way, but keep pushing forward.” – **Jillian**

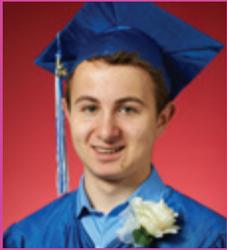
“I owe to this institution the fulfilling and joyful life I lead today. The staff of MSKCC deserves to share in my personal triumph and in our collective triumph.”
– **Cecilia**



“Per Aspera Ad Astra — a rough road leads to the stars.” – **Greg**



Class of 2013



Matthew A.



Vivianne A.



Nicolas B.



Alexandra C.



Allison C.



Darren C.



Arielle F.



Dustin F.



Cecilia G.



Julie G.



Kevin H.



Natalia H.



S.K.



Victoria L.



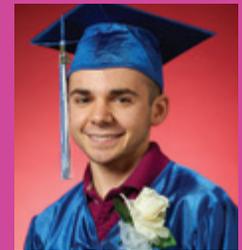
Julia M.



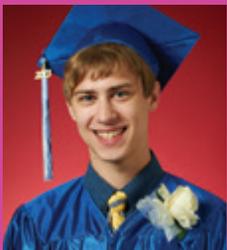
Kurt M.



Kerry Anne O.



Eric P.



Gregory P.



Jillian P.



Joseph R.



Melanie R.



D'Onte R.



Emily S.



Megan S.



Nyrih S.



William S.



Saul T.



Ronald Y.



Alexandra V.

Thank you...

Pediatrics extends its deepest thanks to everyone who made Prom and Convocation spectacular occasions.

Special thanks to the many individual donors and the members of The Society of MSKCC and its Children's and Associates and Kids Kick In Committees for their very special efforts and contributions.

Thank you to Polly Blitzer and her team of cosmetologists from BeautyBlitz.com as well as Kimara Ahnert and her team of cosmetologists, MC Dana and his crew of DJs and dancers from Party King Entertainment, and Juliana Thomas from Juliana Thomas Photography for all you do to create our magic.

We thank the New York City Department of Education for their support for our annual Convocation, the leadership present at our ceremony, the MSKCC teaching staff — Anne Marie Cicciu, Edith Silsdorf, Claudia Rogers, and Joanne DiMartino — and all the past and present teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, principals, tutors, and home instructors for their dedication to helping our students achieve their academic goals at every level.

Finally, a huge thank you to MSKCC's Departments of Food and Nutrition Services, Volunteers, Medical Graphics and Photography, Public Affairs, Facilities Management, Security, and Environmental Services. Your hard work and commitment to our patients and special events are deeply appreciated. We couldn't do it without you!



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