

Children's Wisconsin: Raises \$308 million through historic campaign

Posted on Thursday, Feb 26, 2026

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Brighter Than Ever powers revolutionary approach to care for kids and families

MILWAUKEE, Wis., Feb. 26, 2026 — Children's Wisconsin has successfully completed Brighter Than Ever, the most ambitious and comprehensive engagement and philanthropy campaign in the organization's history. The campaign raised \$308 million, exceeding its goal by \$8 million.

Launched in 2020 and completed on Dec. 31, 2025, Brighter Than Ever was designed to galvanize the community's generosity, volunteerism and advocacy to support the revolutionary approach Children's Wisconsin takes to provide care for all aspects of a child's health — physical, dental, social and mental. Through its Milwaukee and Fox Valley hospitals, primary care, specialty care and mental health clinics, and community services locations, Children's Wisconsin has 7.3 million connections with kids and families each year.

In total, more than 70,000 community members contributed to Brighter Than Ever:

- More than 45,000 gifts came from people donating to Children's Wisconsin for the first time.
- Gifts ranged from 71 cents to \$20 million.
- Contributions came from 50 states and 22 countries.

"Children's Wisconsin is 100% committed to kids, and that guides our exceptional team members in their work every day," said Gil Peri, president and CEO of Children's Wisconsin. "I am thankful for everybody who invests in our mission. Because of you, we will continue to attract top pediatric expertise, develop new programs and services, and focus on supporting the whole child, including mental

and behavioral health.”

“Children’s Wisconsin was founded by the community more than 130 years ago, and it’s the community’s relentless and inspired generosity that allows us to care for kids in the places where they spend the most time — at home, at school and in the community,” said Meg Brzyski Nelson, president of the Children’s Wisconsin Foundation. “We are deeply grateful to every benefactor, volunteer and advocate who powered the success of Brighter Than Ever, and we are poised to continue our momentum to care for even more kids and families, thanks to your partnership.”

Powering Brighter Futures for Wisconsin’s Kids and Families

Through the Brighter Than Ever campaign, Children’s Wisconsin dedicated resources to the following priority areas:

- **Eradicating disease and innovating health care:** Identifying better ways to prevent, treat and eliminate childhood diseases, including through the Children’s Research Institute and its work to advance precision medicine, which looks at genetics, environment and lifestyle to better determine the most appropriate treatment option for patients; the upgrade and expansion of the Milwaukee Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit; the expansion of services for kids and families in Northeast Wisconsin, including offering specialty and urgent care at the Appleton Clinic, enhancements to the Appleton Child Advocacy Center and the opening of the Ashwaubenon Clinic.
- **Caring for the whole child and empowering families to build strong communities:** Meeting kids and families where they are and when they need help most, including through programs like Project Ujima, the nation’s first hospital-based violence prevention and intervention program, which provides crisis intervention, case management and more; and the Health Navigation Program. Health navigators serve as a single point of entry so families can access basic care needs like housing, food and transportation, as well as specialty care needs.
- **Creating solutions for mental and behavioral health:** Knowing that mental and behavioral health is just as important as physical health, Children’s Wisconsin made a commitment to address this critical need in 2019, propelled by a \$15 million gift from The Reiman Foundation and a \$20 million gift from The Yabuki Family Foundation. Five million dollars of The Yabuki Family Foundation gift was designated as a match called the Change the Checkup Challenge, which galvanized the community to support mental and behavioral health at Children’s. These services are now integrated across the Children’s

footprint and in the community through the Craig Yabuki Mental Health Center, including behavioral health consultants embedded in every Children's pediatrician's office. Children's was the first health system in the country to adopt this model. Powered by the generosity of Kohl's, Children's also opened three mental health walk-in clinics, which provide care for mental health emergencies, at the Milwaukee hospital and in Kenosha and Green Bay.

- **Immediate Impact for Kids:** Helping Children's Wisconsin be nimble and responsive to what kids and families need in real time, including investing in programs and services like Child Life, which helps kids and families navigate the stress and anxiety from illness, hospital stays and medical treatments. Programs like Child Life improve outcomes for kids, and Children's offers them even though many are not reimbursable by insurance.

Other Brighter Than Ever Highlights

- In 2022, the Delta Dental of Wisconsin Foundation donated \$1 million to support the expansion of the Children's Wisconsin dental program, designed to increase access to oral health care for some of the state's most vulnerable and underserved children.
- A core group of more than 100 campaign volunteers served as advocates for advancing the Children's mission statewide, raising funds and awareness and rallying the community.
- In 2025, Children's debuted its inaugural Rally Round. Held at the Milwaukee Mile at Wisconsin State Fair Park, the event gives kids, families, care providers and the community an opportunity to run, walk and roll together, with all proceeds directly supporting Children's kids and families.
- Launched in 2025 and ongoing until funds are spent, the Brighter Forever planned giving challenge offers an opportunity for benefactors seeking to establish their charitable legacy for the future, while also seeing the immediate impact of their generosity on Wisconsin's kids and families now. The challenge was galvanized by a donor-funded cash match pool of \$1 million.

"As a grateful mom and now a Board director, I am proud of the community's investment in this incredible organization and the impact that we have — and will continue to have — on the kids and families of Wisconsin," said Stacey Walthers Naffah, chair of the Children's Wisconsin Foundation Board of Directors. "The future is incredibly bright, and we're grateful to the community for continuing to walk by our side in partnership."

About Children's Wisconsin

Children's Wisconsin is the region's only independent health care system dedicated solely to the health and well-being of children. The hospital, with locations in Milwaukee and Neenah, Wisconsin, is recognized as one of the leading pediatric health care centers in the United States. It is ranked among the top pediatric hospitals in the country by *U.S. News & World Report's* 2025-26 Best Children's Hospitals report. Children's Wisconsin provides primary care, specialty care, urgent care, emergency care, mental and behavioral health care, community health services, foster and adoption services, child and family counseling, child advocacy services and family resource centers. Children's Wisconsin achieves its mission in part through donations from individuals, corporations and foundations and is proud to be a member of Children's Miracle Network.