

## SHC Patient and Family Giving Back to SHC – Chicago and Children



Many of you may recognize the adorable young girl in the photo, left. Her name is Natalia Villegas, and she is one of the Chicago hospital's wonderful patient ambassadors. As you may remember, Natalia's mother, Norma Villegas, works for Zurich, NA, and Shriners Hospitals for Children is one of Zurich's core charities. Norma, her husband, John, their son, David, and Natalia are all amazing ambassadors for our hospital. Norma was highlighted in a recent video, talking about the wonderful care Natalia, has received at SHC – Chicago, and she has taken an active role at Zurich to increase awareness about our hospital. Yet, the Villegas family decided that wasn't enough, so this past year, they started a not-for-profit organization—Karina Cristian Cares Inc. The

purpose of this organization is to support families in need and the good work at SHC. The genesis of the non-profit was Natalia's desire to help kids "who do not have toys, food, clothes, or money." The non-profit will be hosting several fundraisers throughout the year, with the goal to make an annual gift to Shriners Hospital, as well as other local organizations, which provide assistance to families in need. This fall, Natalia started the family fundraising with a very successful Scarecrow "FUNdraiser"!! She invited her neighbors and friends to join in for a day of scarecrow building, all while collecting money for SHC – Chicago! (photo above). Natalia, 7, and her big brother David, 9, truly are ambassadors for their new organization and for Shriners Hospital. They are both sources of inspiration, and Natalia is already planning for the future. She is confident that when "...my bones get stronger..." she will host and participate in a 5K walk/run to raise awareness and funds for SHC – Chicago!



## Sara Klaas, Spinal Cord Injury Director, Honored for Vision and Work



Sara's on the left

Sara Klaas, director of our spinal cord injury program (who serves as an undercover-agent around here, as associate development director), wears more hats than your grandma's

hall tree can handle. She now has a new, shiny-bright hat, thanks to her friends at Diveheart. Sara was recently inducted into the Hall of Fame for Divers with Disabilities. The Hall of Fame for Divers with Disabilities is a not-for-profit entity established under the umbrella organization Diveheart. The Hall of Fame's mission is to

recognize and salute individuals both disabled and able-bodied, who have displayed an exceptional commitment to the support, promotion, and furtherance of scuba diving for individuals with disabilities. Sara has been a champion and advocate for adaptive scuba diving since the early 1990's. She co-founded our hospital's sports & conditioning camp and eventually began teaching scuba diving to kids with SCI in the small pool at the Chicago Hospital. She has run a scuba adventure travel program for adolescents with SCI for the past 16 years, to places such as the Florida Keys, the Cayman Islands, Bonaire, and Cozumel, Mexico. Sara has helped more than 100 patients with SCI become certified divers, and countless others have experienced scuba because of her efforts. Sara joins an elite group as she enters the Hall of Fame including Jean-Michel Cousteau (son of Jacques Cousteau) and Jim Gatacre, founder of the Handicapped Scuba Association. We thank Sara for her inspired work and congratulate her on this great honor! She honors SHC – Chicago as she is honored by the Hall of Fame



Sara (top) with divers

