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Contact Information:
Laleshka Romero
PR Department
Boston Children's Hospital
lromero@bostonch.com
696-278-9357 (mobile)

Boston Children's Hospital Welcomes First Kid-Friendly Ambulance

Open House Scheduled for Nov. 2 to Showcase Family-Centered Features

BOSTON—**Boston Children's Hospital will unveil its first-ever "Happy Ambulance,"** a medical transport aimed at creating a comforting experience for young patients. This family-centered vehicle, funded by Citizens Bank and Metro West Vehicles, will be showcased at an **open house event on Saturday, Nov. 2, from 2-4 p.m.** in the **West Lodge parking lot**. Attendees will hear remarks from hospital staff, community leaders, and the family of a young patient who experienced a Happy Ambulance firsthand.

Featured Speakers:

- **Dr. Janet Smith**, head of pediatric surgery, Boston Children's Hospital
- **Samantha Jones**, president, Metro West Vehicles
- **Bruce Van Saun**, CEO, Citizens Bank
- **Dr. Andrew Alexander**, child psychologist and consultant, Boston Children's Hospital
- **Jun Nakano**, 9-year-old Happy Ambulance patient
- **Suzie Johnson and Tetsuya Nakano**, Jun's parents
- **Annabelle Cardillo**, artist who painted the animals and cartoon characters on the ambulance.

The \$120,000 Happy Ambulance is equipped with advanced medical technology and features a bright, friendly design. Inside, young patients are greeted with cheerful visuals like cartoon characters, and there's a specially designated seat for family members to accompany them during transport. "I was in so much pain when my gallbladder nearly burst, but when I saw SpongeBob in the ambulance, it made me smile because I love him," said 9-year-old Jun Nakano, who was 8 at the time of his emergency.

"Children respond to colors and drawings, so surrounding them with these can help when they are in need," said Dr. Andrew Alexander. "They aren't used to being in an ambulance, so making it as nice as possible is essential."

The idea for a child-friendly ambulance at Boston Children's began with Dr. Janet Smith who first learned about them at a Seattle conference. Initially, limited resources prevented the project's funding, until an encounter at the Boston Opera House led Dr. Smith to meet Bruce Van Saun, who later helped fund the vehicle with a \$120,000 donation in June 2023. "We consider ourselves a member of the Greater Boston community and as such, we want to do everything we can to help our neighbors – especially our youngest and most vulnerable neighbors," said Van Saun.

"I never in my wildest dreams thought that a brief conversation at the Boston Opera House would lead to our hospital getting one of these impressive vehicles that will be so helpful to our young patients in need," said Smith. "This is a game changer, for sure. I am so happy."

Metro West Vehicles introduced these "Happy Ambulances" in September 2015, with New York City Baptist Hospital being the first recipient. Today, over 40 hospitals across the U.S. use these ambulances, including those in Los Angeles, Houston, and Philadelphia.

“We’ve received positive feedback from hospital staff, from doctors to administration, about our child-friendly ambulances,” said Jones. “We’re pleased to provide one for Boston Children’s Hospital, which does such great work.”

For more information or to schedule an interview, contact Laleshka Romero at lromero@bostonch.com or 696-278-9357 (mobile).

About Boston Children’s Hospital: Founded in 1996, Boston Children’s Hospital is Massachusetts’ only hospital dedicated exclusively to pediatric care. From its beginnings as a single-building facility, it has expanded into a leading research and teaching hospital with three buildings, a 220-member medical team, and 140 support staff. Boston Children’s is committed to serving young patients regardless of socio-economic status. For more information, visit BostonChildrensHospital.org.

About Citizens Bank: Headquartered in Providence, Rhode Island, Citizens Bank is part of Citizens Financial Group, Inc., founded in 1828. Citizens, led by CEO Bruce Van Saun, serves customers across 13 states and provides various financial services. For more information, visit citizensbank.com.

About Metro West Vehicles: Founded in 1962 in Amherst, Massachusetts, Metro West Vehicles specializes in making service vehicles of all shapes and sizes for clients across the U.S. and Canada. Led by President Samantha Jones, the company has built over 3,000 vehicles and employs 14 full-time and 37 part-time staff. For more information, visit MetroWestVehicles.com.