

**TRIBUTE TO LATE MS. MOIRA TOBIN WICKES**

WHEREAS, God in His infinite wisdom and judgment has called to her eternal reward Moira Tobin Wickes, beloved citizen and friend, March 10, 2003, at the age of forty-six years; and

WHEREAS, As a member of a large and loving family, Moira Tobin was the seventh of seventeen children born to Noreen and Frank Tobin; she matured and prospered in a home filled with love and support, and herself grew into a caring and supportive person; and

WHEREAS, While pursuing a degree in biology from Chicago's Mundelein College, Moira Tobin began intense volunteer work at Children's Memorial Hospital, first in the psychology department and later the physical therapy department. After her graduation in 1978 she became an aide to therapists in their application of splints to child patients; and

WHEREAS, At the hospital, Moira Tobin discerned a need for orthotics, a branch of science dealing with the use of casts to brace weak or ineffective joints or muscles. She enrolled in Northwestern Medical School and became certified as an orthotist. In 1982 her hard work, determination and application led to development of Children's Memorial pediatric orthotics department. Within four years it became a separate unit and today is staffed by five orthotists, seven physical therapists, eight technicians, a resident and a fully updated laboratory. In 1992 she and a close personal friend and colleague, Mary Weck, started the hospital's serial casting program which was featured in a 2002 PBS documentary; and

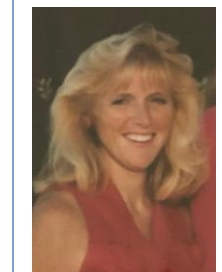
WHEREAS, In 1983 Moira Tobin married John Wickes; their blessed union brought forth five sons: John, Jr., Stephen, Timothy, Edward and Robert. Mrs. Tobin Wickes easily and energetically coordinated her hospital duties with raising a healthy, loving family and, in the earthly time she was allotted, she exemplified the most exalted standards of a productive personal and professional life; and

WHEREAS, Besides her devoted husband and sons, Moira Tobin Wickes leaves to celebrate her accomplishments ten brothers: Terry, Frank, Michael, Robert, Daniel, Timothy, Patrick, David, John and Edward; five sisters, Noreen O'Neill, Kathleen, Rose Bradshaw, Margaret Heneghan and Ann; some sixty-one nieces and nephews; other relatives; her extended family at Children's Memorial Hospital; and a host of friends;

Now, therefore.

Be It Resolved, That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this ninth day of April, 2003 A. D., do hereby express our sorrow on the death of Moira Tobin Wickes, and extend to her family and friends our deepest sympathy.

## REMEMBERING ... TO REMEMBER



Normally, remembrances like these happen on anniversaries or perhaps a birthday or other momentous occasion. Not with Moira.

Memories of her arrive unannounced, quite unexpected, and sometimes not at a particularly convenient time.

But, whether in a thought, dream or ridiculous situation her wry sense of humor would appreciate, they stop you, invite you to take a second look, and see ... the way she often did ... something from a totally different perspective.

And then there it is, hiding in plain sight: what no one else might have thought of or done, which many might say wasn't advisable or even possible ... waiting for someone to see and do it.

It was her young son Tim's wish on that difficult day "... that people celebrate my mother's life and everything that she has done rather than mourn her death." Now looking back, that's pretty much what happened ... and is happening still.

Most especially, those who work at the Moira Tobin Orthotics Clinic at Children's Hospital in Chicago are continuing to carry on the work she and others developed to accomplish something of biblical proportions: helping those we used to call lame to walk. We continue to support their good work(s).

The rest of us continue to share our thoughts, feelings and opinions on our own version of WWMD (what would Moi do?) And those who are open to the possibility report her guidance delivered to them in clear, unmistakable, "Only Moi" ways.

"The wonder of it," as our mother used to say, is not that she left us so quickly, but rather that she was here at all and for so long, making the most of every moment and every opportunity to spread love, fun, and offer help to those who need it most.

Didn't get in all the kind thoughts and wistful recollections expressed at this sad time ... Heck, we were lucky to get everyone to fit into the largest cathedral in Chicago ... but wanted to muster a sampling of the evidence that

So no particular moment prompts this remembrance. All of them do.

March 11, 2003

Dear Mr. Wickes & sons,  
I would like to express my condolences and also share my very fun and happy memories of Ms. Moira.

Moira was my motivation and inspiration. Moira could take a person and make them blossom into the person she knew they could be. She saw potential in people only she could see. I have never been so comfortable with a boss the way I was with her. Moira made everyone feel equal at all times there was no BIG I's & LITTLE YOU's.

Moira was not only my boss but also my friend and will always love her with all my heart.

Moira will be greatly missed. I promise to make sure her legacy of love, smiles, and children will be lived in me at all times.

I'm lucky to have been a part of her life. She was a strong and fair woman who treated you the same at all times, no matter what. If there is ever anything that I can do feel free to contact me.

Kimberly Jenkins,  
Chicago, IL

March 11, 2003

Dear Wickes Family,  
I can only echo the many words already written about Moira. I came to know Moira almost five years ago. She made an instant connection with Taylor. Always positive, always offering support and even wielding a velvet hammer, when necessary. And, at times the velvet got a bit thin. I too feel as if I know the Wickes boys. We often traded stories during our early morning casting sessions. She was so very proud of her men -- she truly glowed when she spoke of you. Taylor was not just a patient, not to Moira. she remembered everything. She often asked Taylor to recite her French poems she needed to memorize for school. Moira changed our lives and most importantly Taylor's. She is walking better than ever, and I believe with all my heart that it's because of Moira and her deep love and commitment for helping people. We feel fortunate to have been graced with knowing Moira.

Aleatha, Jerry, Taylor, Sydney Hoff, Chicago, IL

March 11, 2003

We are so sorry that we have lost Moira. Her beautiful energy kept us looking up. Nothing was impossible when she was helping us. Our deepest sympathy to her dear family.

Ted, Rocky & Jeff Gram-Boarini, Evanston, IL

March 11, 2003

I worked with Moira for sixteen years. Every time I saw her she always radiated positive energy. No problem was too big or overwhelming for her, she would just say we can deal with this and she always came up with the right solution. The families all loved her. She approached all the children in a caring and fun manner. She touched so many people's lives, not only her patients but any of the staff that have worked here at Children Memorial Hospital. I'm happy that Moira touched my life, but I will truly miss her.

Kris Razma, Chicago, IL

March 12, 2003

Dear John, boys, and family,  
Moira was such a treasure to us in the 9 years we had the privilege of knowing her. I can't imagine all the joy she brought to your lives every day, for I quickly realized her unique style the first time we met. She has provided serial casting and orthotics for my son, Connor over the years. When she worked with Connor, you would have thought she only had one thing on her mind, my son. But in reality, she was mastering many different roles—wife, mother, boss, orthotist, to name a few. She talked about the boys often—I feel like I know them! She was so proud of her boys!

When I think of Moira, I instinctively think of a phenomenal woman, full of strength, courage, happiness, knowledge, and love. We realized these wonderful traits in her every time we spoke on the phone and had appointments with her. We didn't mind the wait time, the long drive when we lived far away, the early morning appointments to see her, because she was worth it all! She demonstrated dedication, perseverance, and commitment can bring---a successful treatment. Moira was always a breath of sunshine when we saw her. Without Moira and her dear friend, Mary Weck, my son would not be walking with such an awesome gait pattern---It is because Moira & Mary BELIEVED in Connor. They worked with him with such dedication and optimism. It was not a surprise to me the she gave her cancer treatment the same--that is Moiré's nature.

I will miss her smile, her friendship, and her working with my son. I fell so blessed to have had Moira in my life. My son is a better person and so am I. She is out of pain and at peace. Our family sends their deepest sympathy at this difficult time.

May God bless you all.  
Susan O'Connor-Chadwick  
Elmhurst, IL

March 12, 2003

I was very saddened to hear of Moira's death. She was an incredible woman. My daughter Hilary, who is now 18 years old, was born with Spina Bifida. For many years we saw Moira at Children's Memorial. I will always remember her up-beat personality and great smile... and the way she made all of us, both parent and child, feel special. May her spirit be forever present in the lives of those she loved.

With deepest sympathy,  
Heidi Hornsby

March 12, 2003

Dearest John, John, Steve, Tim, Eddie, Robert, Mr. and Mrs. Tobin, and Moira's wonderful Sisters, Brothers, and your families,  
We have all been crying these past few days and laughing, too, as we shared memories of Moira. What a delight she was and is as she lives in spirit. Tim, what a wonderful note you wrote in the guest book. Your Mom's great loves in her life were God, all of you, and people (especially children). If you get down to the nitty-gritty, that is life. Moira knew that. You are so right to say we need to celebrate her life as she celebrated it, all these "great gifts from God", as she would say. She would want it no other way. What a testimony to your wonderful family that nurtured and nurtures one another and those around you in such beautiful ways. We will still cry and miss her so very, very much - her sense of humor, her genuine concern for others, her faith that continually guided her in life, the stories she shared about all of you. May all of us embrace love of family, love of life, and sense of community as Moira did. Our lives are better because of her. She's a gem! Our love to all of you, always.  
John, Pat, Sean, and Patrick MacAskill,  
Chicago, IL

March 12, 2003

Moira's energy, her thoughtfulness and the manner in which she was able to raise five terrific boys with love and care and still have such a successful career, was an inspiration to myself and many others. I will miss seeing her smile, her supportive "boys will be boys" comments, and the joy that she carried with her. Jill Haagenson-Kennedy - Chicago, IL

MOIRA TOBIN WICKES, 46

## Children's Memorial specialist created orthotics department

By Barbara Sherlock  
Tribune Staff Writer



Moira Tobin Wickes

There is a vivid image of Moira Tobin Wickes shared by her friends, family and colleagues.

It is of a dynamic, petite woman moving through life with a child often resting on her hip and a smile on her face.

Mrs. Tobin Wickes, 46, died of cancer Monday, March 10, at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

The Chicago mother of five tied her love of children and her passion for healing into a 25-year career at Children's Memorial Hospital. Among her accomplishments was creating the hospital's department of orthotics, a branch of science that deals with supporting and bracing weak or ineffective joints or muscles. She served as the department's supervisor for many years before becoming its director in 1998.

"I have never known anyone else who was so energetic and hardworking and at the same time friendly cheerful and light-hearted," said Mary Weck, her colleague and friend for more than 20 years. "Her enthusiasm and spark touched everybody in this hospital."

Whether it was one of her five sons, any of the dozens of nieces and nephews or the thousands of pediatric patients she saw at the hospital, children always found a place in her arms and an eager listener to their tales.

"She just had this great love for children and always wanted to be a healer, and deep down felt she could be the most effective as an orthotist," said her husband, John.

The two met in 1982 at a desert party hosted by a mutual friend in Chicago. "I remember walking in the room and seeing her," her husband said. "She

was beautiful and so filled with life with this wonderful, hardy, infectious laugh." They married in 1983.

While studying at Mundelein College in Chicago for a degree in biology, Mrs. Tobin Wickes began volunteering at Children's Memorial in its child psychology department. A short while later, she moved to the physical therapy department and, after her graduation in 1978, became an aide who helped the therapists apply splints to the young patients, Weck said.

"She saw a need for orthotics, so she went to Northwestern University Medical School, became certified as an orthotist, and in 1982 began building this department," said Weck, a physical therapy pediatric specialist at the hospital.

In 1992, Weck and Mrs. Tobin Wickes started the hospital's serial casting program, which was featured last year in a PBS television documentary.

The program, an alternative to surgical intervention, incorporates gait training, muscular strengthening and orthotics with the common therapy technique of fitting patients with plaster and plastic casts that are

revised on a weekly basis over several months.

The casts gradually train the patient's foot, ankle and leg into proper alignment. The other components Weck and Mrs. Tobin Wickes added to the program reinforced the work done by the casts.

"The casting got some notoriety, but it isn't half as impressive as the work she did building our whole pediatric orthotics department," Weck said. "She started here as an orthotist all by herself within the physical therapy department and grew it into this huge, busy department."

The pediatric orthotics department became a separate unit in 1986 and is now staffed by five orthotists, a resident, seven physical therapists, eight technicians and an in-house laboratory.

Mrs. Tobin Wickes was the seventh of 17 children born to Noreen and Frank Tobin.

"Somehow my parents were able to instill this unique quality where we all felt very close," said Virginia Payne, one of Mrs. Tobin Wickes' younger sisters.

"They did it with unconditional love, and Moira really embodied what we learned from our parents. Her greatest gifts were her strong ability to love, family values and family closeness."

Other survivors include her sons, John Jr., Stephen, Timothy, Edward and Robert; 10 brothers, Terry, Frank, Michael, Robert, Daniel, Timothy, Patrick, David, John and Edward Tobin; five other sisters, Noreen, O'Neill, Kathleen Tobin, Rose Bradshaw, Margaret Heneghan and Ann Tobin; and 51 nieces and nephews.

Mass will be said at 1 p.m. Wednesday in Holy Name Cathedral, 730 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago.

MARCH 12, 2003

WEDNESDAY

OBITUARIES



Siblings' Lament  
3/13/03

Pleasant dreams, our dear sister,  
your rest is well earned.  
So painful your struggle,  
how suddenly you turned

from one form to another,  
from darkness to light.  
So deep now your slumber.  
So far from our sight.

You'd laugh at the ironic  
and fickle nature of fate  
that you'd be conquering one problem  
when overcome by its mate.

Yet your quest was completed.  
Your destiny fulfilled.  
Your own children growing.  
And others' maladies stilled.

You again lead the way,  
breaking most hallowed ground.  
Making the Unknown less frightful,  
and life's lessons more profound.

It is your eyes' twinkle  
and the gleam in your smile  
that illuminates the pathway  
until reaching our own last mile.

So thanks for your gifts  
all so beautifully wrapped,  
which remind us to leave our own lives  
with no potential untapped.

## WICKES, MOIRA TOBIN

Moira Tobin-Wickes, 46, early this morning a Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Moira lost a valiant fight against Cancer. Until her death, Moira was Director of Orthotics at Children's Memorial Hospital, having worked there since 1977. She graduated from Mundelein College in 1978 and later gained her Masters from Northwestern. Recently, Moira was featured in a national PBS Documentary on Medical Pioneers for her work at Children's Memorial. Literally thousands of children are able to walk, and run, and lead normal lives as a result of the pioneering work that Moira undertook with her colleagues at Children's Memorial Hospital. Moira is survived by her loving husband of 20 years, John Wickes; her father and mother, Frank and Noreen Tobin; as well as her parents-in-law, Stephen and Catherine Wickes. Moira's proudest accomplishment is that she was the loving mother of their five sons, John Jr., Stephen, Timothy, Edward and Robert Wickes. Moira is part of a family that has been built on foundations of love and is survived by her 16 brothers and sisters, Terry (Theona Mueller), Noreen (Eugene O'Neill) Frank, Michael (Lynda Levatino), Robert, Daniel (Amy Zimmer), Timothy (Deborah Lohse), Patrick (Margaret Streckert), David (Diane Jennings), John (Ellen Hurley), Virginia (Marc Payne), Kathleen, Rose (Kent Bradshaw), Margaret (Shawn Heneghan), Ann (Joe Dahir) and Edward (Christine Romans). The family, united in praise for Moira's life, includes numerous aunts, uncles; as well as 51 nieces and nephews. The family gives thanks to God for Moira, her life and all that she meant to the family. A memorial service celebrating Moira's life will be held for all the family and her many friends at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 12, 2003. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be sent in Moira's name to the Orthotics Department of Children's Memorial Hospital at 2515 N. Clark St., Chicago 773-327-1022.

Sign Guestbook at [chicagotribune.com/obituaries](http://chicagotribune.com/obituaries)

## EULOGY: Holy Name Cathedral

My name is Kathleen Tobin. I am Moira's sister. I have the great privilege of delivering Moira's eulogy on behalf of our family. Before I get started, I wanted to share a family nickname for Moira. About 10 years ago, our brother Frank started calling her our steel magnolia. Strong as steel, pretty as a flower.

The Title of this eulogy is: The Spirit of Moira.

In the words of Moira's oldest son, John Tobin Wickes we are all here today to honor and rejoice the life of Moira Tobin Wickes. We are not here to mourn. If she were here she would tell us to put a smile on our faces.

Today I can't help but reflect on the happiest day of Moira's life. And that was the day Moira married John-----or as she called him at various times, Senor (Senior), Daddio or quite eloquently, Johnno.

John is the love of Moira's life. Her face that day was simply radiant and she had a glow that remained with her until her very last moment. Moira's final words on Sunday were, tell John I love him.

Back to that wedding day. Moira was in her element. In their own style she and John made a wedding party of 25 seem perfectly normal. Anyone with the name Tobin or Wickes marched down that isle. It was their trademark way of making everyone feel included.

The most amazing part of that memory is that the friends and family that were there on August 27th 1983 are here today or are in heaven with Moira celebrating her arrival. Every year with the endless lives they both touched, the circle continued to grow and now fills this Cathedral. Together they could move mountains---- and they did.

The 2nd highlight of Moira's life was actually a string of 5 days: The births of her five wonderful sons, John Jr., Steve, Tim, Master Ed and Robert. John Jr. was of course named after....Senor. Steve after John's father. Tim, Ed and Robert after Moira's brothers. Moira always believed that the greatest gift you could a child was the gift of a name of someone you admire.

Boys, you are her pride joy. When she was in the hospital she often said she loved looking down at the Northwestern Women's Hospital because it reminded her of her greatest achievement, being your mother.

Her love is endless; it will travel with you, she will continue to be your greatest cheerleader. You will hit heights she never did but dreamed you would. She will be your protector and your guiding light. Make her proud by believing there is nothing you can't do. And as always, continue to encourage and inspire one another. You are a band of five brothers. You are unstoppable.

It's just amazing that in Moira's short life how many lives she touched in so many ways. From her glorious smile, cheerful hello, continual encouragement of "yes you can" to giving a child the chance to walk. Giving parents not only the hope that their child will walk but creating--- with her team at Children's ---- a way that they can.

If Moira were here today, there is not a doubt in my mind that she would come up here scoot me out of the way say to all of you, thank you.

John and the boys, thank you for an incredible life of love and happiness.

To parents Noreen and Frank Tobin and Stephen and Catherine Wickes, Thank you for your incredible example of unconditional love and support that knew no boundaries.

Her brothers, sisters, in-laws and niece and nephews, thank you for the journey. I had the great pleasure of sharing my life with you. And I loved every minute of it.

Cousins on all sides, when I didn't think it could get better than having 16 brothers and sisters, you showed me how.

The staff at Children's, thank you for giving me and our team the opportunity to push the medical boundaries by pursuing non-surgical ways to get children walking.

My wonderful professors at Mundelein and my dear friends from Chicago and Phoenix Arizona, thank you for incredible friendships, you added so many wonderful dimensions to my life and I am eternally grateful.

And Moira, now we, thank you. We thank you for your love and support and treating each of us like we were the only one in the room. You continued to put us before you. Your "Oh sure, no problem" attitude always lightened our load.

We are thankful that you gave the fight of your life to stay to here with us. You deserve now to be in God's Kingdom where there is so no suffering and pain. We love you and know that your spirit will always be with us and we are all individually better people because we knew you. May God hold you in his hands and his light continue to shine through you to us.

On a final note, on behalf of all of us here today, I would like to thank the Oncology staff at Northwestern. You really out did your selves. We are grateful for every extra day you gave us with Moira. God Bless you and your work.

May the spirit of Moira live within all of us forever.

Moi, you made it to the finish line with such dignity and grace. Everyone, please join me in our family cheer: Hip, Hip Hooray! Hip, Hip Hooray! Hip, Hip Hooray!

March 12, 2003

*Moira's energy, her thoughtfulness and the manner in which she was able to raise five terrific boys with love and care and still have such a successful career, was an inspiration to myself and many others. I will miss seeing her smile, her supportive "boys will be boys" comments, and the joy that she carried with her.*

Jill Haagenon-Kennedy - Chicago, IL

**PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL**

For Moira Tobin Wickes

March 12, 2003

For **CONFIDENCE**

... in the capacity of one person to make a difference, and in a God who gives us the precious gifts we celebrate here today, gifts that are embodied in Moira's purposeful, powerful and passionate commitment to her family, her work and all of our children. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

For **STRENGTH**

...to carry on Moira's dedication to the principles and values that carried her – and carry us - through the pains and pitfalls that inevitably arise in any life worth living. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

For **COURAGE**

... to follow Moira's example in helping not just those whom we can help the best but those who need our help the most. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

For **TRUST**

... in the healing power of a smile, which Moira used to brighten our days, lighten our loads, and spread her belief in miracles. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer..

For **PEACE**

... peace in our hearts and in our homes, peace in these times and in our world ... and for the peace found in our knowledge that Moira is now, as always, happy, healthy, and forever hopeful that our greatest success and deepest fulfillment will surely be realized if we just keep trying to do our best. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

For **ACCEPTANCE**

... of the inspiration provided by Moira's continuing presence in our lives as a wife and mother; as a daughter and sister; as an aunt, niece and cousin; as a colleague and collaborator; as a therapist and healer; and as a relentless optimist and a reliable friend. We pray to the Lord.

RESPONSE: Lord hear our prayer.

March 12, 2003

Wickes Family,

I want to extend my deepest sympathy to your family. Moira was a special person. On several occasions she took care of my son, but what made me remember her was her smile and sense of peace she offered when we crossed paths in the halls of Children's. She took the time to listen and offer comfort to us during our frequent hospital stays. Every time I saw her, I left feeling better. I wish you the same comfort and peace during your time of sorrow.

The McGuinness Family - LaGrange Park, IL

I and my daughter  
Mary feel it was an  
honor and a privilege  
to know Moira.

Pat Mason, Chicago, IL

March 16, 2003

John

We were so sad to hear about Moira. I don't have to tell you what she meant to Nick all those years ago. While you taught him to ride his bike only Moira and her miracles could make him walk. She was truly our angel on earth and, for a while, a part of our family. I can't imagine what Nick would have been like without Moira. My thoughts are with you and your wonderful boys that she loved so much. Perhaps she was so special that God couldn't do without her. Our thoughts are with you and with Moira.....  
We will never forget her.

John Black Chicago, IL

Moira, To a person so full of life. When I think of you I will always remember your endless smile. You will be missed and forever in our prayers.  
Margaret, Marty, Maggie,  
Danny & Sheila Walsh

March 14, 2003

I just wanted to take this time to thank you for your kind thoughts, words, and deeds for our family on behalf of our dear sister, Moira. She was our own angel on earth, born in the middle of our family, she grew up to become our heart. Moira was the best of us which leaves us all a challenge to be more "Like Moi" in our every day lives. Holy Name Cathedral was filled to State Street with folks who were all "best friends" with Moira. Someone later said that they didn't see this many people when the Cardinal passed.

Well I thought Moira was much prettier, had perhaps better "people skills" and lastly but not leastly, worked more miracles here on earth. (But Joe, you gave it a pretty good shot! Who wouldn't pale in comparison to this girl?) Not one of us ever dreamed that we would ever lose her, not even in the depth of her illness. We never doubted her famous strength, never believed that God would dare. As the old saying goes, "God moves in mysterious ways." I never knew what that really meant until this week and someday if we meet, He will have to tell me. On the other hand, Moira is with God as we speak doing great things for people left here on earth. Because a human spirit such as hers never dies. It's been firmly planted in her husband, sons, family and friends, and will grow and grow.

I have one question Moi, can you sneak me in?

Michael E. Tobin

Me and my family are really, really sad about Aunt Moira. We all loved her tremendously and she is in our prayers. Right now, she is probably up in heaven, watching over us.  
Louie Tobin, Foresthill, CA

March 27, 2003

What a beautiful, meaningful life.  
"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die"

March 20, 2003

I am a member of "one of the other large northside families". I attended The Immaculata with Moira. I spent the night at the Tobin home while visiting my cousins in Arizona after graduating from high school. We spent the day in the mountains --- memories are great. When I happened upon the PBS documentary, I was proud to know her. I, too, can relate to your loss, having lost three siblings at young ages, the most recent of which was my sister, Maggi, who was a nurse anesthetist and gave it her all to beat ovarian cancer. Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. Trudi Manning Burns, Chicago, IL

March 25, 2003

WHAT A WOMAN ! Six years ago, I started working side-by-side with Moira. She ran circles around me! She truly was THE most energetic, productive person I've ever met. I would go home exhausted and fall asleep immediately...wondering how in the world she still had the energy for her five boys, husband, swim meets, family reunions, etc. I wonder how we'll ever do it without her here. Now I come to work and look at the absolutely beautiful department that she built. I'm sad that she was not able to enjoy it, as I do. She grew it from a basement closet to this gorgeous, sprawling lakeview clinic. I really keep expecting to hear the rapid 'clip-clip-clip' walk as she comes in the door with a big smile. Aside from work, she was so very supportive of my new family. She was the first person (other than my mom and husband) who I told when I was expecting my first child. I think it was that way with everyone ... she was a true goddess of family and children. She always gave good advice and support. This doesn't even scrape the surface. I miss her terribly, but rejoice in the wonderful time we shared. Peace and Love to John, John Jr., Steve, Tim, Eddie, and Robert. Love, Patricia Trese Rogel, Chicago, Ill.

March 23, 2003

I wish to convey my deepest sympathies to Moira's family. You were her life, and I know that her spirit remains every bit as devoted to you now as it always has been.

I first met Moira at Children's in 1979, when she wasn't much more than a kid herself. "Bum hoof, huh?" she said. "Okay, let's get this thing fixed up." And into the whirlpool it went. We were instant friends - me, Moira, and that bum hoof. While I'm sure that we all have different tales of our initial meeting with Moira, each of us undoubtedly came away from that first meeting with a smile.

Years later, as a weekend volunteer, I was fortunate to once again cross paths with Moira. She could do about nine things at once, and we would talk, laugh, and crack jokes as she busied herself with the other eight tasks. I don't really recall the words we exchanged - those seem to fade beside the recollection of that brilliant aura of hers.

Today, I continue to draw upon the energy of those warm, happy memories as I gently weave the tapestry that is my life. And one day, when it comes time for me to pass along that tapestry, be sure to examine it closely. You may notice a fine bit of detail that is woven from but a few precious strands that positively glow with joy and wit, compassion and strength - and they may even seem a bit familiar to you, as well they should. Because they're a gift from Moira. God Bless, Moira. And thank you. Pat Brown, Schererville, IN

April 2, 2003

My son Justin and I met Moira about three years ago. My son Justin is 13 years old and has cerebral palsy. We drove all the way from Dayton, OH to have her make Justin's braces for his legs. From the minute I met her there was an instant bond as I'm sure she had with all people she met. She was the kindest and most caring person I have ever met. She went out of her way for us every time we came to see her and made sure that we didn't have to wait long because of the long drive home for my son. We were at the hospital today for an appointment and I realized when I walked in that it wasn't the same. I wanted her to come around the corner and say "hi guys" It broke my heart when I first heard of Moira's illness and prayed every day for her recovery. We missed her yesterday and today and will miss her forever. She was a person that makes an impact in your life for whatever reason, through her work, her smile, her personality or her tremendous amount of energy. My son is non-verbal but I could tell he loved her and smiled at the sight of her. Every time we saw Moira she always spoke so highly of her children and family. I never had the opportunity to meet them but I saw their pictures and know that they are special because they came from her. In conclusion, we will never, never forget her and she will remain in our hearts forever. Our hearts go out to her family and through reading this web page I can see why she was the wonderful person that she was. God bless all of you!! Michelle & Justin Rose, Dayton, OH

April 9, 2003

From the start and until the very end, you showed us the way...to love, laugh and cry with abandon. We thank God for the time that we had you here with us. Far too short, but just long enough to bring the wonder. It is a terrible loss. Our thoughts are with you. We will always keep her in our prayers. My son's name is Jose, he was the one that Moira removed the casts on a Christmas morning, after his sister gave him a bath in them, We will always remember her. THANK YOU Idaliza Morales - Chicago, IL

April 9, 2003

From the start and until the very end, you showed us the way...to love, laugh and cry with abandon. We thank God for the time that we had you here with us. Far too short, but just long enough to bring the wonderful John and your five beautiful boys into our lives. Our blessings... Don't know how we will bear up without you down here. Our only consolation is knowing you are with us, always and everywhere.

A few weeks ago, one of our youngest family members said, "I can't talk to her, but if I whisper, she can hear me." Well, Moi, get ready. The whisper campaign has begun. In our darkest and finest hours, and all those in between, we will be whispering.

Thanks for being such a great big sister. Tobin Sister, Chicago, IL

***A TRIBUTE FROM CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL STAFF***

When God made Moira He threw away the mold,  
thought better of it then recast it in  
...her five sons, husband, family and friends she walked the earth with...  
...the minions of children she gave wings to  
by strengthening both limbs and hopes...  
... the amazing P.T. / R.S./Orthotics Teams  
who work miracles, magic and create memories daily at each other's sides.  
She taught all of us to stand a little straighter, live a little louder, laugh  
a little longer, love a little stronger, to use our talents widely and wildly,  
to live each day like it's our first and last, to remember adults have tickle spots  
just like kids, and to touch them often and joyously in ourselves and others.  
She taught young people not just how to walk, but how to reach for the stars...  
a child's first steps were often tumbling into Moira's arms.  
Moira was an I.V. to the soul... she was spirit and sunlight sutured to bone,  
she was there to support you, and to tell you when it was time to stand on your own.  
Grief is an imprecise science, we will all miss our cherished colleague  
in deep and diverse ways, for she taught us to live with velocity and voracity,  
vivacity and veracity...  
But for now, I'd like to think of her pioneering this passage that we'll all travel,  
with a high-kick into the sky, shimmering us with stars, passing the torch to us  
flame first, then tumbling into God's arms.  
My favorite picture of Moira is one that's blurred. It shows her in motion,  
motoring down the halls a kid crazy-glued to her hip, talking to / touching  
everyone along the way.  
When God called Moira back home He threw away the mold,  
thought better of it and recast it. It's here in everyone who carries on her magic,  
her passion for children, her love of family, her faith that all things  
are possible,  
her enduring love for Children's Memorial and all that it holds.  
She will never be far, Look just down the hall,

where  
blur  
becomes

*As I have looked through this site, I have realized how much my aunt has touched the lives of so many people. I think it is truly remarkable the effect she had on people once you got to know her. She has five loving and caring sons that show that.*  
Megan Wickes - Walden, NY

*vibration, becomes energy, becomes Moira,  
forever boundless in our hearts and souls.*

*Kathleen Keenan, Chicago, IL*

*March 19, 2003  
To the Tobin Wickes Family..  
I worked with Moira as a patient. I have many memories of her. She was determined to help me walk before my First Holy Communion when I was in grade school.  
On behalf of the Merlau family our prayers are with you.  
Alana Merlau, Evanston, IL  
p.s Thank you Moira for your time and commitment.*



<p><i><b>A SMALL STORY</b></i> (continued)</p> <p>By 1998, the department of orthotics had moved from a basement workroom to a full-fledged, fully staffed clinic. And its founder became its first director.</p> <p>When workers arrived to stencil "Moirra Tobin Wickes, Director" on the wall, she wouldn't let them leave until everyone's name was put up including the volunteers who had been coming every week for years to help her out. As far as she was concerned, names meant something.</p> <p>Right before Thanksgiving, Moira was diagnosed with aggressive, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Tragically, the disease was as unstoppable as Moira herself. She died March 10 at the age of 46.</p> <p>And ever since, I've been thinking about how we name things. And debating about whether to write this column at all because I'm one of those thousands of parents whose children walk better and stand straighter thanks to Moira.</p> <p>Maybe I'm too close to this to see clearly. I think Moira's clinic should be named the Moira Tobin Wickes Orthotics Clinic. She started it, she built it, and she still inspires it. Just ask the 1,500 people who packed Holy Name Cathedral for her funeral.</p> <p>But names on clinics are reserved for generous donors who give large financial gifts. I have great respect for people who use their wealth to help others. And I have great respect for Children's Memorial, which needs all the money it can raise to financially assist patients who can't pay for themselves.</p> <p>And if Children's Memorial or any hospital started naming things after dedicated staff, well, there would be a lot of people to name things after.</p> <p>I understand.</p> <p>So why should there be an exception in this case?</p> <p>Maybe because we're in danger of becoming as hardened as one of Moira's plaster casts to the notion that money is the only way to get anything done these days. Witness a ballpark on the South Side now named, for \$68 million, U.S. Cellular Field.</p> <p>That's an extreme example, but you see the point.</p> <p>Moira believed names should mean something. But as I think of it, she probably wouldn't tolerate the clinic being named for her anyway. Not unless there was a huge plaque on which everybody got the credit.</p>	<p>16, 2003</p> <p>d Moira e of those in ouched.</p> <p>splattered an making</p> <p>bral palsy red dren who</p> <p>order of lly lower</p> <p>it is, she</p> <p>do "serial ligaments</p> <p>old casts et plaster</p> <p>has casts re the ee.</p>
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May 24, 2003

She was wonderful with my sons serial casting for club foot. A great lady.  
Ryan Johnson, Villa Park, IL

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC THURSDAY, MAY 15, 2003

## Memorial draws family home to Phoenix

By Connie Cone Sexton  
The Arizona Republic

**PHOENIX** — Moira Tobin Wickes won't be coming home to Phoenix today but it is a homecoming, nevertheless.

Several of her 16 siblings are in town to honor her memory.

Moira died March 10 from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The Chicago resident was 46. She is the first of the 17 children born to Frank and Noreen Tobin to die. Both parents are still living.

The Tobin family, which took root in Phoenix during the 1970s and '80s, had all moved away over the years. But with Moira's death, they said they had to come back to the city she loved so dearly.

A memorial service will be held at 5:30 tonight at Brophy Chapel, 4701 N. Central Ave.

Word has gone out to the Xavier and Brophy high school classes of 1973 and 1974. Moira graduated in 1974.

All seven girls in her family attended Xavier. The 10 boys went to Brophy.

Their parents wanted their children to have a strong Catholic education.

"They wanted to give their children not only the experience of a tight-knit family but a gift of education," Moira's sister Kathleen Tobin, 38, said.

The Tobin siblings range in age from 53 to 29.

Moira was born in Chicago but it was Phoenix that gave her wings, her parents say.

She took flight at Xavier and became the good student, the one you could always count on for a smile, recalled Xavier Principal Joan Fitzgerald. "She was just always enthusiastic and very involved."

The family had a sprawling house near Central and Missouri avenues and it was where all the kids in the neighborhood

she did to help children walk.

Moira balanced her work with her home life with husband John and their five sons, age 4 to 17.

John Wickes, 49, remembers the first time he saw Moira. "She was beautiful and had a marvelous laugh. I was completely enamored."

They got married in 1983. "It would have been 20 years this August," John said.

He said he admired her courage as she battled her illness. "She truly faced it with a lot of courage," he said.

she did to help children walk.

Moira balanced her work with her home life with husband John and their five sons, age 4 to 17.

John Wickes, 49, remembers the first time he saw Moira. "She was beautiful and had a marvelous laugh. I was completely enamored."

They got married in 1983. "It would have been 20 years this August," John said.

He said he admired her courage as she battled her illness. "She truly faced it with a lot of courage," he said.



Courtesy of Tobin family

Moira Tobin Wickes (second from left in first row) stands with her 16 siblings and their parents at the wedding of her sister Rose on Feb. 16, 2002.

December 3, 2003

My daughter is a patient at Children's and of the orthotics department. Taylor will go in for casts a third time in March -- which is going to be very hard for us. I just wanted you to know that I too think of Moira and even though we had a patient/professional relationship she was very special and made Taylor feel like a winner. Knowing Moira and her passing has had such a profound impact on me -- one that I cannot explain or did not expect. Simply put, a testament of just how special Moira is. Your family is in my family's thoughts and prayers.

Aleatha Hoff, Chicago, IL

April 19, 2003

Moira, I shall always think of you playing your flute. Your wonderful family will miss your smiling face, but your incredible body of life's work will continue to help many people well into the future. Tim Sterling, Aptos, CA

Dear Wickes Family,

I met your wife/mother only once when my twin son had some casts made for his legs. It was a busy morning, but we had a pleasant conversation about living/raising kids in the city and schools. She talked a lot about her five sons (since I also have only boys), and she was very proud of them. Some people, just make an impression on you, and when I saw her picture in the paper this morning I remembered who she was and I was saddened. The world has lost one of its special rays of sunshine long before it should have gone out. As the Greeks say "Zoi se sas" (Life to you) and "Eonia i mnimi" (May her memory be eternal). My prayers go out to your family. Stephen Melonides, Chicago, IL

Dear Wickes and Tobin Families,  
We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to your family. Your family is in our thoughts and prayers. Hopefully the following prayer will give you some comfort.

**TOGETHERNESS - An Irish Prayer**

Death is nothing at all ...  
I have only slipped into the next room  
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.  
Call me by my old familiar name.  
Speak to me in the easy way in which you always used to.  
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.  
Play, smile, think of me, talk to me.  
Let my name be the household word it always was.  
Let it be spoken without effort.  
Life means all that it ever meant.  
It is the same as it ever was, there is absolutely unbroken continuity.  
Why should I be out of your mind, because I am out of your sight?  
I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just around the corner.  
All is well, nothing is passed, nothing is lost.  
One brief moment, and all will be as it was before ... only better ...  
infinitely happier ... and forever we will be one, together in eternity.  
The Heneghan Family, Chicago

The story I will tell my children about Aunt Moira will begin with the day we had to say goodbye.

Holy Name Cathedral was reserved for a private mass to begin at 1:00 on that chilly March 12th afternoon, but the crowds began to gather outside at 12:00. Five hundred copies of a program were made, and handed out at the door. Those five hundred copies were gone by 12:30. As we waited outside among friends, family and strangers- I began to realize- Moira meant something to each one of these people. She had touched the lives of each person standing there, and suddenly those strangers did not seem so unfamiliar. We watched as Children's Memorial Hospital dropped off busloads of people coming to pay their respects- nurses, doctor's and patients alike. It was touching to see so many people.

As we filed into the church I watched my grandfather, FX Tobin. In typical Tobin fashion, he stood as a pillar of strength greeting each person at the door. We took our seats and the ceremony began. I sat close to my Uncle Frank hoping to comfort him- as he in turn, comforted me. I tried to listen closely to each word spoken, careful not to miss a thought. Yet I couldn't help but get lost in her photo's on the altar. Was she smiling at everyone or just me?

Just when I felt myself slipping deeper into my tears, father Watts spoke out to the crowd. "People standing in the back- Come on in!" he cheered. I turned around to see that the crowd in church had spilled from seats, to standing room, and even out the door. In that moment, my tears of sorrow turned to wonder. She had sold out the cathedral!

What I did not know until that day, is what I know now. Our Aunt Moira helped to change the world. I realized then, that we hardly knew what a hero Moira was, until she was gone. She was more than a hero, she was a healer. I can say for sure now, that she was smiling at us from that altar. This time was a celebration of her young life. It was a fantastic celebration indeed.

Moira, I will miss your laugh, but I will keep your photos. Thank you for smiling. I will miss your kiss, but I hold dear each kiss you ever gave. I will miss your touch, but I am grateful to know you touched so many. I am so proud of the time I had with you, thank you for loving me so much. Your legacy will live on through your boys, who have proved to be strong men. I love them as I love you- endlessly.

Jocelyn Tobin, Oak Park, IL

I would just like to share my two happiest memories of Aunt Moira.

First, the image of showing up at her place right after we arrived in Chicago, getting up from the couch, giving me a huge hug, and opening her home, and her heart, to me. That feeling of loving and belonging will remain with me forever.

My second memory is of all the "Tobin Teens" (A name which we never consented to) in John and Steve's room, watching some movie when she walks in and asks us to switch it off, because it wasn't "appropriate" for Timmy or Louie.

We would first dismiss the request, but she would not take the "yeah, whatever aunt Moi!" for an answer.

By the end, she had us practically on our knees, begging to keep watching the movie. Then, with a cross of her arms, a smile, and a twinkle in her eye, she would say "well, okay..."

Thinking of her brings so many words to my mind. All I can say is, Aunt Moira, wherever you are, I will always love you!!!!

George Tobin, Foresthill, CA

Heaven's gain is earth's loss.

Anthony Brenner, Palatine, IL

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Tobin

You're in my thoughts all of the time. At this time of Thanksgiving, I was reflecting on how much I have to be grateful for in my life. Moira was truly one of the greatest gifts in my life.

I turned 50 in May, and it was one of the most memorable birthdays that I've ever had. There were no big parties or any hoopla, just some special time with family and friends. On November 26th, we celebrate Moira's 50th birthday. I'm going to celebrate and remember all of the fabulous times that we shared together. I'll dig out the old photo albums and pour a glass of wine, or perhaps two. If Moira were here, we would have shared the bottle! I'll laugh until I cry, at some of the antics that we pulled over the years.

I'll never forget when she cooked a turkey in a brown paper bag and caught the oven on fire. Or the time that she found the beautiful apartment on Sheridan Square and decided that we'd break our current lease and move out in the middle of the night. It seemed like a brilliant idea until the landlord sued us. I could go on: we had so much fun together over the years.

In my heart, Moira's birthday will be just as special and memorable as my 50th.

I'm so lucky to have her as a friend and part of my life. I often feel her beside me during tough or challenging moments. She was a friend that you could count on no matter what the circumstances were. She was like a rock, but a rock with a heart of gold. I wanted you to know that she is not forgotten on her birthday, or any other day. Moira's legacy will always live on.

They say that losing a child is the most difficult thing that a parent will face and I pray everyday that you're both doing well. You've raised the greatest family that I've ever seen. I know that you find strength, hope, and laughter and love in all of them. Here's to Moira's 50th! Happy Birthday and Cheers my dear friend!  
Love, Mary Claire

I was very saddened to hear of Moira's death. She was an incredible woman. My daughter Hilary, who is now 18 years old, was born with Spina Bifida. For many years we saw Moira at Children's Memorial. I will always remember her up-beat personality and great smile... and the way she made all of us, both parent and child, feel special. May her spirit be forever present in the lives of those she loved. With deepest sympathy. Heidi Hornsby - Morris, IL

Dear "All" ... And that means you, too, Moi.

How fantastic it's been reading notes from all corners of the country. And the Far East! And it was great to be reminded of the "other Moi" by Mary Claire. The Moi who set fire to the kitchen and moved out in the middle of the night. So great to get a laugh about her - and with her - today.

No, it doesn't seem like 4 years have passed - except that I do feel the 4 years' worth of healing. Now when I think of Moi, it makes me happy instead of just sad. I get flashes of her all the time. Especially when some tragedy has been averted - like somebody almost sideswipes me in traffic or a car I didn't see comes out of nowhere, or I miss an accident that happens just up ahead - I feel Moi on my shoulder getting me out of that jam. And she's laughing at me - as she always laughed heartily at inappropriate times.

Right now I feel her presence strongly hovering close to all of us. She's always with us - but this weekend even more so. I remember Fr. Wayne's instructions to us - "Go and be Moira to others in the world." I can see her spirit carried on in all of you.

And she - personally - is still working overtime. Let's face it - only Moi could see Nora safely through all the adventures she's having. It scares me just to READ about them. Then she's got to fly back here to get Audra & Noreen through freshman year, help Jocelyn with wedding plans (her favorite thing), Brian and Carl with children of their own, Molly's survival, Timmy's broken leg, Theona moving out of the house, Gene Jr. finding his own place in the sun, George lording it over the Loyola campus, Clara and Louie in a new school, Frankie making it happen in Sacramento, Danny figuring out Santa Barbara, Charlie's cross into manhood - Brigid and Betsy chomping at the bit, Pat's own "Miracle on 34th St.", Kevin's triumph in 8th grade, Erin waiting to make her mark, John & tribe's many trips across country, Marc's plane almost going down, but making it home to John Marcus, Matthew and Lizzie, the miracle of Barbara, Katie & Moi as Aunt Moi's new representatives, Eddie and Brendan (2 boys, just how she started), Annie's new job (and a new guy soon to arrive), Frank's new direction (and new guy soon to arrive), Billy Boy Tobin batting clean-up. WHEW!

And we're so grateful to you, Moi, for giving us your wonderful sons. They inspire us.

We're holding hands across the country today and tomorrow - as midnight here tolls the anniversary of her passing. Moi's in the middle of our circle of love.

I LOVE YOU!! Noreen

re: Miracles this week  
Family and friends...

First and foremost, I decided to re-title this chain letter "miracles every day", because I think we can all agree each day we are lucky enough to enjoy is absolutely a miracle in itself. While this past week has been a blessing to read all of these letters and realize that just when you thought you knew Aunt Moi and all of those wonderful attributes of hers, you really have no idea (set the kitchen on fire and moved out in the middle of the night?...i love it!)

Yes, miracles abound! It's a miracle that we have the ultimate privilege to find Moi in our own individual lives every single day. It's a miracle that we have so much love for her and for one another, and this email chain is absolutely symbolic of our solidarity as a family. Moi is indeed the cohesion that keeps us together. She provides us with gentle reminders to keep the faith, and though this much easier said than done, it doesn't seem as daunting when we know she's right there with us.

At the beginning of this year, I had a very personal moment with Aunt Moi: A new semester was just on the horizon, and I have to admit that I was a bit apprehensive. While I had been enjoying the freedom of the past couple years out of high school - living on my own, exploring the notion of "responsibility" - college had somehow (I have NO idea how this could have happened!!) become more of a hobby than an occupation. Being the optimist that I am (another wonderful trait of Moi's), I believe regretting your decisions can very easily become a slippery slope, but this is in no way a cop-out. It's important to take those mistakes and learn from them. I knew it was time I got proactive about my education. This is where my apprehension came in. It all was a little overwhelming: the idea of getting back into classes full time, dusting the cob webs off of my study habits, etc. But, as my Dad the philosopher likes to point out, "It's those situations we'd rather not be in that agitate the most change in us." Oh, how true that is.

While registering for the upcoming semester, I became aware of the fact that if I was going to tackle this semester head on, I needed to restructure my time, and that meant leaving the restaurant I had been working at the last year and a half. It wasn't feasible to work evenings any longer; I needed that time for homework. I found myself in a quandary: What the heck am I going to do for a part time job?? ... enter Moi. Boy, does she work in mysterious ways. I really believe she was looking down on me, observing my frustration but knowing that all of this was for a goal that was important. I was praying for the guidance I needed to make this leap of faith. Well, no sooner than a few days later I received a call which I really believe Aunt Moi had orchestrated herself. It was my old boss from Auburn, calling to see how life was treating me in Sacramento, and by the way was I interested in a part time job? My previous employer, a durable medical equipment distributor, had recently invested in an orthotics and prosthetics division, and this office, located in Sacramento, needed a part time office manager! Where did I need to sign?! Now, a few months into the semester, I am enrolled in five demanding classes, recently completed my mid-terms, and passing with flying colors. And, just as important, I come to my wonderful job three days a week and am constantly reminded of Aunt Moi and the dedicated work she did at the hospital. I am so lucky to be able to be a first-hand witness of the amazing phenomena of healing and recovery, and to know that my aunt facilitated this miracle every day with her patients is so incredible. This is my personal bond with Aunt Moi. She helped make this happen for me, and she's making sure I don't forget it. Like Fr. Wayne said, "Go and be Moira to others in the world." Every time I interact with a patient, this is my own special way to accomplish that miracle.

Can't wait to see you all in July...Including you, Aunt Moi. I love you Aunt Moi. And I love you all as well. XOXO, Frankie

... left off the list, and she won't let me forget about it. My own Sean, valiantly pursuing post-college life, Molly's brave older sister Bridget - and hero parents Bob & Marlene, Katie & Don - keeping all of us anchored, Vince (a Timmy Drake look-alike), Megan, Moi's namesake Moira and my Billy - and how could I misspell lovely Bella's dad's name? KARL! Frankie's note gave me goose bumps. As Moi would say, "It'll all work out." Love again, Norn



Sorry for your loss. Moira was such a cheerful wonderful person.

*I will always remember are days on swim team and singing at her parent's house.*

*I ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO MOIRA SHE WAS ALWAYS SO NICE TO ME.*

Margaret Kussmann Hair, Downers Grove, IL

No words can express the way that I feel at your passing.

*From the time I met you at Mundelein College in the 70's, sharing an apartment on North Shore Avenue to our most recent involvement working with "the kids", you as the orthotist and me as the PT trying to make a difference.*

*You are a woman of substance... someone who truly gave of themselves. I will miss your smiling face and think of you often. Goodbye...say hello to Joanne for me...I'll see you on the other side...Love Maureen*

Maureen Ward Corcoran, Lincolnwood, IL

March 13, 2003

*Our family would like to express our condolences to all of you. We met Moira almost two years ago, when our youngest child, Louis, was born with club feet. Moira was a good person, caring for others, and gave us support and answers when we needed. Moira and others at Children's Memorial Hospital played a major role in the life of our son, Louis, and we will always remember their generosity. We are deeply touched by her loss, and cannot express how sorry we are. She was proud of her husband and children, whom she mentioned often during her daily work. Agnes, Stan, and Edward Brooks Chicago, IL*

*In moments like these, I always hoped to encapsulate my sentiments in a raw and eloquent manner. But I'm still not sure what they are, and when I need it most, language proves far too inefficient as I try to conceptualize who my Aunt Moira was and the love I had for her. I have memories of her, but like a painting you gazed upon, or a song you heard when you were driving home alone one night, you're itching to tell others about it, but something will always get lost in the translation. I have memories of her, and all of the people I love, and no matter where they are now, though I may see them every day or never again, I can smile, content that I have those memories that are just for me. They make up the footprints of love, and with this great big family, I'm secure in the knowledge that when I look, they'll always be back there. My heart goes out to the Wickes family, they were always the first thing I thought about when I pictured Chicago. And the second thing was that pizza place down the street from them because, man, that was some good pizza.*

Gene O'Neill III, Sherman Oaks, CA

*I remember the first time I met Moira in Coffey Hall at Mundelein College. She had just come in from a jog along the lake. I was 12 years old and I remember thinking that she was the first truly extraordinary human being I had ever met in my life. Since that first meeting and the 30 years that followed, knowing Moira has been one of the greatest joys in my life. Whenever I talked about Moira I told friends that the "Light of God" was constantly shining through her and blessing everyone around her. I feel so blessed for all the wonderful memories that I carry of this dear friend and I truly believe I am a better human being as a direct result of Moira's rich legacy she has left behind. I know that Moira was blessed with such a great family. I adore John Wickes, their five extraordinary children and all the equally inspiring brothers and sisters of Moira, as well as Moira's Mom and Dad. And I know in my heart that as I continue my life journey, Moira's friendship and unconditional love will be remembered, celebrated and esteemed. For I know that my life has been immeasurably enriched knowing Moira Tobin Wickes, one of the God's greatest creations. Both David and myself extend our deepest sympathy and love to Moira's family and her family of friends. John Mahady, Chicago, IL*

*The tears flow easily, in between the images and memories of you, Moira; your abundant, positive energy ever palpable in the hearts of so many, in my own heart even still. For you lived more and made more living possible for others, than most of us could ever imagine doing. We mourn losing you.... and find strength in all you were. We are grateful to your family for sharing you so fully and pray for their peace and comfort during these sad days.*

Wendy, Bill and Trevor Stewart - Madison, WI

From an "Outlaw" perspective....

*I'll always think of Moi as "other-oriented"...Whenever we happily assembled at one of our recent gatherings, I can see her sitting poolside with one eye watching out for all the kids. She and John came to New York and stayed with Gene III when Sean was born. In recent years, Moira offered the expert expensive services of a noted plastic surgeon--gratis, for Gene's arm scar. (Don't know if he/she knew of this donation, but Moira would have arranged it, I'm sure if desired). When Noreen came to Chicago for the bone marrow check, she told Moira that I'd been in a car accident and suffered a compressed disc. Anti-inflammatories were proscribed and some physical therapy. Moira gave strict instructions for Noreen to relay to me. Don't overdo the exercises, no lifting weights, cold rather than warm compresses etc. Even when she was gravely ill, still thinking of others. (Or long-distance nagging--both appreciated)*

*To John, John, Steven, Tim, Eddie and Robert, I offer the following; borrowing from the Bard and transposing some lines of Juliet's about Romeo...*

Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-browed night.

Give us our Moira, and when she shall die

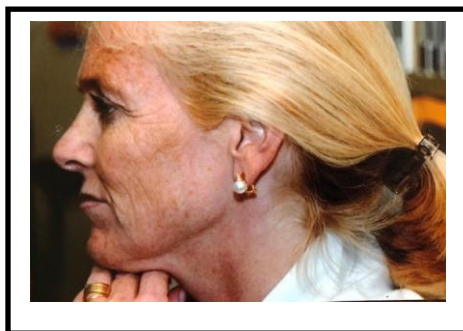
Take her and cut her out in little stars

And she will make the face of heaven so fine

That all the world will be in love with night

and pay no worship to the garish sun

Gene O'Neill, Sherman Oaks, CA



Moira, My little "steel magnolia," now blossoms in a better place.

I know I speak on behalf of the Wickes and Tobin family when I acknowledge the following:

To our beloved brother-in-law, John, Moira's husband and life partner, thank you for your dignity, grace and courage in all that you have endured since November and thank you for your unconditional love for Moira and for making all of Moira's dreams come true;

To John and Moira's sons, THE FIVE FABULOUS WICKES BOYS -- John, Jr., Steve, Tim, Master Ed and Robert, thank you for your courage in getting through these difficult days, and the love you have always shown your mom, our dear sister Moira;

To Moira and John's parents, Frank and Noreen, and Steve and Catherine, thank you for all the love you have shown all of us, for your example, for living your lives in the true spirit of the Judeo Christian tradition, and for teaching us, and everyone, what family really means;

To my surviving 15 Tobin siblings and their spouses, although the magic circle has been broken, we will always remember Moira and miss her forever; to my sister Kathy, the bone marrow donor for Moira, who was our shining light through every awful minute of this tragedy;

To the next generation of the Tobin family, the nearly four dozen Tobin cousins, led by Bob (Marliene), Katie (Don), Brian, Karl, Theona, Jocelyn, and on down the line, who, by their leadership, presence, their humour, and their love, helped all of us, and most of all their Wickes cousins, to deal with this unbearable pain; You all will carry the memory and legacy of Moira to the next 40 generations of Tobins;

To Father Wayne, Msgr. Cardiff and Father Keneally, who gave us the strength to get through Wednesday's beautiful service;

To all of our cousins, the Tobins, Mayers and Carruths from Ohio, the Bangerts from California, the Gillespies, Reidy, Flaherty and O'Neill families from Chicago, thank you for your presence and your love;

To all of the Tobin family friends, the Maier and Kussman families from Queen of Angels, Moira's friends from Phoenix (Mary and Mike and others), the swim team families, the neighbors from EBA and all of the other members' of Moira and John's community of friends, who by their presence, testified to the achievements of this great woman;

To the administration, teaching staff and alumnae of Mundelein College, you guided, nurtured and loved Moira; To the staff of the Oncology Department of Northwestern Hospital, thank you for your care and love for my sister;

To the staff of Children's Memorial Hospital of Chicago, thank you for inspiring and supporting Moira's great work so that she could reach the heights she did;

To God, you have shouted and now we have listened, as Father Wayne says. Thank

*Moira was my colleague and friend since my first day at Children's in 1987. She made me feel so welcome and so valued from the very start.*

*Moira has been on my mind and in my heart ever since... I feel privileged to have worked together and to have shared her friendship. You just don't have the opportunity to meet many individuals with such amazing talents and a tremendous ability to demonstrate genuine love and caring for others.*

*The thing I admire most about her, though, is that she was a role-model mother. She and John started their family a couple of years before Bill and me. When I was expecting my first child, I remember hoping and praying that I would be as good a mother as Moira. She balanced so many things and made it look easy!*

*Moira was an amazingly effective clinician, but there was never any doubt that her boys were her #1 priority. She taught me so much about mothering, and about loving each child as the amazing gift from God that they are.*

*May Moira's goodness and love live on in those who were blessed to know her!*  
*Maureen Windmoeller, La Grange, IL*

*Moira's passing is a devastating loss to all who knew her, even marginally. But her life, her spirit, her legacy live on in the bright shining eyes of her sons, and her husband, and her family and friends. I can't think of a single person more unfairly removed from this earth. I also can't think of anyone who was more of an angel on earth, loving and sensitive, giving of spirit and time. I join her family and friends, my friend John and the boys I like so much, in mourning Moira. And celebrating her life as well.*  
*Jan Arnopolin, Chicago, IL*

*Frank & Noreen:*

*Our deepest sympathies to you and your family. While your time with Moira was short, the love and kindness you have was three times the amount anyone else would have been able to give to her in 46 years. Our thoughts are with you.*

*Debra & Steven Parsow, Omaha, NE*

*Dear John and Sons,*

*This quote from Moira's epitaph "... literally thousands of children are able to walk, and run, and lead normal lives as a result of the pioneering work that Moira undertook with her colleagues at Children's Memorial Hospital..." is absolutely true and my child is one of them.*

*Moira was my child's orthotist for over fourteen years. Moira always extended herself, gave freely of her time and God given talent.*

*She was always professional, patient and above all, kind.*

*She spoke often of you and her "fellas" and her love for her family was always evident, we feel as if we know you and your sons because of her.*

*We love and miss her. Kathryn Durkin, Chicago, IL*

*I would hope that people celebrate my mother's life and everything that she has done rather than mourn her death.*

*She was a wonderful person and always thought of others before herself.*

*In my opinion, now was not her time, but God thought differently.*

*Heaven is the place that he wants her to be.*

*On behalf of my family and I, I would like to thank everyone's thoughts and prayers.*

*Tim Wickes, Chicago, IL*

*In a phone conversation this morning, my sister Elisabeth marveled at the number of people that Moira had touched in her life. She said that to have a legacy like Moira has is so rare and precious. To know that Moira has helped so many children learn to walk has earned Moira a spot in their hearts forever.*

*This "outlaw" has so many great memories of Moira. Moi fussed over me on a regular basis. Most recently, she was worried about my wrists and had already begun planning to design special wrist braces for me. Imagine that, with all that she had been through and just days before beginning the bone marrow transplant, Moi was reviewing the do's and don't of carpal tunnel with me. What an amazing woman. When my children were sick Moira would lend support. I can hear her saying, "ice chips, Di", anytime my children had fevers. I could always count on her for a boost to my spirits.*

*As I finish this, Erin is sitting on my lap. She loves her Aunt Moira. Erin joins the Moiras as a child who sucked her middle fingers as a baby and continues to wear her socks inside out so that the seams don't bother her toes.*

*Diane (Jennings) Tobin, Foresthill, CA*

When I have the chance, I try to read the daily reflections from the "Daily Bread" booklets from Marc & Virg. I was doing a reading the other day and came across a piece of paper slipped into my bible....a daily reflection that I had clipped out a few years back....it was dated November 26, 2003.

"As Paul said, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). To those of us who have lost someone dear, heaven becomes even more real. We know that as we talk with God, we are talking to Someone who holds our (Moir) in his presence."

Some of you may recall that when Annie was just 2 or 3, her crib was right next to the telephone. Since the phone was always for Moi, some of her earliest words were, "Moouooooooooooooiraaaaaaaaaaaaaa, te-le-phone." Well, one day, Annie bounced off one of the big girl's beds and wound up in the hospital. She was unconscious for quite some time, and no one knew which way it was going to go. That is until a hospital phone rang, and Annie piped up and said, "Moouooooooooooooiraaaaaaaaaaaaaa, te-le-phone."

Fast forward 32 years. When our little Kate calls after her sister she says ,..."Moouooooooooooooiraaaaaaaaaaaaaa." One day, I piped back "te-le-phone." Now, at random times, Kate lets loose with "Moouooooooooooooiraaaaaaaaaaaaaa, te-le- hone." And I take the cue to raise my eyes, wipe a tear, and have a few words with my big sister...who always did love to dish.

I want her here now ... .but for now I must settle for long distance. Thank God I have all of you. Love, Rose

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*To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Moira, you more than succeeded, you excelled in all that you did. I will miss you dearly. To John and all of your Spirited Sons: You are and you will continue to be because of Moira, your wife and Mom. A beautiful, gifted woman who has inspired me ever since I worked with her at Children's back in 1991. You will be in my thoughts and prayers to have peace and serenity in cherishing all the memories you have created as a family.

Kathy Mallon Hassen, North Branford, CT

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There are about three or four days every year when it so happens that if it is not cloudy in March and October as the sun marches north and south, it sets between my west neighbors' houses. And to all you young ones out there, I know it's the earth moving and not the sun, but 'm from a primitive tribe and believe every day to look to the east for the rising sun and at sunset look to the west.

I don't want to be droll on the rotation and tilt of mother earth except that it's damn cold here in January and hot in August in Chicago. Coincidence? I think not. But anyhow when the sun sets on these twelve days of the year and the clouds are not there, the sun plays perfectly through a couple of stain glass windows that we purchased as if the setting sun would come through 365 days of the year. I'm an optimist and the house across the street might be razed and they might put up a one-story ranch.

Well my brothers and sisters, this is all preamble to seeing the sunset come into my front room and flowing through my kitchen. Little Michael, who I think might need an angel before it's all done, had just come off a time out and was sitting across from me as I faced west. Somehow the sun shown through his hair that I like to call "Frank red" and I thought to myself: "wouldn't Moira like to see you now!"

She was the one who took the respirator out of her mouth to urge Jocelyn on when Jocelyn was seven weeks away from delivery and dear Moira was two days away from her delivery. I will never forget her under constant monitoring of a nurse, slipping off her respirator to say to Jocelyn "Take care of that baby! Take care of that baby!" and as the nurse scolded her I think my sister said, "oh shut up" rolling her eyes. Knowing her medical background and knowing her sweet nature I too advised the nurse to keep her tongue. If my sister says "shut up", you better shut up.

Well anyhow, the sun came in, the thoughts flowed, Michael had put his tears behind him and wanted more treats, the phone rang and it was Lynda saying she was on the way home and I could barely get it together. I've become an emotional housewife. I gotta get back to work and soon.

Your brother Michael

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Kathleen Zahner, North Miami Beach, FL

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*Peggy Richard, Chicago, IL*

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*Peggy Richard, Chicago, IL*



Winter Break, 1998

I was headed out to Edge Water Beach to spend the night with the Wickes boys. I was filled with excitement, and anticipation knowing that I was going to have a wonderful time with my cousins. My Dad dropped me off at Aunt Moira and Uncle John's old apartment on the ninth floor. The minute I walked in, my first move was to run to Steve and John's bedroom (but first saying hello to Aunt Moira and Uncle John of course). To my disappointment the boys were already downstairs at the pool, and what are the odds that I forgot to bring my bathing suit with me. Without hesitation Aunt Moi offered her bathing suit for me to use, and I quickly accepted the offer.

Somehow, unbelievably... Aunt Moira's bathing suit fit me, and I was only in the 6th grade (hard to believe that her little body was the same size as me at age twelve)!! As soon as I was changed Aunt Moira brushed and put my hair up in a pony tail so it wouldn't get tangled in the water. As soon as she was done brushing my hair, I immediately turned around and started playing with her hair as well. We got so carried away with each other that soon enough the boys had already come back from the pool, and it was dinner time.

The next day (after a night of playing and laughing with my cousins), Aunt Moi took me out to get a manicure for the first time with Aunt Virginia. Never did I actually feel that certain, indescribable feeling till that day. After a long day of getting pampered with our manicures, Aunt Moira and I rested on the family room couch talking and visiting. She told me how much she loved me, and how nice it was to play with our hair, and nails (something she usually didn't do with all her nieces). I went to the city to spend one night there, I found myself spending the rest of my winter break with the Wickes family. I really didn't realize how important that day was until now. Aunt Moira loved all her boys everlasting, but she told me how much she loved having a girl around the house sometimes. And I loved being that girl.

I am a proud niece of my Aunt Moira, A proud God Daughter of my Aunt Moira, but most of all I am proud of Moira, and all her accomplishments. Never could I think that just one person can literally change the lives of so many. Never could I think that someone could do so much in the time she was with us. It is an honor to say that Moira was my Aunt and Godmother, and never will I forget that.

Grandma told me that God has a plan for everything, and that God must want Aunt Moira to be with him. Can you only imagine the amount of desire

Dear Mr. Wickes and boys,

I only met your Mother once, but from what I have read here and the outpouring of love respect at her service, it is evident she was a treasure to all who knew her. I know she must have been a gifted Mother to have raised such wonderful sons. You will be in my thoughts and prayers.  
Maureen Finch, Oak Park, IL

(Re)Birth Day  
3/7/04

*It's either a day or a decade.*

*Can't be just a year!*

*How many remembrances?*

*How many a tear?*

*You left oh! so quickly,*

*yet still seem quite near.*

*When we wonder: "Can I do it?"*

*your "yessss!!" still rings clear.*

*When those cliffs that we're climbing*

*seem most dauntingly sheer,*

*we get reminded, and hold*

*our fond memories more dear.*

*And whenever we forgot*

*how to get into gear,*

*you'd be there with a smile*

*and swift kick in the rear.*

*Or, at the end, when we all tried*

*to bring you good cheer,*

*it was YOU who told US*

*there was nothing to fear.*

*So when life's looming*

*challenges appear,*

*I feel my chances are good*

*'cause you're so close to God's ear.*

*Your spirit still guides us*

*as on our path we steer,*

*always believing -- nay knowing --*

*that you're always here.*

*Link to the PBS/BBS special on "Medical Pioneers" that  
features the Children's Hospital serial casting program:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCKp-aq5d4Q>*

Moira,

I want to thank you for your dedication in your work, which has helped me so much. For the short time I've known you, you were always kind, generous and greeted me with delight. You have helped so many, now it is time to rest. May God bless you and your family because I know He blessed me with knowing you.

With Love and Sympathy,  
Zachary and his Family - Chicago, IL

October 21, 2004

*I miss Moira very much.*

*I am one of Moira's ten brothers and she is one of my seven sisters. She is the 7th child and I am the 11th. Moira was born after a string of 4 boys and followed by a string of another 4 boys. I believe this birth order contributed to Moira's people skills.*

*More important were her parents, Frank and Noreen Tobin and her husband John Wickes. From my perspective, the good works Moira was able to do were made possible by and a direct reflection of the constant love, support and guidance of her parents and her husband John.*

*Tomorrow, 10/22/04, Moira will be a posthumous recipient of the Community Leadership Award presented by the United Cerebral Palsy of Greater Chicago. Reading all the wonderful entries in the Tribune guest book and watching the PBS videos give me a clear understanding of why she will receive this award.*

*Moira's extended family will be gathering in Chicago this week-end to celebrate her life. Moira was a second mother to me. My earliest memories are of her and her Queen of Angels elementary school girl friends giving me kisses in the front hall of our Artesian Avenue, North-side Chicago home. From there on it is not any specific memory but rather Moira always "checking in" with no formalities. "How's it going?" "Tell me what's up." Always cutting to the chase and in a few seconds getting to the heart of where I was at the time.*

*Moira was always the fun-loving leader of the pack, always a people person wise beyond her years. She never took herself or any else too seriously. Her concern for others was ever present. Her relationship with me was always one on one, unique, and it continues the same to this day. I LOVE YOU MOI !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! John Tobin, Cleveland, OH*

Dear My Amazing Family,

*I only have a few minutes to check the e-mail because we have to catch the train but I just wanted to write and tell everyone how much I enjoy reading the stories of Aunt Moi. I wish I could be with the whole family this month and experience the incredible Tobin love. Although I cannot physically be with any of you guys, I have everyone with me always. I can feel our family love all the way across the world. I have each one of you with me through this whole trip and I can feel Aunt Moi and Michael right here making sure I can feel all of the love. I love all of you so much. I feel like the luckiest girl in the world to be part of our family. I love you all Love, Nora*

October 28, 2004

*I and many of my family members continue to have dreams about Moira, and we're amazed at how consistent she is in her new "life" as she was here on Earth. In our dreams she is smiling and re-assuring us. And, in typical Moi fashion, she's always showing up when we most need her.*

*She's told some of us that she's "fine" or that she's "happy." Or when we ask her if she's really here, she says "YES! I'm here!" And most often and most like her, she tells us "everything is going to be OK!"*

*We hear you, Moi, and we're still listening and we still need you... STAY IN TOUCH. We love you!*

*Moira's sister, Chicago, IL*

November 29, 2005

*We feel so lucky that we were able to have a small piece of Moira while she was on this earth. We met her because my son went through the casting program and I can honestly say she was able to bring so much positivity to an otherwise stressful situation. We are forever appreciative of the care and sensitivity that she showed our family. My heart goes out to her family and those who knew her best. Thank you, Moira. Clara Prouty, Oak Park, IL*

March 9, 2006

*On this morning of mournings I want to let you know I am thinking of my brothers and sisters. e are less by subtraction. No God nor anybody else, can sell me any different. However, and together we have the will to move on, to go forward. Together, we will go to a place that is free of guilt and free of sorrow. And it will be a place full of promise of that which is yet to come.*

*I have to admit that Moira was my girl. She had many other fans from all points around the globe. She had a great husband and family of great five boys. This was Moira's great accomplishment. One look at any of the boys and you will see Moira's stamp. I was always regarded her as my friend even though we saw each other not enough. She was a beauty. Always on cue. Always focused, even when she was hospitalized in intensive care with a dew rag on from chemo therapy, she greeted me every day like she was running for mayor.*

*I had a lot of laughs with Moira in my life and in hers. I can remember almost every one. But right now I remember the days we spent in her hospital room. The nurses would say "no admittance, not today", but I was always hard of hearing, and Moira was a rebel, and loved that I made it through it somehow. We would talk for an hour, mostly about the continuing Tobin soap opera. At the end of every session Moira would say to me, "Okay Mike, no more gossip about the family" and I would say, "Well Moira what ever would we talk about". And she would laugh. And I would say good night, and pass thirty-five people on the way to the elevator who had no idea.*

*I LOVE YOU MOIRA AND I LOVE ALL MY BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S AND MY MOM AND DAD. Love, Your brother Michael*

March 7, 2006

Not a day passes where you are not in my thoughts. With March 10th approaching the thoughts are even more, and your name is heard throughout the day. We are all working so hard to keep your dreams alive, and the kids are doing great. You have taught me so much, and I still find myself turning to you to find the answers. My friend Erin, who has been my friend for 32 years, finally convinced me that you would be so sad to know that I am still so sad. So in true Moira fashion I was told to put a smile back on my face and celebrate March 10th every year. This tradition started last year with Erin in Atlanta and this year will be in San Francisco. There will surely be a toast to Moira this Friday. You are still the first person I say good morning to when I walk into the office, and the last person I say good night to when leaving. Thank you for being such an inspiration. I miss you so much, but I know you are still always there when I need you. I love you Moira! Brigid Driscoll, Chicago, IL

I wish I could say something that I felt would not sound superficial, but somehow, I lack the words. I'm more sorry than I can say in words, but am thankful that Moira graced the earth for the little time we could have her. Your family is and will remain in my thoughts and prayers. Love, Katherine Jacob, Chicago, IL

March 10th, 2006

FOUR YEARS GONE- Part I

subtle signals  
telltale signs  
baffling mysteries

the search for life  
before death  
elusive enough

the spirit of life  
dwelling within  
readily available

the meaning of life  
hides in plain sight  
largely ignored

the value of life  
often unappreciated  
rarely over-estimated

the beginning of life  
neither starting at birth  
nor ending in death

the living of life  
fulltime job  
fringe benefits aplenty

the way of life  
easily lost  
persistence required

March 11th, 2006

FOUR YEARS GONE- Part II

Our search for life before death  
can distract us from the here and hereafter,  
blocking us from the benefits of both and  
often leading to preventable disaster.

Yet constant messages and mystical sounds  
too loud and obvious to ignore  
hint at the possibility  
that spirits flutter behind our closed doors.

Or, perhaps worse, just outside our window,  
silent witness to each action and thought.  
Might there be no such thing as "hidden agendas"?  
No such thing as not getting caught?

Of course, we resist considering this option  
For all the problems it engenders,  
but this denies the benefits of Divine Guidance available, if so we choose.

There's ultimately no way of proving  
whether there's any "there" after here  
except for the undeniable evidence  
of how better life is when we decide to stay near.

To live every moment as if someone's watching,  
noting well what we think, say and do  
matters less in the final analysis than  
whether we're done by the time that we're through

To make the most of life's opportunities,  
why not allow spirits who lost theirs be our guide?  
It we're right, it leaves fewer stairs up to heaven.  
If we're wrong, well then what's the down-side?

October 7, 2006

I think about Moira on a daily basis. I was having the hardest time even coming back to this website but when I think of her beautiful smile and her strength alone it encourages me in many ways. I am still in my mind Moira's personal assistant and I am diligently and loyally keeping The Moira Tobin Wickes Orthotics Program in order. and consistent on how she have wanted it to be.(smile) I realize that all the people who love her or ever graced her presence will make it a point to fulfill her destiny and all of her visions. I will to do my best to play a significant part in carrying on her legacy. Moira changed my life in many ways by just believing in me. Every day when i see my daughter Ki'Moira running around, never tired, continuously smiling, i know that it is truly power in a name and her spirit lives on. I love you (my Moira) and I always will. I have plenty of things to tell and teach my daughter about you!!!! Kimberly Jenkins, Chicago, IL

March 6, 2007

Last night I started to write a St. Patrick's Day note (see below) which eventually became a Moira note because all thoughts eventually go there. And also I wanted to complain about the weather ... "Global Warming"...my ass.

Then we got Frank's email today and for once in my life I was ahead of a deadline. Coincidence I think not. We've experienced a couple of these this week like "Tiny Dancer" on the radio just when you need it. Lynda also pulled out the 2005 relic (I had no idea she kept this stuff) written during another knee operation recovery, and it just goes to show you how far I haven't gone.

They say "time heals all wounds". Let's hope they're right. We have to look to the future and give ourselves all the "time" we can. And then stick around a little longer just to piss the right people off.

Mike

March 5, 2007

Truly the winter of our discontent.

The calendar points toward Spring, but Old Man Winter continues to grip us, and makes our hope of spring just that, a hope and a prayer. But it will come, after all the three-week celebration of St. Patrick's Day (in Chicago it's not a day, it's a month) has already begun in surrounding suburbs this past March 3rd weekend, not wanting to compete with the south side parade March 16th or the original downtown parade March 17th. Saints be praised, imagine a St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 17th! The newly re-elected Mayor Daley (again) really must have some clout. The Plumber's Union Local 130 will re-arrange their lives, as they will the rest of the year, but be at Columbus and Balboa on the day as scheduled. I will see you there on the big day.

They call it the Ides of March, but I call it "Moira Days". These are the days when we think of our sister and if it weren't for the calendar I have, it's the only time I see the setting sun go down all year between my western neighbor's houses. I know you might have read this before when I described Moira's Day and how the sun caught another red head's hair...Michael. Well this former redhead is thinking of those two particular redheads, and also of each of you and our mutual connection tonight. They are sorely missed.

"Let the cold and it's brother the wind do their damnest. They know naught what I'm made of." I can say that now. It's almost mid-March.

The quote is well - just made up. Some would say a fictional account but I needed a closer. Everyone seems to blend fact and fiction these days whether they be writer's or even politicians.

Mike

Each anniversary if Moira's death brings great sadness for myself and my sons. I will never understand why such a good person like Moira was taken from us. But, I am buoyed by her successes with her patients, the courage of our wonderful sons, and the people who take the time to remember her.

Thank you. John Wickes, Chicago, IL

March 6, 2007

Mike (and everyone)

Now that you have made me cry...here's my payback.

I've never forgotten your imagery of the sunset flaming up in the western sky and coming through the stain glass windows to catch Michael's red hair in your kitchen ...

A memory that I have that I don't believe I have shared with everyone is the following: several years before Moira's death, maybe in 1999 or 2000, I had this unsettling nightmare or possibly a daydream where I visualized Moira

with two babies -- one in each arm -- and she was so happy. In my dream, I asked Moira who they were and she said "these are my other two babies" and that she was so glad that she had "found" them. Sounds crazy, right?

I remember the shock that went through me as I realized right then and there that this couldn't possibly have (or be) happening unless Moira, indeed died.

I never told anyone -- including her -- this story until sometime after she died. Right around the time most of my sisters and sisters-in-laws reported dreams of seeing Moira...and some said she was carrying something in both arms. Maybe it was the power of suggestion of our collective subconscious, I don't know. I have dreamed of Moira once or twice since then but will save those recollections for another time. All I know is that in my mind's eye I still see Moira, and she is still carrying something in both arms...and a little redheaded boy named Michael has his arms wrapped around her neck... and she (and he) are still so very happy and are having the grandest time with the communion of the saints...

Love, Frank

March 6, 2007

Thanks for getting us rolling Mike and Frank...

Rose and I spent this afternoon/evening over at Mom and Dad's and I'm happy to report (though you all know this) that Moira's presence is happy and alive and well... here, there and everywhere.

In fact, while we were there, Stevie called to check in on Dad and thank Mom for her birthday gift. As mom said, it wasn't enough to pay a parking meter, but Mom and Dad so loved hearing from him and I know Moi was not only beaming with pride, but probably dialing the number for Steve, as well.

As much time as I spent with Moi, I'm coming to think that we know each other better now than ever. I am ever aware of her support and optimism -- and many times I find her very words coming out of my mouth, especially when I'm with my boys. And as I grow (older), I better understand what she accomplished while she was here.

I know that many of us have had a similar dream in which Moi is with us and we ask her over and over, "You're really here???" And she always says, "YES!" So of course she is with us... who else but Moi would come back to the party to let us know that SHE' STILL HERE? I truly believe Moi is still doing what she does best... one arm around the baby (Michael) and an eye and ear out for each and every one of us. Keep talking to her... IT WORKS!!!

I LOVE YOU ALL!!! Marg



### **PERSON OF THE YEAR: UNITED CEREBAL PALSY ASSOCIATION**

Tonight we are gathered to honor the presence of a unique woman, undaunted maverick, determined pioneer, incredible healer, ...and a swim team mom.

Moira Tobin Wickes has a BIG DREAM --one that touches and changes the lives of thousands of children who are born with conditions that, to many, seem like a life-long burden. To Moira, such challenges are imposing, but not necessarily inevitable.

Through an innovative alternative to painful, repetitive surgery, Moira's dream makes it possible for these kids to walk, to run, to enjoy life... and, in short... to be just like the other kids. But her healing work involved more than the body. The spirit needs healing too.

Moira's tools for this job? faith, hope, love ... and a REALLY zany sense of humor. Reading kids stories, telling them jokes, just hugging them, ... doing whatever it took to get them to smile, make them to feel safe and help them know what it is like to be accepted for who they are... however they are. Reaching out to those who can't walk, Moira walks into their lives and hearts, forever changing the world for these children -- and their parents -- one step at a time.

Growing up on Chicago's North Side, Moira is the 7th of 17 children in the very close-knit family of Frank and Noreen Tobin, most of whom are with us here tonight. Born in the heart of this family, Moira soon became the family's heart, its conscience ... and occasionally its physical therapist. Moira's life and work embodies her parents' shining example of unconditional love, service to others, and an unshakable belief in the achievability of dreams.

As a teenager in Phoenix, Arizona, she was a Xavier High School volleyball star and enjoyed life in the desert. But for Moira, Chicago was always, as Frank Sinatra called it, "my kind of town". She soon returned to attend Mundelein College, and became a lifeguard at the Saddle & Cycle Club. Moira then became a volunteer at Children's Memorial Hospital in the Child Psychology Department. And the rest, as they say, is history.

After college graduation, Moira worked as an assistant in the physical therapy department at Children's Memorial and soon after joined the Orthotics Program at Northwestern University Medical School. Recognizing Moira's unique vision and healing nature, the Tobin family's close neighbors and good friends in Phoenix stepped forward to underwrite her pursuit of a Master's degree. Later, Jack and Mary Alice Sheely also became the first donors to her clinic's endowment fund.

Twenty years ago, in a basement room splattered with drops of hardened plastic and littered with medical saws, Moira's dream takes shape when she starts molding braces for children's legs. As the Hospital's lone orthotist, Moira was not high in the pecking order of the medical profession. But, as journalist Carol Marin describes in a recent Chicago Tribune editorial, "Moira changed all of that by who she was and what she did. The simplest way to say it is that she healed children. And along the way she healed parents too." That's because Moira's own experience as a wife and mother inspired her professional work. She and John Wickes, her husband of two decades, are the proud parents of 5 outstanding young men, John Jr., Steven, Tim, Edward and Robert.

Ten years ago, Moira and her colleague Mary Weck, --who is also here with us tonight -- invented a new way to do Serial Casting, a process that reshapes limbs to slowly straighten bones and loosen ligaments without surgery.

### **PERSON OF THE YEAR (cont.)**

Six years ago, Moira was appointed Director of the new Orthotics Clinic, which by then included a team of orthotists, physical therapists, technicians and an in-house laboratory. Their work maintains a 90% success rate, o it didn't just gain national attention -- it earned it... and deserves it.

Just over two years ago, her entire family gathered around to watch an advance copy of a [BBC documentary](#) shown on public television called: "Children's Hospital: Pioneers" which features the innovative work of the serial casting program. In a clip from that special, Moira expresses confidence that their exciting new program will soon spread national-wide. So you can see, Moira's BIG DREAM, the dream that all children get the chance not just to walk, but to run and play just like the other kids, has finally come true.

Shortly after that nationwide television broadcast, Moira was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer. She died four months later on March 10, 2003 at the age of 46. Barely 24 hours later, nearly 2,000 people packed Holy Name Cathedral to honor a woman who now shares her dream with the entire world. Then, as now, she is remembered as "an IV to the soul" and "sunlight sutured to bone."

Today, this dream is alive and well at The Moira Tobin Wickes Orthotics Program at Children's Memorial Hospital, where faith, hope and love continue to spread to the children, and parents, who need it most.

For, as Moira and her co-workers have proved, when it comes to helping children walk, dreams really do come true. We gather here tonight to help assure that dream really does spread nation-wide. We express gratitude to all those professionals who, like Moira, makes these miracles happen every day.

re: Miracles this week

Moira always amazed me with her energy...sparkling, crisp, vital. Since I am the exact opposite, I always admired that in her. (and wondered how she pulled it off!) In person or via phone she vibrated with enthusiasm and caring.

She possessed a quality that not many people have. Charisma does not quite fit, but it's about as close as I can come. She meant so much to everyone; each one feeling 'special' in her presence; no one feeling left out of her warmth and caring. How did she do that?

Karen Mayer loved children and I always envisioned Karen caring for the little ones in Heaven, including my 2 grandchildren who were not meant to spend any length of time on this side of the Pearly Gates. I figure that Moira's arrival meant that together, they could hold and cuddle even more precious little ones. And enjoy each other while doing it.

I'm sure that Bob and AnnaMae Johnston have been enjoying their own children, and that they, along with Uncle Maury, Aunt Theresa, Str Moira keep the ham sandwiches and bottles of beer at the ready. And I KNOW that Bob Johnston has kept Moira laughing. The Communion of Saints - what a beautiful unbroken chain we have between life here, and life on the other side of the Pearly Gates. Deo Gratias. Kathy Kelleher (cousin), Marion Ohio

10/25/09  
SISTER DEAR

you come once again  
in thought and in a dream  
and, in that sense, you never have gone

your presence, a present  
closer than it might seem  
in god's universe, we each are a pawn

moved by forces unknown  
not in ways that we deem  
yet always toward light are we drawn

and still there you are  
those eyes still they gleam  
and hair the color of dawn

no question you're there  
still part of the team  
close as blades of grass on the lawn

always here as our guide  
with a full head of steam,  
yet quiet and calm as a fawn

*It is an inspiration to us all to know of someone who has accomplished so much with her family, vocation and spiritual side. Many of us complain we have no time. Others use the time they have to the maximum. At a time when we see such misery around us and are feeling less than optimistic about the human condition, Moira is a beacon to what the human spirit can accomplish. Hatch Toffey - Purchase, NY*

*I taught 4th grade at Queen of Angels School during the 1965-1966 school year. I very much remember darling Moira in class. She had the most beautiful red hair....and had a most precious loving personality that one could not forget.*

*I am sorry to hear of her death..  
I remember her gentleness and soft-spoken ways.  
May her family always keep her in their hearts.  
My dearest sympathies to her family.  
Sandra Sansone Brennan- Darien, IL*

11/26/12  
SISTERLY REMINDER

Happy Birthday!! to you  
and our sweet Lizzy too!  
You both brought light to our world  
and each, in your own way,  
remind us to live only today  
staying tethered when we'd otherwise be swirled.

And remind us as well  
in ways that retell  
timeless lessons that get lost 'long The Path:  
about the value of smiles,  
the temporary nature of trials,  
and solutions that require New Math.

Important as things seem,  
that's only a dream  
from which it is hard to awaken.  
But it's important that we do,  
and not think that we're through,  
for only then are our gifts forsaken.

Thanks for these reminders  
to remove our own blinders  
and appreciate our gifts while they're here,  
which ain't for very long  
- life's a very short song -  
so sing loud to reach those not so near.

*This year's March 12th passed with less fanfare but more appreciation of the lasting legacy of your work and family -- the two outlets for your love. It passed with stronger-but-quieter remembrance of how your life continues to affect how we each choose to live. It also brought increasing appreciation for the messages spread through your vocational pursuit: that healing happens; that hope makes a difference; and that courage is not the absence of fear but rather the willingness to face it.*

*Maybe it also brings better understanding for why you lived at such an incredibly fast pace: in her bobbin' along perhaps our own Red, Red Robbin knew that although our possibilities are indeed infinite, the opportunities to "live, love, laugh and be happy...." are shockingly finite.*

*As each of your boys join their father in manhood, your imprint is obvious and inspiration remains strong. Thanks to dedicated co-workers, the model you helped shape widens in application. And your siblings and in-laws, nephews and nieces, cousins, colleagues and friends all try a little harder to follow your recommendation to put a little more OOMPH!!! into it, knowing well that your vigilant eye is now ever-present.*

*That your impact spread from 16 siblings to 1,600 attendees at your Life Celebration to where ever is might go from here is yet another reminder of the power of one person to make a difference. For all that and oh! so much more, we remain eternally grateful.  
Love, Your Sibling(s)*

3/12/10

## **ONE PERSON'S HEALTHCARE REFORM CRUSADE**

By Robert V. Tobin

Moira Tobin Wickes embraced fellow-Chicagoan Daniel Burnham's famous admonition to "make no small plans", developing a dream of biblical proportions: "helping the lame walk" (Luke: 7-22).

In the process, what she learned about our nation's health care system practically killed her.

Moira worked with Mary Weck and other colleagues at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital to develop a new way of doing serial casting, the process that reshapes limbs by slowly straightening bones, loosening ligaments and thereby eliminating the need for painful, repetitive surgeries. Achieving a +90% success rate by dramatically improving the mobility of six hundred kids with cerebral palsy and other crippling conditions over a ten-year period, it is no surprise that their technique finally gained national attention through a [PBS/BBC documentary](#) on "medical pioneers".

Yet, these days it should come as no shock that television program described her national model as operating in the hospital's basement.

Curing childhood disease, Moira discovered, was the easy part of her job. Much more daunting was her constant battle with resistant insurance administrators and skeptical orthopedic surgeons who found themselves in an odd but now-familiar alliance – for former seeking to minimize costs and the latter trying to maximize revenues. Despite a low-tech/low-cost intervention strategy that created one of the few units of the hospital that actually turned a profit, her team was literally relegated to the cellar.

Imagine the indignity of having your child being ridiculed by their peers while you receive sidelong glances from adults who, as our parents used to say, "know better". When seeking help your child needs to simply walk, run and play with those very same kids, imagine being sent to hospital's dingy bowels just to get it. Look up "adding insult to injury" in the dictionary and you won't find a better definition.

But instead of going to hell, these parents found themselves in a place where miracles happened. "The simplest way to say it" wrote CBS correspondent Carol Marin in a Chicago Tribune editorial "is that Moira healed children. And along the way she healed parents too." One such child, Connor Chadwick, was five years old when first referred to Moira's program; by the time he was a freshman, he was running on the in high school cross-country team.

Perhaps it should also be unsurprising that such an innovative, non-invasive system of care for small children with disabilities would come from the only woman then attending Northwestern University's orthotics certification program. It's a testament to how long ago the early Eighties really is that its male students felt Moira should be at home caring for her own kids instead of at the hospital treating others'. They didn't know she could do both, but tried to make sure she wouldn't.

## **ONE PERSON'S HEALTHCARE REFORM CRUSADE**

(continued)

Our brother Mike the Plumber wanted to take out his monkey wrench when she told him how those guys sabotaged her work during final exams, but Moira only smiled and said she'd take care of it.

And indeed she did, eventually winning everyone over with her smile, a red-head's tenacity and later of course, her team's documented clinical results. When executives in the hospital's upper echelons eventually saw the light created by those shiny financial reports, her clinic was finally moved to sunny, spacious offices. Opportunities suddenly seemed to abound as invitations to conference speaking engagements coincided with the release of the "medical pioneers" program; in the last line of its script, the documentary's narrator says: "... Moira hopes to develop serial casting programs at other hospitals". But that didn't happen then, or in the seven years since.

Shortly after the documentary was broadcast, Moira was diagnosed with aggressive, non-Hodgkins lymphoma. During my last visit at her hospital bedside, she was literally tearing her hair out as she concurrently fought the effects of radiation and her clinic's latest political battles. She didn't have the strength for both and died four months later, leaving her husband John and five wonderful sons – the youngest who was 3 years old at the time and named after me.

Each year on this anniversary of Moira's life celebration, her large extended family and many friends are comforted by thinking about the hundreds of kids served since by miracle workers carrying on the difficult, courageous work of the Moira Tobin Wickes Orthotics Program.

But with a half-million children and adults with cerebral palsy in the United States alone and 8,000 infants and nearly 1,500 preschoolers newly diagnosed each year – three-quarters of whom are affected by the spastic variety that inhibits mobility, it is impossible not to think about the thousands who could be standing tall today – and perhaps millions world-wide --if our medical system was more responsive during Moira's too-short lifetime, or since.

Following Daniel Burnham's advice, Moira Tobin Wickes made no small plans. Not in her lifetime, but perhaps in ours might there be a healthcare financing mechanism that facilitates rather than frustrates visionary innovations like hers where and when it is needed most.

3/10/13  
10th ANNIVERSARY

*The basis for so many decisions  
is neither clear nor cogent,  
to say nothing of conscious.*

*It all happens so quickly  
and then it is gone  
with nothing left but the wondering:  
Should I have done differently?  
Could I have done better?  
Would I do otherwise if given a do-over?*

*All the more true  
with a love one departed.  
Did she know how much we loved her?  
Does she know how hard it is  
for us when she's not near?  
And can she hear me now?*

*She would say, emphatically, "YESSSSSS!!"*

*And to say there is no proof  
that she can  
is the same thing those damn doctors  
told her about her serial casting program.*

*She proved them wrong  
so don't bet against her.*

3/10/14  
BROTHERLY REMEMBRANCE

*Are you there? here?  
so it seems, both alive and well  
maintaining a positive influence  
hovering, as always  
not pushing, but prompting  
bringing out our best through yours.*

*Soooo much time has passed since then,  
and water under the bridge as well;  
knowing much more than we knew then  
but still not what will happen next, or  
how much further our own road extends.*

*Your departure was a benchmark,  
the first of so many  
alerting us to life's most really real truth:  
the finite finality of it all;  
reminders if we care to take notice.*

*The indelible aspect of your influence  
is reflected in spontaneous recollections  
of your smile, wit and sensitivity  
that arise at the oddest moments,  
but especially today.*

*It has been some years since I ran into Moira on one of my Christmas visits back to Chicago. What always remains in my mind was her vibrant personality and positive nature. I had not seen her for years but on my visit, it was as if we still lived in the old neighborhood and nothing had changed. She had a way of making you feel special. My condolences to her husband, children, and the Tobin family on their loss.  
Tom Cleys, Santa Monica, CA*



3/7/17  
MEMORIAL

We never forget,  
- always remembering to remember -  
her beauty by which we were blessed.

A wonder of nature  
performing magic and miracles  
greater than we had ever guessed.

People pass us by  
with hearts so big,  
we wonder how it fits in their chest.

Our sister/daughter/mother/aunt  
is one of those  
who too quickly passed The Big Test.

Did her thing  
and flew into the sunset,  
or perhaps even further west.

Having helped others to strive,  
she now sees her sons thrive  
as they each now have flown from the nest.

Sadness and gladness  
so closely intertwined  
among all those who received her best.

Although not having been in touch with Moira for many years, I'll always value the fun shared with her in grammar school...playing the flute in the school band, Girl Scouts, and how her red hair always got her singled out by the nuns. Terry Kiefer Alexander, Chicago, IL

8/24/17  
(RE)VISITATION

Our sister Moira came by again today,  
Not once but twice  
in a dream about a(nother) wild family gathering.

As we were running around  
making various arrangements,  
I suddenly found myself in a lovely  
but unfamiliar part of town.  
I went into an old apartment complex,  
and there she was,  
sitting at a corner table reading under a light,  
healthy and happy as could be,  
as if awaiting our arrival.

"Everything's fine"  
was the message conveyed  
not by her words  
but her smile and laughter,  
eyes beaming  
and not a grey hair on her head.  
We seemed to chat for a while  
as if there was no place to go,  
and not a care in the world.  
I took lots of notes and promptly lost them all.

Ran into brother Dan thereafter  
and tried to explain it all to him  
when suddenly there she was again,  
leaning out from an upstairs window  
of the old apartment,  
shouting for us to come upstairs  
because she has shoes for everyone.

But of course she does.

## Making great strides:

*Serial casting proves successful for kids with musculoskeletal disorders*

**T**he summer sun draws out the freckles on ten-year-old Connor Chadwick's face. It also draws out the innate athleticism in this

irrepressible boy. Despite being diagnosed with cerebral palsy (CP) at 15 months of age, a seizure disorder and juvenile arthritis, Connor swims,

**In a recent study of the long-term functional outcomes of serial casting patients 88 percent made significant improvement by becoming heel-toe walkers, bearing weight when they previously weren't able to and by walking unassisted.**

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bikes, roller-blades, plays basketball and practices Tae Kwon Do with his sister, Bridget. His enthusiasm for the Korean martial art has earned him a senior red belt—eight steps above the entry-level white belt—in this highly disciplined practice.

Connor is able to engage in the many physical activities of a typical ten-year-old boy in large part because of the serial casting program in Children's Memorial Hospital's orthotics department. He originally entered the program five years ago to help correct his gait. CP is a congenital musculoskeletal disorder that often causes the affected muscles to shorten or tighten-up. Kids with CP may



*Pride in his strides: before entering Children's Memorial's serial casting program, Connor Chadwick walked on his tiptoes. Now he walks with a heel-toe gait.*

First, the incidence of JDM in the United States is 3.1 cases per million children each year. That rate is about the same whether the child is Caucasian, African-American or Hispanic. Research also revealed that more than 50 percent of the children had an upper-respiratory illness in the months prior to diagnosis.

Interestingly enough, while the rate of JDM doesn't vary with demographics, some symptoms do. For example, African-American children might lose more weight. Children younger than seven have more upper-respiratory complaints while older kids are more likely to complain about muscle pain and weakness.

Pachman is taking advantage of the newly mapped human genome, looking for genetic markers that indicate a predisposition to JDM. "We already have identified several genetic markers that appear to be associated not only with disease susceptibility, but also the course of the disease and whether the child is at risk for calcifications," Pachman explains.

While steroids like prednisone are helpful, they have drawbacks. One of them is an adverse effect on bones, including a reduction in bone density.

One way to combat this, says Pachman's colleague Craig Langman, MD, head of nephrology at Children's Memorial, is with Vitamin D and calcium. Langman's clinical practice is closely aligned with his research into bone mineral metabolism in children. On the

**On the surface, the link between the kidney and bone is not immediately apparent. However, the kidney is where Vitamin D is activated before the body puts it to use.**

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surface, the link between the kidney and bone is not immediately apparent. However, the kidney is where Vitamin D is activated before the body puts it to use. And Vitamin D helps calcium be absorbed into the bones and regulates hormones that work on calcium. Without Vitamin D, the calcium is very hard to absorb.



*A long way from home: Donna, Nathan and Richard Byrd travel from Texas for treatment of JDM.*

One of his team's discoveries is the use of the compound alendronate to treat children with insufficient bone mass development.

"Bone is living tissue that's constantly being built up and broken down," Langman explains. "Most bone disease in children is a disturbance between the breakdown and the buildup, with the breakdown becoming greater. Alendronate halts the



*Craig Langman, MD  
Head, Division of Nephrology*

breakdown, and accelerates the buildup." Alendronate also has helped in the battle against Jansen's disease, which results in disfigurement and dwarfing.

Children with cancer who must undergo chemotherapy also face the possibility of diminishing bone mass. "Some of the disease and most of the therapies accelerate bone breakdown," Langman says. "Some cancers produce more of the cells that slows buildup of the bones. Survivors of childhood cancer often develop bone disease within a decade. A lot of chemotherapy agents act as poisons hindering how the kidneys develop Vitamin D."

Langman is continuing his research into the effect of steroids on bone by searching for genes related to diseases, including juvenile osteoporosis, brittle-bone disease and others.

As with Lauren Pachman, Langman gets great joy out of seeing his patients improve. "I had a patient with brittle-bone disease come to us all the way from England," he says. "He suffered about 18 fractures a year and was in a wheel chair. Now he has less than a fracture a year and is out of the chair. That kind of progress is very gratifying."



Covering a lot of ground: with eight exam rooms open simultaneously, orthotics director Moira Tobin Wickes and her team check patient alignment, assess their needs and progress, modify their casts and fit patients for comfort. Above, CP patient Khalea Lee and her mom are all smiles.



#### What is an orthotist?

An orthotist is part anatomist, part sculptor, part engineer, with expertise in evaluating skeletal alignment and creating supportive devices to improve patients' range of motion, function and comfort. For many patients with musculoskeletal disorders, the casts, braces and splints they create provide a non-invasive and lasting alternative to surgery.

Children's Memorial is one of only five children's hospitals in the country with an orthotics department located in the hospital.

compensate for shortened muscles by walking on their tiptoes, buckling their knees inward, and swaying their torso weight from side-to-side in order to take each step. "This gait puts tremendous strain on kids' growing ankles, knees, hips and spines," says Moira Tobin Wickes, director of orthotics and co-founder of Children's Memorial's serial casting program. "It can be quite painful."

Since it was started by Wickes and physical therapist Mary Weck in 1992, the serial casting program has shown dramatic success in helping children lengthen leg muscles and achieve a more efficient gait without surgery. The program, which treated four or five patients

its first year, now sees more than 100 patients each year and is staffed by three full-time orthotists, an orthotics resident, seven physical therapists, eight technicians and has an in-house orthotics laboratory. "We could not be successful without the support of the orthopaedic surgeons and physicians who believe in the program and refer their patients to us," says Wickes.

#### An effective alternative to surgery

Seeking a non-surgical alternative to correct Connor's gait, the Chadwicks came to Children's Memorial after two physicians recommended an operation which would involve making a z-shaped incision in Connor's leg muscle to lengthen it. "We weren't comfortable with that,"

continued on page 12



Handled with care: all casts are created in an on-campus orthotics laboratory by highly skilled technicians. From left: Francisco Padilla, Andres Vasquez, Alpeya Reyes, Lou Alfaro, Amin Vukotic, Matejtech Szaszpanek. Below, Montiel Dixon and Isaac Toller fit a patient with a cast.

functional outcomes of serial casting patients. Of the 33 patients followed, 29 (88 percent) made significant improvement by becoming heel-toe walkers, bearing weight when they previously weren't able to and by walking unassisted.



"The results can be permanent," says Wickes. "But it is an intensive program and places a rigorous demand on the family." The serial casting staff initially spends two hours with each family to define the patient's individual goals and explain program expectations.

But the investment is well worth it. "Serial casting really works and I wholeheartedly believe in it," says O'Connor-Chadwick, who travels an hour-and-a-half from Naperville. "We want Connor to be the best he can be," she says. "And Children's Memorial is helping us do that." ☺

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says Connor's mom, Susan O'Connor-Chadwick, who is an emergency room nurse at Edwards Hospital in Naperville. "They couldn't definitively say that it would be the only surgery needed." Compared to a surgical intervention, serial casting has equal, if not longer lasting, results without the risk of infection or a general anesthetic.

Throughout the 10 to 16 weeks they are enrolled in the serial casting program, patients are fitted with plaster and plastic casts revised on a weekly basis. The casts, which are worn both during the day and at night when growth hormones are released, gradually train the patient's foot, ankle and leg into proper alignment.

"Although serial casting has been around for years, we added some significant components to our program that have helped reduce recurrence in patients and achieve long-term success," says Mary Weck. These include strengthening the muscle, the use of night braces following the casting process throughout the growing years, physical therapy gait training, and intensive family education and involvement to comply with the strict requirements of the program. Wickes and Weck recently revealed results of a study of the long-term



A fitting solution: orthotics lab technician Francisco Padilla fits Connor with a cast he made.