



Her proud parents behind her, Hallie beamed during her bat mitzvah. The event was particularly special to Hallie because she celebrated Cohen Children's with a large check.

Dancing for a Heart

By Chris Gasiewski

This 13-year-old is loving life and paying it forward, thanks to a team of doctors at Cohen Children's Medical Center.

Hallie Armengau-Allen is a competitive dancer with a grin wider than the Long Island Expressway. Her smile became even broader in January 2016, when a corrective heart procedure at Cohen Children's helped to prevent permanent lung damage and pulmonary hypertension.

Her heart made stronger, Hallie is channeling her gratitude into supporting cardiac research at the hospital. She's raised almost \$4,500 so far.

Hallie's journey began in November 2015, when she visited Terry Amaral, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Cohen Children's, who evaluated a discrepancy in the length of her arms. Dr. Amaral referred her to Joyce Fox, MD, a human genetics physician at the hospital, who identified a heart murmur and recommended Hallie also see Marion Rose, MD, a pediatric cardiologist.

As a first step, Dr. Rose performed an echocardiogram that showed Hallie had a large atrial septal defect (ASD — essentially a hole in her heart) plus enlargement in the right side of the organ. Together, Drs. Rose and Fox diagnosed Hallie with Holt-Oram syndrome, a disorder that often causes heart defects and abnormal development in bones of the upper limbs.

Then, Dr. Rose shared Hallie's echocardiogram results with Dipak Kholwadwala, MD, a pediatric interventional cardiologist. Hallie was a candidate for a transcatheter device procedure, which is much less invasive than open-heart surgery. Specialists can now close most ASDs with transcatheter devices, according to Dr. Kholwadwala, who added: "It's very gratifying to see a child undergo that procedure and not need open-heart surgery."

Dr. Kholwadwala deployed the devices (Hallie needed two) via

a catheter threaded through a vein in Hallie's leg, up through her circulatory system to the heart defect. During the following months, Hallie's heart tissue surrounded the implants and closed the defect.

Giving Back

Hallie went home the day after her procedure. She was cleared to dance a month later and is now competing again. She will remain in Dr. Rose's care until she is a young adult.

In gratitude to her doctors, Hallie created Dance for a Heart, raising funds by selling bracelets and lanyards and organizing events. At her recent bat mitzvah, she presented Dr. Rose with a large gift check for Cohen Children's Division of Pediatric Cardiology.

"I'm going to continue with Dance for a Heart for a really long time," she said. "My goal is to reach \$10,000 or maybe more, so they can research more about my condition."