



LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Tania Cantrell Rosas-Moreno
Professor / PRSSA Faculty Adviser
Department of Communication and Media
Phone: 512.203.6400
Email: trosasmoreno@loyola.edu

Loyola students launch national public health campaign for children with pacemakers

BALTIMORE, DEC. 11, 2024 — Fourteen Loyola seniors are launching a two-pronged national public health campaign to support children who have pacemakers. The Pediatric Pacemaker Project (The PPP) features an informative website (pediatricpacemakerproject.org) along with a strategic awareness campaign that aims to unite dispersed resources and information for patients, parents, and caregivers, including teachers. The campaign is also designed to raise awareness to build community and safety for those involved. While the website is live and the direct mail outreach to pediatric cardiologists nationwide has begun, the social media campaign across LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube will go live in the new year, on Jan. 1, 2025.

“This campaign has been such an incredible experience to work on,” said Catherine Kutson, a senior majoring in communication and media with a specialization in advertising and public relations as well as the director of marketing and public relations for the Loyola Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) Chapter. “It’s really inspiring to see all the work we’re doing come to fruition to make a difference in people’s lives – to help children with pacemakers live their best lives.”

The PPP is the result of the work of students in Loyola’s public relations and digital media capstone courses offered through Loyola’s award-winning Department of Communication and Media. The formal launch event of The Pediatric Pacemaker Project will occur during the final of the PR capstone, set for Wednesday, Dec. 11, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Student representatives from the four teams responsible for the endeavor – web, video, graphics, and branding – will overview their research and results during that timeframe. Members of the inaugural [Department of Communication and Media Advisory Board](#) as well as other industry professionals, medical staff, and supporters will be present at the hybrid event to discuss the project and offer feedback.

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“This is such a meaningful and much-needed project,” said Caridad de la Uz, M.D., director of pediatric electrophysiology at the Johns Hopkins Blalock-Taussig-Thomas Pediatric and Congenital Heart Center in Baltimore. “I have always been fiercely protective of my cardiac device and arrhythmia patients when it comes to school issues, because I have seen the tragic consequences of what happens when teachers and coaches are uninformed.”

An advisory board member to the website and effort, Dr. de la Uz is one of three featured individuals featured in The Pediatric Pacemaker Project’s series of video interviews. Her expertise founds the medical message, while Lori Jones, an award-winning author and mother to a baby born needing a pacemaker, speaks to public advocacy through her roles, including serving on the board of the Children’s Heart Foundation. The third feature is a video interview with nine-year-old Scarlet Rosas-Moreno, a child who suffered a health trauma while an infant resulting in the need for her pacemaker and, through her experiences, is the inspiration for the project.

The student-developed website hosts much more than the featured video interviews, all orchestrated through student effort.

“It makes medical terminology more approachable through infographics created by the digital media capstone students, and it engenders positivity and possibility, lifting the experience of a child having a pacemaker to be less burdensome and more light-hearted through its triumphs and tributes page,” said Tania Cantrell Rosas-Moreno, Ph.D., professor of Communication and Media and PRSSA faculty adviser.

That space also receives submissions of tributes, or shoutouts, from supporters like family members and caregivers to children with pacemakers. “These children look like other children,” said Rosas-Moreno. “But, they have ‘other health impairments,’ legally affording them accommodations by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to help them live their best lives.”

“Being the liaison for our student PR agency to the web team, or the students in the digital media capstone who were building the website, was like working in an agency setting,” said Alexander Valencia, a senior double majoring in communication and media as well as speech-language-hearing sciences. “Learning to balance relationships, like considering the visitor’s experience on the website with the goals of The PPP that my PR capstone classmates and I were creating, took a lot of work. But it has been so worth it!”

“This merged capstone project exemplifies the Loyola difference,” said Dr. Jonathan Lillie, associate professor in the Department of Communication and Media and the co-capstone administrator of this project. “We are proud of our students, who seek out and embrace experiential and high-impact learning opportunities like this to care for the community and give voice to those who may not be able to be heard otherwise. Further, these capstone students are remarkably prepared for the professional world through applying their talents in a mentored environment like this to real causes, enacting positive change. Introducing students through this project to the sensitive nature of working in the healthcare sector is a bonus.”

About Pediatric Pacemakers

A pacemaker is a special heart machine implanted in one’s body to assist the heart’s natural rhythm. While pacemakers are stereotypically associated with the elderly, one child in about every 22,000 born annually needs this life-saving device. Other children suffer health traumas similarly resulting in their need for a pacemaker. Regardless of age, pacemakers are the same for all, only differing in placement and pacing of the heart. Children with pacemakers form a unique niche within pediatric cardiology, one that is not commonly considered nor well-known, resulting in limited direct federal funding for research, development, and other resources.

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About Loyola University Maryland’s Department of Communication and Media

Loyola’s Department of Communication and Media is housed in Loyola College of Arts and Sciences, which is one of the three colleges within Loyola University Maryland. Founded in 2006, the department is one of the largest and most in-demand on campus. Students studying areas of the communications industry may choose specializations in advertising and public relations, digital media, journalism, or media and society. The department is home to award-winning, student-run media outlets, including [WLOY Loyola Radio](#), [Greycomm Studios](#) and the [Greyhound weekly student newspaper](#). The United States’ first student-run publishing house, [Apprentice House Press](#), also falls within the department’s domain. Clubs and additional activities the department sponsors include Loyola’s heavily decorated Public Relations Student Society of America Chapter, the AAF Chapter, the Evergreen annual yearbook and Lambda Pi Eta Honor Society. For more information, please visit www.loyola.edu/communication. <https://www.loyola.edu/academics/communication/>.