



**Children's Surgery
International**

SUMMER 2025

Changing lives,

one child at a time.

TURNING HOPE INTO ACTION: YAMLAK'S STORY

We learned from CSI nurse volunteer Sam Eisenreich that when the team met 8-month-old Yamlak during our February trip to Ethiopia, she weighed an alarming 8.5 pounds. Born with both a cleft lip and palate, she faced severe feeding challenges that left her dangerously malnourished. Her mother carried her by foot for more than four hours — barefoot — to reach the hospital and ask the CSI team to help.

When they arrived, Yamlak was nearly invisible, strapped in a cloth tied to her mother's back. Her need for surgery to repair her cleft lip and palate was clear, but she was simply too fragile for the procedure.

Turning her away was never an option. The medical team — part of a partnership committed to compassionate, sustainable care — took immediate action. Yamlak was admitted to the hospital's malnutrition unit. Her family received life-saving formula and specialized feeding bottles — items they had never had access to in their remote village. The care she received was a turning point, made possible by the determination of her mother and

the dedication of medical professionals and supporters who fought for her.

Weeks later, a call from Ethiopia brought alarming news: Yamlak's family had run out of formula and her weight was falling again. Her mother, exhausted and overwhelmed, had begun to lose hope.

Within hours, local partners mobilized. They arranged transportation back to the hospital, ensured that Yamlak's nutritional needs were stabilized, and offered her family the support they needed to rebuild Yamlak's strength so that she could safely have the surgery she desperately needed.

Today, Yamlak is alive because no one gave up. Her care is being led by Dr. Kassaw, a CSI-trained ENT fellow in Ethiopia. And on May 31, thanks to the advanced training he received from CSI, Dr. Kassaw successfully completed Yamlak's first cleft surgery. Later this year, when CSI returns to the region, she will receive her second procedure, continuing on a path that was once unimaginable.

"Yamlak's story is not just about survival. It is about transformation," stated CSI Academic Director, Dr. Siva Chinnadurai.

Every supporter, every partnership, and every act of generosity helped turn desperation into hope and hope into action. Together, this global network is shaping a future where children like Yamlak not only survive, but thrive.



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BEFORE

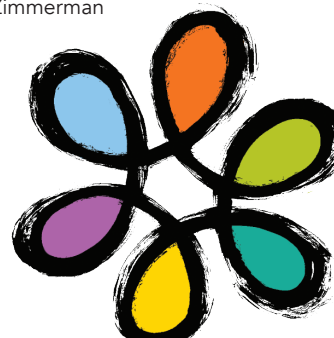


AFTER



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CSI Volunteers Prepare for Life-Changing Surgeries in Hermosillo

Transforming lives today and building a future of better access to care

In May, a team of longtime CSI medical volunteers traveled to St. Andrew's Children's Clinic in Nogales, Arizona, to meet and evaluate patients in preparation for CSI's upcoming surgical trip to Hermosillo, Mexico. This screening work helps prepare the team to deliver life-changing care to children with complex medical needs.

Dr. Michael Fritz, Dr. Paul Melchert and Dr. Brianne Roby collaborated with St. Andrew's Children's Clinic Executive Director Laura Romero and Hermosillo-based orthodontist Venezia Jordan to pre-screen patients. The team met with 14 patients scheduled for surgery this fall, including infants who will receive their first cleft lip repair and a teenager preparing for the final stage of her cleft care — a rhinoplasty surgery. They also met with an adult in need of free tissue transfer to reconstruct her palate.

During this visit, pediatrician Dr. Melchert was able to recommend specific pre-surgical medical workups. Dr. Fritz and Dr. Roby discussed the surgeries that were recommended and reassured parents that their children will not be turned away due to time or resource limitations. The entire team also addressed feeding and speech concerns for the patients.

Dr. Roby, who leads CSI's surgical initiatives in Mexico, reported that this trip was a meaningful opportunity for short- and long-term collaborative strategic planning. Together with our partners at St. Andrew's Children's Clinic, Hospital CIMA and Voluntariados, CSI volunteers are not only transforming the lives of children in need of cleft care today, they are helping build a future where comprehensive cleft care is within reach for every child who needs it.



HERMOSILLO
SONORA, MEXICO



**BECOME
A CSI
SUSTAINER**

With consistent funding, CSI can build capacity and strengthen partnerships to ensure more children and communities have access to life-changing surgical and medical care.

Set up your
monthly recurring
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ACADEMIC DIRECTOR'S UPDATE: Advancing Education Across Our Partner Sites

SIVA CHINNADURAI, MD, MPH, PHD

CSI is proud to share that formal fellowship training has officially launched for our pediatric ENT and facial plastic surgery fellow in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. This milestone marks a new phase in our commitment to sustainable surgical education. The program includes a robust combination of in-person instruction, weekly remote conferences, and plans for international observerships that will allow the fellow to train at partner sites abroad and bring these skills home to better serve children in Ethiopia.

In Mexico, we have continued efforts to create a formal competency-based pathway for post-operative cleft care nursing — an essential step in building long-term, high-quality multidisciplinary care. Additionally, as seen in the photo to the right, CSI delivered the first of a series of live academic grand rounds lectures to more than 40

healthcare providers at Holy Innocent's Children's Hospital in Mbarara, Uganda.

These collective efforts reflect CSI's growing role in global surgical education, strengthening local capacity while fostering international academic partnerships.



UGANDA VIRTUAL GRAND ROUNDS

CSI HAPPENINGS



Pickleball Social Sunday, September 14, 3-6 p.m.

3300 5th St NE, Minneapolis

Join CSI for a fun-filled event with pickleball, food, drinks, raffles and more! Whether you're a seasoned player or new to the game, we'll have something for everyone. All equipment will be provided, but players are welcome to bring their own.

Want to attend but don't care to play? No problem. A semi-private Luxe Lounge is ours for socializing. Proceeds support care for children and training for local medical teams worldwide.

Purchase your tickets by July 31 for an early bird discount! Scan the QR code or go to childrenssurgeryintl.org/events.



Thursday, September 25

1341 Pascal St. N., St. Paul

Support CSI by dining out at Bolé Ethiopian Cuisine in St. Paul on Thursday, September 25, from 5-9 p.m. A portion of dinner and takeout sales will be donated to CSI. Reservations and walk-ins available. *You must mention CSI for a portion of your meal to count toward the fundraiser.*

Be the light

CSI GALA 2025

This year's Be the Light Gala raised nearly **\$485,000** to support life-changing care for children and to empower local medical professionals in our partner communities around the world.

Your generosity fuels our vision of a world without barriers to essential medical and surgical care for children. Together, we're creating lasting change.

Whether you attended the event, bid in the auction, made a donation, or helped spread the word, you are a vital part of this impact. Thank you for being the light.



THANK YOU *to our sponsors*

Watch our latest video,
presented at CSI's 2025 Gala.



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Mary Alice Seipp

CSI VOLUNTEER
OF THE YEAR

CSI proudly presented the 2025 Volunteer of the Year award to Mary Alice Seipp in recognition of her key role as a founder and champion of Children's Surgery International. Mary Alice did not view CSI as a project or pastime — she saw it as part of her family and nurtured and grew it with the same care she gave her own children.

Those who had the privilege of working with her said Mary Alice was a powerful force for good. She



was a mentor and an inspiration. Mary Alice passed away at the end of 2024. We thank Jennifer Seipp, Mary Alice's daughter, for accepting this award on her behalf and for sharing with gala attendees a beautiful reflection of her mother.



A Surprise Proposal

Congratulations to Jordan Meyer and CSI nurse volunteer Samantha Eisenreich, who got engaged at the close of the gala evening.

BOARD UPDATES

Thank you, Melanie and Brianne

Melanie McCall and Dr. Brianne Roby rotated off the CSI Board of Directors in June. We thank Melanie and Brianne for their leadership and dedication in support of CSI's mission.

Melanie has volunteered with CSI for more than a decade, serving as board chair, secretary and Gala chair. She's traveled as a non-medical volunteer to Ethiopia, Liberia and Mexico. Melanie continues to serve on CSI's communications and development committees. Brianne has served on the CSI board since 2017 and has traveled with CSI to Liberia, Mexico and Vietnam. Brianne continues to serve as a member of the CSI Medical and Mission Committee and spearheads CSI's annual trip to Mexico, providing children in the Sonora State of Mexico the same high level of long-term cleft care that they would receive in the United States. Thank you, Melanie and Brianne, for sharing the gifts of your time and talent to help us change lives and strengthen communities!



Melanie McCall



Dr. Brianne Roby



Raquel Counihan

Raquel Counihan and Dr. Nathan Kreykes join Board of Directors

The CSI board welcomed two new members this summer, Raquel Counihan and Dr. Nathan Kreykes. Raquel brings more than 28 years of experience in employment law and employee relations, including leadership roles at U.S. Bank. A committed volunteer, Raquel has contributed her time to events ranging from major sports tournaments to CSI's own warehouse. She also serves on the boards of The Bakken Museum and Pillsbury United Communities. Nathan, a pediatric general surgeon, has been volunteering his clinical expertise with CSI since 2020, traveling to Liberia and delivering online education lectures to our partners in Africa. Nathan serves as the



Dr. Nathan Kreykes

Trauma Medical Director and the Medical Student Site Director at Children's Minnesota and is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

UPCOMING TRIPS/DATES

Mexico:

October 3-9, 2025

Ethiopia:

August 2-9, 2025*

October 16-26, 2025

December 6-12, 2025*

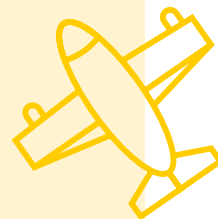
The Gambia:

November 12-23, 2025

Liberia:

January 13-31, 2026

**Small, targeted Pediatric ENT and Facial Plastic Surgery Fellowship training trip*



Summertime Merch Store Items



Summer is heating up, and the CSI merch store has all the warm-weather essentials you need, including quick-dry tees, tanks and caps in a variety of colors. Every item helps spread the word about CSI and the life-changing work we do. Visit childrenssurgeryintl.org/shop to shop.

