

# Starlight Gaming

## Program Overview



For more than 25 years, Starlight mobile gaming units have provided millions of seriously ill children with hours of entertainment, distraction, and a sense of normalcy. Starlight Gaming Units are specially manufactured to meet strict infection safety protocols and are designed to safely roll anywhere in the hospital. Our Gaming Units powered by Nintendo consoles featuring online access to platforms like Netflix and Hulu, provide entertainment and relaxation for kids in a rather overwhelming situation. Doctors, nurses, clinicians, and child life specialists are able to use a single gaming unit in variety settings, from the ER, to a playroom, to a treatment, and even bedside for a pediatric patient in isolation.



*"The Starlight Gaming Units are an incredible and unique tool that helps turn a sick or injured child's pain, fear and stress into smiles and laughter by providing them with the best in entertainment, education, and one-of-a-kind experiences. Their belief that all children deserve to enjoy the magic, wonder and happiness of childhood mirrors our mission of helping children grow well and play well; so, we are thrilled and thankful to Starlight Children's Foundation for this generous gift."*

—Anthony Scaduto, M.D., Orthopedic Institute for Children

## Reach

Since 1992, **7,200 Starlight Gaming Units** have delivered happiness to **11,607,645 children** at **919 children's hospitals and pediatric units** in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

## Program Impact



### Play

*"The Starlight Gaming Unit was used as an incentive for a particularly difficult patient who needed some positive reinforcement and bedrest. The patient was given a sticker chart to earn playing time on the Starlight Gaming Unit. When he redeemed them for play time, his demeanor changed completely to being joyful, happy and playful. He engaged in play both alone and with the child life specialist which helped him connect to staff. The Starlight Gaming Unit helped with both behavior regulation and normalizing the hospital environment through play. We are so glad to have this option available for patients."*

—Rebecca Martin, CCLS, UnityPoint Health Methodist

- School-aged children and adolescents seek play that contributes to feelings of mastery and achievement, which is one reason video games are so popular with this age group (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2014). 1



## Entertainment

*"The Starlight Gaming Unit has been a meaningful source of entertainment in our infusion clinic. Over the winter holidays, we had several siblings accompany patients to appointments since they were off of school, and we watched one set of brothers (who typically don't get along), play and laugh with each other throughout their whole stay while using the Gaming Unit. Their mom was so grateful, and we were happy to see them share a positive experience together."*

–Kellie Matters, CCLS, Kaiser Permanente Capitol Hill

- To a hospitalized child, a Starlight Gaming Unit helps combat boredom and loneliness through access to popular and entertaining games that can engage and entertain children during long hours of treatment or extended stays (Wallace, 2018).<sup>2</sup>



## Socialization

*"Starlight Gaming Units not only instantly brighten up a child's room but also makes it possible for us to connect with children and help foster an atmosphere that is child focused. These aspects may seem small, but they help families feel a sense of trust when there is a display by staff to recognize the unique needs of their child."*

–Erica Magnuson, CCLS, UCI Health

- Electronic games enhance the bio-psycho-social well-being of children and young people. A systematic review especially highlighted that pro-social content in games and software positively influences children's social behavior including helping and sharing.
- Social benefits of Electronic Gaming for Entertainment (EGE) include increased cooperation, support, helping behaviors, and civic engagement (Horne-Moyer et al., 2014).<sup>3</sup>



## Normalization

*"This program continues to make a huge difference in relieving anxiety in our patients and giving them back a sense of normalcy in their lives."*

–Velma Workman, Community Development, Hoops Family Children's Hospital

- A child's ability to play video games in the hospital restores the discontinuity resulting in his/her life due to hospital admission and shows somehow that the child may continue his/her normal life even inside the hospital (Koukourikos et al., 2015).<sup>4</sup>



## Emotional Support

*"There was a child that was very fearful when his mother underwent emergency surgery. The staff engaged him with the gaming activities. He immediately dried his tears and became distracted in the Starlight Gaming Unit. When his mom was brought back to her room from surgery, he was thrilled with his game and couldn't wait to share with her."*

–Dorinda Hock, Director of Maternal Child Health, Anaheim Global Medical Center

- Research shows that video games, consoles, and tablet computers are effective distractors, reducing anxiety and stress in children and young people.
- Emotional benefits of using Electronic Gaming for Entertainment (EGE) include improved mood or increases in positive emotion and adaptive regulation strategies for managing negative emotions like anger, anxiety, and sadness (Horne-Moyer et al., 2014).<sup>3</sup>



## Pain Management

*"We had a patient who was extremely nervous being in the hospital environment and even more nervous about the pain associated with getting a nasogastric feeding tube. He has several issues, which has made his hospitalization even more difficult. He voiced wanting to play on a game system because that is what keeps him calm and can 'keep his mind off of all that is going around him right now.' When child life brought the game system into the room, he got very excited and went straight to playing Minecraft and has remained calm and focused ever since."*

–Kelli McElhone, Grant Specialist, Covenant Children's

- Playing games takes the patients' minds off of what hurts them. One of the best ways to help pain is through distraction, and so when your mind is somewhere else and you can get in another world and have some fun and feel in control and a sense of mastery, it can be very useful to you (Kaslow, 2007).<sup>5</sup>
- Research underlines the fact that pain is always felt in the brain and not in the extremity or body part where the cause might be. Distraction with video games that require user participation will lead to less perception of pain at the central brain level (Black, 2018).<sup>6</sup>



## Physical Therapy

- The Starlight Gaming Unit is being used in hospitals, rehabilitation, and classroom settings, all with the similar goals of improving patients' standing balance, strength, coordination and activity tolerance (Gargin and Pizzi, 2010).<sup>7</sup>
- The unique features of the gaming system allow occupational and physical therapists to capitalize on their patients' functional abilities in a fun and novel manner (Gargin and Pizzi, 2010).<sup>7</sup>
- Children may find therapy boring or stressful, therefore the concept of playing as a form of therapy can be much more encouraging.

## The Future

- In the fall of 2019, Starlight will launch the Nintendo Switch as a part of its Starlight Gaming program. It will have the capability to attach to personal beds or chairs which increases portability and gameplay flexibility in addition to our traditional mobile unit.
- Starlight continues to explore opportunities to enable all of our gaming experiences to be accessible no matter the patient's physical limitations.

<sup>1</sup> Child Life Services; Committee on Hospital Care and Child Life Council. (2014). American Academy of Pediatrics,133(5).

<sup>2</sup> Wallace, N. (2018). Video Games for Kids in Hospital Just What Doctor Ordered.

<sup>3</sup> Horne-Moyer, H. L., Moyer, B. H., Messer, D. C., & Messer, E. S. (2014). The use of electronic games in therapy: a review with clinical implications. Current psychiatry reports, 16(12), 520. doi:10.1007/s11920-014-0520-6

<sup>4</sup> Koukourikos, K., Tzaha, L., Pantelidou, P., & Tsaloglidou, A. (2015). The Importance of Play During Hospitalization of Children. Materia socio-medica, 27(6), 438–441. doi:10.5455/msm.2015.27.438-441

<sup>5</sup> Kaslow. (2007). Video Games May Help Relieve Pain. CBS News.

<sup>6</sup> Black. (2018). Gaming as a Tool for Pain Relief. Practical Pain Management,18(1).

<sup>7</sup> Gargin, & Pizzi. (2010). Wii-HAB: Using the Wii Video Game System as an Occupational Therapy Intervention with Patients in the Hospital Setting. 23(1).