

## Concern for Cerebral Palsy Patient Merits a Ben's Belling

UA Health Network  
February 2015

One of the first people in 2015 to get "belled" by the **Ben's Bell Project** [1] was **Judi Carrington**, assistant operations director of the **Venom Immunochemistry, Pharmacology and Emergency Response Institute** [2], also known as VIPER, at the UA College of Medicine – Tucson. Carrington was presented with her bell – which symbolizes kindness and its power in healing – on Jan. 7.

The Ben's Bell Project was founded by former UA faculty member Jeannette Maré, who taught discourse analysis before becoming the Ben's Bell Project's executive director. In 2002, after her nearly 3-year-old son Ben died suddenly from croup, family and friends began making ceramic wind chimes as a way of coping with grief. Wanting to pass on the kindness of those who helped the family begin to heal, on the first anniversary of Ben's death hundreds of ceramic wind chimes were hung randomly throughout Tucson, each with a written message to take one home and pass on the kindness. Soon, many Tucsonans volunteered to craft the bells, and the Ben's Bell Project began.

Carrington received a Ben's Bell because of a fundraising effort to buy a van and have it modified with a wheelchair lift for the family of Rusty Bowen. She met the family more than 25 years ago through **Therapeutic Riding of Tucson** [3], or TROT, which offers physical therapy and counseling programs for children, adults and wounded veterans.

"While volunteering there – and later serving on the board – she worked with a boy named Rusty who had cerebral palsy," said **Sarah Ascher**, patient relations director at the **UA Medical Center** [4]'s University Campus, who participated in the belling.

"Rusty's positive attitude and outgoing personality made a lasting impression on me," Carrington said.

Now with the UA for 15 years, Carrington stayed in touch with Rusty's family. He was 10 when she left TROT and is 35 today. After the death of Rusty's father's in 2013, his mother, Lois, asked for donations for a new lift in lieu of flowers for the funeral. Carrington started her campaign after realizing there was no point in putting a new lift in the family's old van.

"And with the help of many wonderful people in the community, we were able to purchase the van, raise the roof to give access to the wheelchair and put in a new lift," she said. "It took more than a year to raise the money – just under \$30,000 – all from private donations."

"I've never met anyone with a bigger heart than Judi," said **Leslie Boyer**, director of the VIPER Institute. "Her devotion to improving people's lives makes a real difference in the community and also at work. VIPER, and the people for whom it develops medical treatments, is fortunate to benefit from her steadfast determination to make good things happen, regardless of the challenge."

The VIPER Institute works with scientists and clinicians around the world to develop new diagnostic tools and treatments for venom injuries – mainly from the bite or sting of spiders, snakes and scorpions – affecting millions of people each year.

About the belling, Carrington said, "I was totally surprised when this all happened and feel very honored to be in the company of so many other amazing people who've received this recognition."

---

*A "Be Kind" mural will be installed this week at the UA Medical Center, between the Diamond Children's lobby and the Surgery Waiting Room. It's part of the **Ben's Bells Kindness Challenge** [5] and coincides with a week of activities designed to bring together the UA health sciences colleges' faculty, students and staff in celebration of the National Solidarity Day for Compassionate Patient Care, held each year on or near Valentine's Day.*

*Solidarity Day was established in 2011 by the Gold Humanism Honor Society of the **Arnold P. Gold Foundation** [6] after the tragic shooting in Tucson that injured then-U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and 12 others and resulted in the death of six people. It is intended to pay tribute to the qualities of kindness and compassion exhibited by UAMC caregivers on that day. Now observed at medical colleges across the country, Solidarity Day promotes "provider-patient relationships based on caring, personalization and mutual respect."*

*Read more and see a schedule of events in this **UA News article** [7].*

---

**Source URL:** <https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/concern-cerebral-palsy-patient-merits-bens-belling>

### Links

[1] <https://bensbells.org/> [2] <http://viper.arizona.edu/> [3] <http://www.trotarizona.org/> [4] <http://www.uahealth.com/> [5] <https://bensbells.org/bekindchallenge> [6] <http://humanism-in-medicine.org/> [7] <http://uanews.org/story/solidarity-week-to-focus-on-compassionate-care>