

Bravery Bead Bowls: Celebrating the meaningful contribution of regional woodturners

By Naba Saeed, Intern, Communications and Public Affairs

Nine-month-old Isabella is a patient at SickKids and has been collecting [bravery beads](#) ever since she was first admitted to the hospital less than a week after her birth. For each procedure, patients may receive a bead that represent each milestone on their medical journey with the beads coming together in a colourful necklace. Patients often collect many beads but don't have a place to keep them.

Isabella is just one of many patients who has received a new Bravery Bead Bowl as a beautiful storage container for her beads. The Grey-Bruce Woodturners Guild (GBWG), which is a club that brings together local woodturners, has started producing these handcrafted bowls and donating them to SickKids as part of the Bravery Bead Program. Members of the GBWG practice the art of woodturning, which involves carving wooden pieces or blocks into various forms and shapes using a lathe.

Isabella's dad, Dominic, said the Bravery Bead Bowl gives his family a unique symbol of their time here. "It's incredible to see people like the woodturners volunteering their time and craft to create these bowls and donating them," said Dominic. "Isabella has gathered a huge collection of beads and it's wonderful to have this beautiful bowl we can keep them in."



Nine-month old Isabella was admitted to SickKids less than one week after her birth. She has been collecting bravery beads ever since.

Each bowl is made out of stacks of wooden rings that have a dozen pieces of woods called segments. A typical segmented bravery bowl contains about 70 pieces of wood, but one with a more elaborate design could contain hundreds of pieces. Each bowl is

labelled with a laser-engraved Bravery Bead Bowl medallion and the name of the contributing guild.

The Bravery Bead Bowls initiative came through as a community outreach activity among members of the GBWG. Carl Durance, head of the GBWG, first saw these types of bowls at an annual woodturners symposium in 2011. He learned the bowl-making process, and brought this knowledge back home. The GBWG then began running Bravery Bead Bowl-making workshops for woodturners in their guild. They began with donating 25 bowls to SickKids in June 2017. Carl knew that his one small guild could not support the demand of these bowls. So, he visited guilds all over Ontario to help them run their own Bravery Bead Bowl-making workshops.

“It can be a complicated process and giving woodturners the confidence to learn this skill was a huge part of making this initiative successful,” said Carl. Three other woodturning guilds from across Ontario have joined the GBWG in creating these bowls. This includes the Simcoe Woodturners Guild, the Waterloo-Wellington Woodturners Guild and the Kawartha Woodturners Guild. They have all helped significantly increase the number of Bravery Bead Bowls donated to SickKids each year.



The bravery bowls are handmade by volunteers in various woodturner guilds across Ontario.

Annabeth is a two-year-old patient in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) on the transplant list, waiting for a new heart. Since her time at SickKids, Annabeth’s parents have been hanging her bravery bead necklaces on IVs or storing them in plastic bags.

“The Bravery Bead Bowl has given our family stability,” said Raven, Annabeth’s mother. “It’s given us a meaningful way to store the beads and take them with us in and out of the hospital. We’re so grateful to the woodturners for donating these bowls to patients.”



Annabeth is a two-year-old patient in the Critical Care Unit (CCU) and has been in and out of SickKids since her birth.

The Bravery Bead program is near and dear to the hearts of many patients and families throughout the hospital, and the woodturners' contribution of the Bravery Bead Bowls has truly enhanced the impact of the program!

To find out more about the Bravery Bead program, click [here](#).