Patient story from a collection written by Gail Terry Grimes for a San Jose, Ca, hospital. The collection was given as a thank-you gift to hospital board members and donors.

# DONIVAN

In spite of it all, Donivan Hicks is one happy boy.

Donivan has a genetic disorder: a chromosome defect that contorts his body and makes his life a torment—but he smiles all the same. He giggles. He grins. He shakes his brown curls and squeals with delight at life itself. Our nurses cherish him.

In spite of the pain, in spite of the bouts with pneumonia, in spite of the dozens of hospital stays, in spite of his deafness and his weak vision and the fact that he cannot talk at all, Donivan speaks volumes with his wide brown eyes.

"Life is grand," he seems to say, "and I love you all."

Adding up the days, Donivan has spent at least two of his six years in our Pediatrics Unit, where every young patient takes home a stuffed animal puppet. Donivan has the whole collection. The nurses keep a bed made up in his room for his mother, Angela.

"If he's in pain, I stay," says Angela Hicks. "It's been my second home."

The doctors compare Donivan's pain to the pain of gallstones. They think it emanates from his stomach and pancreas. It's about the only thing that makes him cry.

Often he cannot eat. He misses out on ice cream, peanut butter, cotton candy and hot dogs. Instead he drinks a chalky formula. Still, he smiles. Once, even the formula wouldn't stay down. The nurses tried to "fatten him up" intravenously. He turned out to be allergic to the milk and soy products that are the basis of most formula foods.

One formula gave him hepatitis. His weight dropped to 19 pounds. He was literally starving to death. Desperate, our doctors and nurses started calling everywhere to track down a formula that Donovan could tolerate. Finally, they found one, but the cost was staggering. Our social workers petitioned MediCal on Donivan's behalf to pay for the formula and have it delivered to the Hicks' residence. Then the nurses trained Mrs. Hicks to feed her son intravenously, so Donivan could go home.

One day the Make-A-Wish Foundation called us looking for the names of pediatric patients, who might enjoy a trip to Disneyland. Our nurses nominated Donivan. Two weeks later we learned he’d been chosen.

At Disneyland, Donivan danced with Mickey Mouse. He ran from ride to ride, and smiled at everyone in sight, but the next day he started to cry. Mrs. Hicks called us long distance. Our nurses contacted a pharmacy in Los Angeles and made arrangements for Donivan's pain medication to be delivered to Disneyland so the boy could finish his adventure.

"If they see a problem," says Mrs. Hicks, "they do whatever they can. Sometimes their hands are tied, but usually they can cook up something. If they can't do it, they'll get in touch with someone who can. When I think of the medical center ... well, they've done a lot for us."

Maybe so. But ask the housekeepers at San Jose Medical Center. Ask the couriers and clerks, the people who work in the Cafeteria, the Auxiliary members who deliver the flowers, the nurses on any floor. Ask them about Donivan Hicks. They'll say he's the one who does something for them. They'll say, thank you, Donivan. Thanks for being such a fighter. Thanks for reminding us that life truly is grand. And please know that we love you too.