

# SUNDAY The Birmingham News

www.al.com EM123

November 16, 2008 ♦ Our 121st year

\$1.55 home delivery ♦ \$2 newsstand

## Children's catches \$8 million pledge



An artist's concept of the future Children's Hospital shows how the 12-story hospital will look on Birmingham's Southside.

### Quarterback Club gift for new hospital

By ANNA VELASCO  
News staff writer

The Monday Morning Quarterback Club of Birmingham has pledged \$8 million for the construction of a new Children's Hospital, catapulting the hospital's fundraising to more than \$80 million toward its \$100 million capital campaign.

The gift is the largest in the Quarterback Club's 69-year history and in the 79-year history of the club's preceding charitable foundation. The nonprofit group's leaders

will announce the pledge to its 550 members Monday at the club's meeting in downtown Birmingham.

"This is when Children's Hospital needs us to make a big commitment, so we're trying to stand up," said Tom Luckie, this year's captain of the Quarterback Club.

Children's Hospital won state approval in October to build a \$483 million replacement hospital that will connect to the current facility. Construction of the 12-story, 720,000-square-foot hospital will begin in late spring or early summer.

The Quarterback Club's

See DONATION | Page 6A



For over 70 years, the Monday Morning Quarterback Club has been dedicated to improving the lives of children with medical needs in the community.

## DONATION: Work begins next year

From Page 1A

\$8 million pledge, to be given over multiple years starting in 2010, is the third-largest of the hospital's "Keeping Promises" capital campaign.

The hospital launched its fund-

raising in May with the announcement of a \$25 million pledge from Ben and Luanne Russell of Alexander City. That gift is the largest in Children's 97-year history, and the hospital will be renamed the Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children when the new facility opens in 2012. The second-largest gift is a \$10 million pledge from McWane Inc. and the McWane Family Foundation.

Birmingham's Quarterback Club was started in 1939 for football enthusiasts under the direction of Zipp Newman, then sports editor of The Birmingham News. The impetus for the club's creation was to support a foundation, now known as the Crippled Children's Foundation, that was started in 1929 to help children stricken by polio. Since the scourge of polio has essentially been eliminated in the United States, the club has redirected its charitable arm to other charities that support health care for children.

Leaders of Birmingham's Quarterback Club say their dedication to giving sets them apart from other quarterback clubs nationally. In the Birmingham case, philanthropy preceded football.

"We're not just a bunch of guys drinking beers and talking about college football," said Hartwell Davis, president of the Crippled Children's Foundation. "We're seriously helping others."

The club meets only during football season and attracts national football celebrities to talk, many of whom donate their time when they learn of the group's fundraising.

Children's Hospital has been the largest beneficiary of the Quarterback Club's generosity. The club, having given about \$7 million to date, was the hospital's single largest donor before the gifts from the Russells and McWane, said Coke Matthews, the hospital's chief development officer.

New members in the Quarterback Club go through what Luckie called a hazing of sorts. But instead of making the "freshmen" overindulge in beer or food, the new members tour Children's Hospital, including the in-

creased each year the past 40 years, although the rate of growth slows during recession years. The only exception was 1987, when a tax law change made it more advantageous to give more the year prior.

Those statistics are not adjusted for inflation. If adjusted, there is a 1 percent average decrease in giving during a recession year, the report says.

Matthews said Children's Hospital is still getting commitments for its campaign, although donors are asking to extend the time period over which they give. All of the hospital's employees have contributed.

Kate Nielsen, president of the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, said major gifts continue to come, true to Birmingham's identity as a philanthropic stronghold.

"Giving has not shut down in this community," Nielsen said. "We have this quality of compassion in our community. As long as we continue to have that, we'll do well."

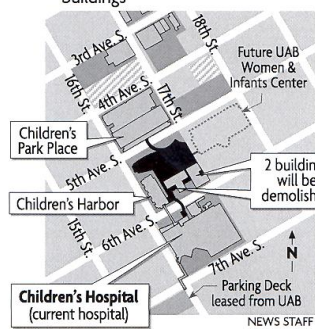
But Nielsen said it's important for those who can give more to do so because the needs are greater when the economy weakens.

"Our nonprofits here live on a shoestring," she said. "When the needs grow, that really stretches and stresses our nonprofits."

Quarterback Club leaders said they will continue to give as generously to other groups despite the large promise to Children's Hospital.

### CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL \$483 MILLION EXPANSION

- Future Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children
- Hospital property
- Existing hospital buildings
- ▨ Expanded parking area



tensive-care unit.

"When they go through that, they understand what we're about," Luckie said.

Matthews said Children's received the letter Wednesday promising the \$8 million gift.

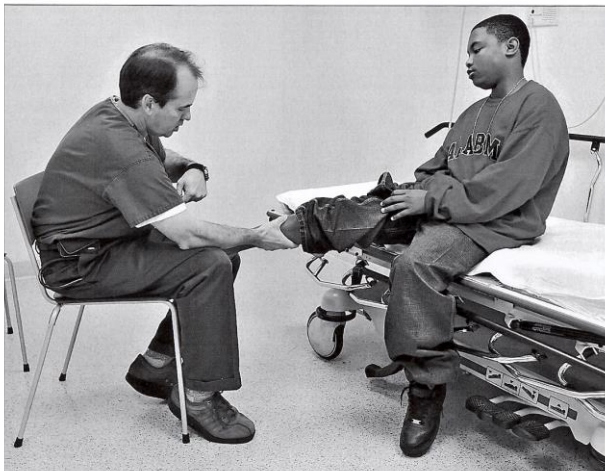
"They've been at the forefront of every capital campaign we've had," Matthews said of the club. "This gift keeps the momentum of our campaign going at a time when you don't see a lot of big checks flying around."

### Philanthropy not down

Despite the souring economy, the Quarterback Club has not pulled back from its goal of raising more

"We're not just a bunch of guys drinking beers and talking about college football. We're seriously helping others."

Hartwell Davis  
president of the Crippled Children's Foundation



Dr. David Bernard examines 13-year-old Julian Hardy for an ankle injury in the emergency room at Children's Hospital. Children's is raising money to build a \$483 million hospital that will connect to the current facility.

E-MAIL: avelasco@bhamnews.com