

Can You Hear Me?

K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital Ocean Township boy had tubes placed in his ears to help him hear again.

Vanessa Habermann, mother to 5-year-old Duke, noticed a change in her son when it came to his hearing. It became a family joke that Duke didn't want to listen, but what the family soon realized was that Duke really couldn't hear.

"It wasn't until my mom told me that Duke was constantly yelling and responding with 'What?' that I made an appointment with an ear, nose and throat doctor," says Vanessa.

Finding Answers

After hearing positive reviews from friends about Samuel Engel, M.D., a pediatric otolaryngologist affiliated with K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, Vanessa made an appointment for her son. Duke met the audiology team, and Vanessa was relieved to learn from Dr. Engel that there was no permanent hearing loss but rather a buildup of fluid in Duke's ears.

In children, fluid in the ear is common, as the eustachian tube — the natural drainage pathway from the ear to behind the nose — may not function well in kids. This fluid backup is more common in the winter, as mucus tends to build up in the cavity. This was the source of Duke's problem; the fluid was blocking sound getting to his hearing nerve.



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A Surgical Solution

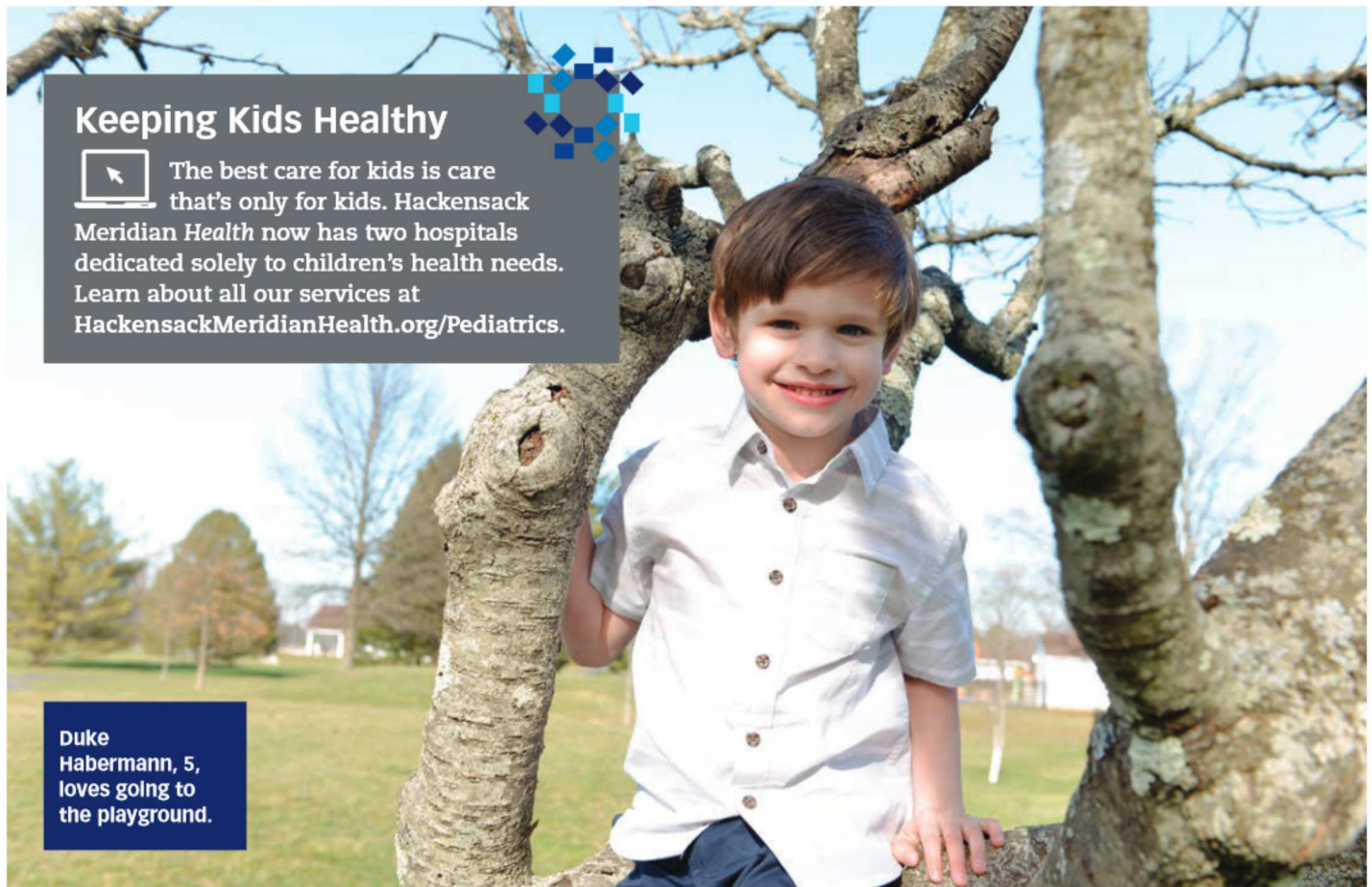
"Duke needed to have tubes placed in his ears to drain the fluid properly so that he could hear clearly," says Dr. Engel. Placing small tubes in the ear stops mucus from sitting stagnant there, preventing any temporary hearing loss.

"The tubes will last for about a year, and will help drain any potential fluid until Duke's ears develop properly. After about a year, they fall out and the fluid should begin to drain on its own," says Dr. Engel.

A week after his initial appointment, Duke had the procedure. His team of nurses brought smiles to his face before, during and after surgery. "Their kindness put my 5-year-old son at ease, which is a mother's dream come true," Vanessa says.

The short and simple outpatient procedure renewed Duke's spirit. After only one day of rest, Duke was ready to play with his sister and friends at a dinosaur museum. "I'm so happy that Dr. Engel took such good care of my son," says Vanessa. ■

By Kaylin Harper



Keeping Kids Healthy



The best care for kids is care that's only for kids. Hackensack Meridian Health now has two hospitals dedicated solely to children's health needs. Learn about all our services at HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Pediatrics.

Duke Habermann, 5, loves going to the playground.