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## **Phoenix Children's Hospital First in Nation to Pilot Mobile Classroom for Hospitalized Kids**

**Bed-bound Patients to Get Private Workspace, Tools to Keep Current With Studies**

PHOENIX, Ariz. (March 13, 2006) – More than 3,900 school-aged kids (5 to 18 years old) were admitted to Phoenix Children's Hospital last year with an average visit of five days – that adds up to more than 19,000 missed school days. This month, Children's and USA Funds are partnering to help chronically ill kids reduce learning obstacles by piloting the first-ever multi-media mobile classroom designed especially for hospitalized children.

The mobile classroom was designed to be a link between school and the hospital. The cartoon-themed cart includes a laptop, printer, school supplies, Internet access and other media tools. This classroom on wheels will provide bed-bound patients with a private workspace and the tools to keep them current with their studies.

“It brings the components necessary for a teaching environment right to a child's bedside,” says Tiffany Garcia, a teacher at Children's “One Darn Cool School,” the hospital's regular classroom. “Kids can get homework help by e-mailing hospital teaching staff, their school teachers, and fellow classmates. The rolling classroom conquers communication challenges and encourages kids to not only complete their school work, but stay connected with friends and family.”

Children's is the first hospital in the country to receive the mobile classroom. After a six-month trial, the patients, families, and staff working with the cart will provide feedback and recommendations to its designers. Carlos Sosa, president and design director of SosaGroup ([www.thesosagroup.com](http://www.thesosagroup.com)), designed the cart in conjunction with hospital educators.

“Promotion of education is USA Funds' primary focus, so we have a special concern that children who are hospitalized for extended periods don't fall behind in their studies because of their hospital stay,” said Carl Dalstrom, USA Funds president and CEO. “This gift will permit children who are confined to their beds in the hospital to access computer equipment, books and other activities so they can follow their lessons and keep pace with their classmates in school.”

Future carts will be developed based on the hospital's comments. In future versions, the system's camera will provide wireless/infrared access and remote capabilities. Children's educators will establish connections from the hospital's classroom to patients unable to leave their rooms, as well as facilitate 'virtual' visits between patients and their younger siblings who, during certain times of the year, are too young to visit the hospital because of a common respiratory virus. This technology will also allow patients to connect with their home school, participating in lectures, and communicating with peers and teachers from their hospital room.

"It's hard enough to miss a day or two of school due to the flu or a minor illness," says Lori Schweighart, Director of the Child Life program at Children's. "But for some kids, their illnesses and injuries are chronic, requiring multiple hospitalizations for several weeks to several months at a time. This changes everything about their lives and the world they know – including school."

USA Funds<sup>®</sup> is a nonprofit corporation that works to enhance postsecondary-education preparedness, access and success by providing and supporting financial and other valued services. USA Funds is designated by the U.S. Secretary of Education as the guarantor of federal student loans for Arizona. More information on USA Funds is available at [www.usafunds.org](http://www.usafunds.org).

Phoenix Children's Hospital is Arizona's leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children's hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Children's leadership position. For information about Phoenix Children's, visit the Hospital's award-winning website at [www.phoenixchildrens.com](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com).

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**Editor's Note: The first patient to use the mobile classroom is scheduled to receive it on March 16 between noon and 1 p.m. at Phoenix Children's Hospital. Representatives of Children's and USA Funds will be available for interviews. Members of the media are invited to the event and should R.S.V.P by calling Jessica Wheeler at (602) 546-0824.**