

# Vital Link



...For Hoosiers Living with a Bleeding Disorder

December 2025

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Designed by: Kristy McConnell

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## 2025 Year In Year Review

As the year comes to an end, we like to take time to reflect on all that 2025 brought to our community.

The year started strong with one of our most successful **Hearts for Hemophilia Galas** to date. Held in February at the beautiful Grand Hall at Union Station, this year's **Masquerade Ball** welcomed more than 200 attendees for an unforgettable evening in support of our mission.

In March, our advocacy team returned to **Washington, DC** to advocate on behalf of Indiana's bleeding disorders community, once again working to advance the **HELP Copays Act**. While there is still work to be done at the federal level, we are thrilled to share a major victory at the state level. Indiana now joins **21 other states** in ensuring that all co-pays count toward patients' deductibles and maximum out-of-pocket expenses.

March also brought the **2025 Bowling for Bleeding Disorders** event, a community fundraiser supporting the **Judy Moore Memorial Scholarship Program**. Thirteen teams participated this year, helping raise funds that allowed the scholarship committee to award **\$53,000 in scholarships to 12 community members** pursuing higher education.

In June, we hosted the **Course to a Cure Golf Outing**, which welcomed 110 golfers. Although the day began with a downpour, it ended in sunshine and was another tremendous success. That same week, **Camp Brave Eagle** took place with **115 campers and 8 Leaders in Training** in attendance. Of those campers, **89 successfully completed self-infusion training** and earned their "Big Stick." This vital program helps empower children with bleeding disorders by fostering independence

The **Doug Thompson Teen Leadership Camp** was held in July and traveled to **Bagley, Wisconsin** for the first time. Twelve male and female campers participated in outward-bound activities, leadership development, and the traditional “Chopped” cooking challenge.

In September, we hosted the **2026 Annual Meeting** at the Crowne Plaza Indianapolis Airport Hotel, with more than **125 community members** in attendance. The weekend was filled with education, connection, and support, as well as time to reflect on the challenging and resilient history of the bleeding disorders community—*lest we never forget*.

The year concluded with the **2025 THXRUN and Year-End Education Event** (see pages 3 and 4).

Overall, 2025 was an incredibly successful year, and we are already well underway in planning for an even stronger 2026. We wish everyone a **happy and healthy holiday season** and look forward to what the new year will bring.



To see more pictures from our 2025 events, make sure to check out our social media pages!



## 2025 Year End Education Event

The **2025 Year-End Education Event** was held on December 6th at the **Wellington Banquet & Conference Center** in Fishers, Indiana. This special event provides an opportunity for community members to reunite and reconnect while kicking off the holiday season. Attendees enjoyed a delicious holiday lunch, an educational presentation, festive crafts, and even a special visitor from the North Pole! Thank you to everyone who attended, as well as the incredible staff at the Wellington, for helping make this event such a wonderful success.



## Thank you to our 2025 Sponsors!!



## 2025 THXRUN

This year marked the **17th anniversary of the THXRUN!** What began in the backyard of the Shade family with fewer than 50 participants has grown into a beloved community tradition with **nearly 400 runners and walkers.**

The THXRUN kicks off at **Dr. James A. Dillon Park** and winds through the beautiful **Lochaven neighborhood** at 14th Street and Cherry Tree Road. We are incredibly grateful to our generous sponsors, whose support helps make this event possible. A special thank you to **Skylar Paunwar with the BifWard Real Estate Group** for sponsoring the **Free Kids Run**, as well as to **Taft Law** and **Integra Realty Resources** for serving as **Mile Marker sponsors**, and **Pepsi** for providing water for our participants.

Proceeds from the THXRUN benefit the **Judy Moore Memorial Scholarship Program**, helping support students in our community as they pursue higher education. Despite the cold weather, our runners and walkers showed up with enthusiasm, making this year's THXRUN another fun and successful event!

SAVE <sup>THE</sup> DATE

HEARTS FOR HEMOPHILIA GALA

**BOOTS** & *Bling*

FEBRUARY  
FRIDAY **7** 6:00PM  
2026

CROWNE PLAZA INDIANAPOLIS - UNION STATION

# How to Make Doctor Visits Less Scary for Kids

By: Carrie Starnes - *Child Life Specialist, Innovative Hematology*

For some kids, a trip to the doctor can be scary. A little preparation can go a long way in easing their fears before a routine check-up, vaccination, or something more involved like a blood draw.

## Play

Play allows kids to explore their emotions and what they might experience during a medical visit. One approach is role-play. Let your child be the “doctor” for a favorite stuffed animal. Pretend to give the stuffed animal a check-up or a shot. This helps kids process emotions that may arise during a medical visit and allows you to find ways to ease your child’s fears during medical visits.



Practicing infusions by role-playing with a teddy bear.

## Be Honest

For a child, honesty is the best policy in building trust and allowing them to confront the realities of the medical setting.

If your child has concerns about blood draws or injections, call the office to see if there are options to make them more comfortable.

Give your child honest answers if they have questions about a medical visit. If you know they will get a needle poke but tell them they won’t, this can keep them from feeling safe in a medical environment.

## Distraction

Bring a favorite book, toy, or even a tablet for games or videos during the appointment. Focusing on something fun can make procedures feel less overwhelming.



A patient looking at a book to stay distracted during an appointment.

## Take a Virtual Tour

Visit the hospital or doctor’s office online if available. Show your child pictures of the lobby, exam rooms, and even the people who work there. Seeing the environment ahead of time can reduce the fear of the unknown.

These strategies can help with everything from dental cleanings to more complex visits. The goal isn’t to eliminate every worry—it’s to help kids feel safe, informed, and supported.

Carrie Starnes is a Child Life Specialist at Innovative Hematology and the Indiana Hemophilia & Thrombosis Center in Indianapolis. Carrie helps children with blood disorders manage pain and stress during treatments and helps them develop age-appropriate techniques for handling their condition.

# Meet the New Hematologists

This year Innovative Hematology welcomed two new hematologists to our ever growing multidisciplinary care team.

Dr. Sherwin DeSouza treats adult patients. Dr. DeSouza has expertise and specific interest in thrombocytopenia, neutropenia, anemias, Evans syndrome, and autoimmune hematologic conditions.



Dr. Mehul Thakkar treats pediatric patients. Dr. Thakkar’s expertise and special interests include pediatric thrombosis and thrombophilia, hemophilia and bleeding disorders, von Willebrand disease (VWD), and medical education.



To learn more about our our new physicians and the rest of our care team, visit our website or scan the QR code shown below.



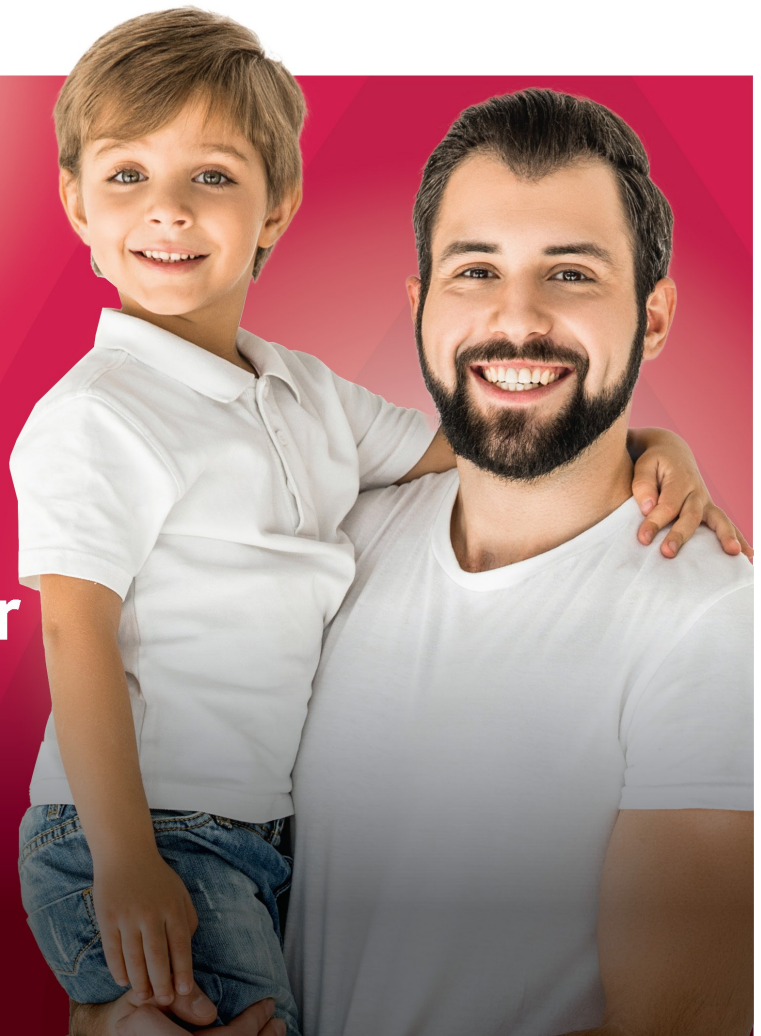


# Innovative Hematology

Indiana Hemophilia & Thrombosis Center

Helping you thrive with a bleeding disorder all in one place

No matter where you are in Indiana, we will extend our care to you.



Innovative Hematology and the IHTC provide care in Indianapolis and across the state through locally based medical professionals, home visits, outreach clinics, and telehealth.

### Lifespan bleeding disorder care

Innovative Hematology is home to the Indiana Hemophilia & Thrombosis Center (IHTC), providing advanced care for both adult and pediatric patients with rare bleeding and blood disorders. Our care truly spans a lifetime. There are many changes in life, and our team works to support you through all of them.

### The care you need—all in one place

We realize medical appointments take time away from your life. We work to make the most of your visit to decrease the need to go other places for services. Our team, including hematologists, advanced practice providers, mental health professionals, physical therapists, genetic counselors, a nutritionist, and more, are available to you when you need them.

Visit [InnovativeHematology.org](https://www.InnovativeHematology.org)

Innovative Hematology • 877.CLOTTER  
8326 Naab Road • Indianapolis, IN 46260



**2026**

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**Hearts for Hemophilia Gala: February 6**

**Bowling for Bleeding Disorders: March 21**

**World Hemophilia Day: April 17**

**Women's Retreat: May 16 - 17**

**Camp Brave Eagle: June 7 - 13**

**Course to a Cure Golf Outing: June 12**

**NBDF Bleeding Disorder Conference, Orlando, FL: Aug. 13-15**

**Annual Meeting: August 29 - 30 (Date Change!)**

**Thanksgiving Day Run: November 26**

**Year End Educational Program: December 5**

***Our mission:***

***Hemophilia of Indiana is dedicated to empowering the bleeding disorders community through education and support, while advocating access to quality care and product safety.***

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## Mark your Calendars!

- 2026 Hearts for Hemophilia Gala - February 6th
- 2026 Bowling for Bleeding Disorders - March 21st
- 2026 World Hemophilia Day - April 17th

Call our office @ (317) 570-0039 or email Kristy McConnell @ kmcconnell@hoii.org if you would like to get involved in any of our events!

- Check out our social media pages for updates!!!

