

Mount Sinai inside



TOP LEFT: Patient Katelynn Vargas and her father, Kevin
 TOP RIGHT: Siblings Alexis and Christian Alonso get a hug from a furry guest.
 BOTTOM: Ira Parness, MD, Chief of the Division of Pediatric Cardiology, with his patient Michael Biamonte and mother, Catherine

The Heart of the Matter

In October, five month-old Katelynn Vargas had surgery to fix a hole in her tiny heart. On February 18th, she was one of a few hundred pediatric cardiac patients crawling, toddling, or running around at the 23rd Annual Valentine's Reunion Party sponsored by the Division of Pediatric Cardiology, the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, The Children's Heart Fund, and Project Sunshine.

"It is so rewarding to see kids that we have operated on in their regular clothes at a social event," said Ira Parness, MD, Chief of the Division of Pediatric Cardiology. "The caregivers who have worked so hard to bring these children through complex heart repairs are incredibly energized to see those children fully recovered and doing what kids are supposed to be doing—having fun and enjoying life."

Throughout the event, patients like Reece Breyer, 5, munched on cupcakes, played Guitar Hero, and posed for pictures with celebrity guests like the New York Giants', Rich Seubert and Miss USA, Crystle Stewart.

Rachel Justus, LCSW, a social worker in the Division of Pediatric Cardiology described the event as a "celebration of life."

"It is such a joyful event," she said. "In addition to being fun, it gives these young people a chance to connect with other families who understand what they have been through."