

New pediatric behavioral health unit at Banner Thunderbird Medical Center



With a growing need for behavioral health care in the communities we serve, Banner Thunderbird Medical Center just completed a new 12-bed inpatient pediatric behavioral health unit for patients ages 5-12. The project was funded with proceeds from the Banner Health Foundation's Pulse of the City Soiree held in 2019 and a special virtual fundraising campaign, Lighting the Way, held in 2020, to raise funds and awareness of youth mental health needs in Arizona.

Banner medical experts have noted a significant increase in pediatric behavioral health cases at hospitals, both in Arizona and nationwide, with the trend accelerating in the past year. While the increase has been seen in both children and teens, children under age 13 typically have the longest stays in the Emergency department (ED) and are unfortunately an underserved population. The availability of these inpatient beds will help alleviate long waits in EDs, providing specialized and highly skilled care in a safe, comforting and age-appropriate environment.

"I know that this will have a dramatic effect on the lives of these children and their families, and we are proud to offer this service that is so greatly needed in our community," said Banner Behavioral Health CEO, **Bill Southwick**.

The unit has been thoughtfully designed for children, with plenty of safety features and special touches such as youthful colors, kid-friendly artwork, natural light and outdoor recreation spaces.

In addition to this new inpatient unit, proceeds from the Pulse of the City Soiree and Lighting the Way campaign also support the implementation of tele-behavioral health care to get care more quickly to young patients, on-demand psychiatry consultations for pediatricians and the hiring of additional adolescent psychiatrists and trained social workers to help meet the growing needs of our youth.

