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An amazing year for DeVos Children's Hospital

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The Helen DeVos Children's Hospital at Spectrum Health turned a year old last week and the \$286 million state-of-the-art medical marvel already has compiled quite a track record by debuting about a dozen new pediatric specialties and adding roughly 150 new jobs.

Although providing care to sick children is more than a numbers game, the numbers bear out the hospital's importance to those children and their families.

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital now employs nearly 200 physicians in more than 50 pediatric specialties and programs, including the only pediatric radiology department in the region, which had nearly 75,000 visits over the past year. It offers one of the nation's largest programs for cancer and blood disorders, giving relief to more than 700 patients each month. The hospital has one of the country's largest neonatal centers, which cared for 1,200 babies in the last year. It also has one of only 115 nationally accredited cystic fibrosis care units in the nation and one of the state's largest diabetes programs.

Helen DeVos Children's Hospital had more than 8,300 inpatient admissions, 53,000 radiology procedures, 41,300 emergency room visits and 6,600 surgeries in its first year.

"Many institutions around the country would love to have that facility," said Michael La Penna,

principal of The La Penna Group, which provides the medical industry with strategic and financial consulting services.

"Our first year in the building has exceeded our expectations," said Dr. Robert Connors, the facility's president. "It's exciting to think what the next year will bring in terms of program development, continued community support and inspiring patient stories."

It took about eight years for the hospital to go from the drawing board to the top of Michigan Street hill. The design work began in 2003, with Jonathan Bailey Associates of Dallas and URS Corp. of Grand Rapids teaming up for the task. Construction took four years and 2,400 workers to complete, an effort that was managed by Turner Construction Co. of New York and Wolverine Building Group of Grand Rapids.

"The workers and everybody on this project understood this was something special, and I think everybody, right from Day One, really took a lot of pride in this project. We do that on all projects, but this one was really unique and special," said Bruce Burgess, vice president of Wolverine Construction Management.

"It's a world-class hospital and it's also got the same unique aesthetic aspect that you don't typically see in a hospital to this degree," said Ron Dawson, senior project manager for Turner Construction.

The uniqueness was created purposely for the patients the hospital serves. It was designed and built to be a place that generates an appealing atmosphere to children and their parents.