

Pediatrics Monthly Newsletter

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February 2026

After over three decades of outstanding leadership, Dr. Fayez Ghishan is stepping down from his role as Department Chair to continue his research program in the Steele Research Center. He has been a pivotal figure in the Department of Pediatrics, shaping its identity, enhancing its reputation, and strengthening its influence on children and families throughout Tucson and Arizona. Dr. Ghishan has seamlessly integrated clinical excellence, scientific discovery, education, and philanthropy into a legacy that will continue to impact our department for generations.

Since assuming the position of Chair of Pediatrics and Director of the Steele Children's Research Center in 1995, Dr. Ghishan has established one of the region's most robust pediatric academic and clinical enterprises. Under his guidance, the department has experienced significant growth in terms of size, expertise, and national recognition. He has actively promoted faculty recruitment, strengthened residency and fellowship programs, and fostered an environment that encourages inquiry, compassion, and innovation to coexist. Even during his final year as Chair, he celebrated recruiting 11 new faculty members, expanding fellowships, and welcoming an increasing number of University of Arizona students to the Pediatrics program—indications of a department continuing to thrive under his visionary leadership.

Dr. Ghishan's impact on pediatric research is immeasurable. A globally recognized pediatric gastroenterologist and NIH-funded investigator for over four decades, his scholarship has advanced our understanding of the developmental physiology of the gut, intestinal transport, mucosal immunology, gut microbiota, inflammatory bowel diseases, and the gut-bone axis. His extensive body of over 275 peer-reviewed publications and uninterrupted NIH funding, including two consecutive prestigious NIH MERIT Awards, underscore a career characterized by sustained excellence and scientific leadership.

Dr. Ghishan's impact extends beyond laboratories and academic accolades. His dedication to children in Tucson manifests in every program he strengthened, every clinical service he expanded, and every family he touched through improved access to world-class pediatric care. As Physician in Chief of Diamond Children's Medical Center and longtime Director of the Steele Children's Research Center, he fostered a comprehensive and compassionate environment where science and humanity converge in service to children and their families. His commitment to education has resulted in the training of numerous residents and fellows, inspiring countless medical students to pursue careers in pediatrics. The Department faculty has garnered multiple teaching awards.

Dr. Ghishan possesses a remarkable ability to engage the Arizona community in our mission, leading to his extraordinary success in philanthropic partnerships. A compelling example of this was his pivotal role in collaborating with Greg Pivrotto and the Diamond family to establish Diamond Children's Medical Center, which opened in 2010. Dr. Ghishan has cultivated one of the most robust cultures of giving within the Arizona Health Sciences, inspiring individuals, families, foundations, and community groups to invest in children's health. In 2025 alone, the department raised nearly \$8 million from over 3,000 gifts—an achievement rooted in his tireless storytelling, community engagement, and capacity to connect donors with meaningful purposes. His years of leadership in fundraising have enabled new research programs, endowed positions, high-impact clinical initiatives, and opportunities for trainees—resources that will continue to shape the department's trajectory long after his tenure.

On behalf of the entire University of Arizona Department of Pediatrics, including staff, faculty, students, residents, and fellows, we extend our sincere gratitude to you, Dr. Ghishan. Your unwavering dedication has left an indelible legacy, transforming our department into a more robust institution capable of delivering exceptional care to the children of Arizona. Your contributions have fostered a vibrant research community that will undoubtedly contribute to a healthier future for children across Tucson. Your decades of service serve as a testament to the transformative power of vision, generosity, and unwavering commitment, inspiring us to achieve even greater accomplishments in the future.

With Respect, Appreciation and Gratitude,
Wayne Morgan, Andy Theodorou, Manny Katsanis, Kareem Shehab, Pawel Kiela, and Lori Stratton

With Gratitude and Appreciation

As we mark a leadership transition for the Department of Pediatrics and Steele Children's Research Center, we want to take a moment to recognize and thank Dr. Ghishan for his extraordinary service and dedication.

Throughout his tenure, he has led with vision, integrity, and an unwavering commitment to advancing children's health. Under his guidance, the Center has grown in impact, innovation, and collaboration — strengthening research initiatives, expanding programs, and fostering a culture where both science and compassion thrive.

But leadership is not only measured in programs built or milestones reached. It is reflected in the people influenced along the way. Our staff consistently describe him as a thoughtful mentor, a steady presence, and a champion for their growth. And beyond our walls, the gratitude extends even further. Patient families frequently share words that speak not only to clinical excellence, but to kindness, attentiveness, and genuine care.

It is clear that admiration for his work reaches far beyond the office, it lives in the lives of the children and families we serve.

While we will deeply miss him in the role of Chair and Director, we are grateful that this is not goodbye. We are fortunate that he will continue to be part of our department and community, and we look forward to the ongoing impact of his wisdom and presence.

On behalf of the entire department, thank you for your leadership, your compassion, and the legacy you leave in this role.

Best,
The Pediatric Administrative Team

Dr. Ghishan,
Thank you for all you have done for our department and Pediatrics. I am grateful to have been a small part in your legacy. Your commitment to advancing the care of patients and Pediatrics is admirable.

Best,
Rachael Cho

Your unwavering passion for your work has been felt each day. Your legacy will certainly endure.

Best,
Teresa Reyna

"Dr. Ghishan is a world renowned doctor who is a true benefit to Tucson. He is my hero, he saved my son's life. My son had sudden weight loss, his heart rate dropped dramatically & he was ready to go into cardiac arrest. Dr. Ghishan knew my son and unfortunately was no longer his doctor due to our insurance. The doctor under our insurance did not show up at the hospital to see my son even after calling my cell phone & stating that he would be right over. By the second day of the other doctor not showing, Dr. Ghishan came to our rescue and examined our son and knew he was in danger and took over my son's care at UMC. If it had not been for Dr. Ghishan, my son would not have made it. If we would have remained where we were, the unthinkable would have happened. Dr. Ghishan is the BEST doctor, he is exceptional. He is genuine & he knows his patients, he takes the time to go over everything, his nurse Kathy is one of a kind and she goes above & beyond for both dr/patient, she too is the BEST! Both SPECIAL!"

Dear Dr. Ghishan,

Thank you for inspiring us with your passion and showing us the power of science. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to making a difference in the lives of children in Arizona and beyond.

Wishing you all the best in this next chapter!

Sincerely,
Katie James



Dr. Ghishan,

Thank you for your leadership and support. Thank you for the care and concern you showed me through my battle with cancer. Your dedication to our patients and their families has made a lasting impact on me. You deserve all the best things as you move into the next phase of your career.

Take care,
Cindy

Dr. Ghishan,

Thank you for the confidence you've instilled in me and for being such a wonderful mentor. Your dedication to your patients and research is truly inspiring. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn from you as both a leader and a person.

Inshallah,
Casey

"Dr. Ghishan is by far the best doctor I have ever known. There isn't enough space here to tell you everything he has done to save our daughter's life. Take your child to him without hesitation and you will be thrilled. He knows what he's doing and is super sweet on top of it all! Kathy, his assistant/nurse is also top-notch and always available."

"Simply the best! He is the most knowledgeable and caring physician I have ever seen. He walks on water in my eyes!"

"Dr. Ghishan is an expert in the field of GI issues, bedside manner, patience with patients, knowledge, and skill."

"Dr. Ghishan is truly knowledgeable in his area of expertise. We always feel that he takes the time to listen to our daughter's needs. He's very thoughtful and precise in problem solving and developing a treatment plan."

"I am a patient of Dr. Ghishan's and can without a shadow of a doubt say that he is one of the best doctors out there. I know I'm not his only patient, but I always feel like his top priority. His methodology is flawless and it's clear how well versed he is in his field. His examinations are thorough, and he always makes sure to acknowledge all possibilities in diagnosis while at the same time explaining everything in terms that a patient can easily understand. I have always trusted him and felt that I was in excellent hands."

"Dr. Ghishan has been very good to us and always had provided excellent care to my son. We are very lucky to have him as my son provider"





We are pleased to welcome back Wildcat alumna Dr. Lisa Chamberlain, who will begin her role as Chair of Pediatrics on March 1.

Please remember to join us on Monday, March 2nd from 12:30-1:30pm in room 5403 to welcome her, and hear her vision for Pediatrics.



Pawel R. Kiela, DVM, PhD

Pediatrics in the news



 **Banner Health (Diamond Children's Medical Center)** ...
1d · 

Diamond Children's Medical Center cancer patient Bella Wiswell, 4, presented a check to Holly Pariury, D.O., and her care team in memory of her grandfather, Roger Wiswell, who recently passed.

This inspiring gift was from a dear friend of the family who wanted to honor Roger's memory and Bella's courage, teaching Bella to pay it forward.

This special gift will support the greatest needs of the clinic in serving patients facing similar battles.

Donor / Steele CRC Spotlight & Upcoming Events!

Desert Gold Childhood Cancer Walk

Thank you to all who came out and walked!

Have a Heart Fundraiser at Catalina Mountain Arizona Elks

Thank you, Dr. Sarah Mathena from the ARID team for sharing your research on health and illness in everyday lives!

Kids of Steele

Kids of Steele had their membership event on Sunday 2/22 at COM-T. Thank you to Daniel, Anna and Nabahi from the PANDA Core for Genomics & Microbiome Research lab for taking part in the amazing event!

Kids of Steele donated over \$190,000 to Steele CRC! Thank you KOS for all of your hard work!

Walk with a Doc

A special shout-out to Michelle Burr, from Dr. Rickie Simpson's lab for sharing her inspiring research with our community at Walk with a Doc on February 14th! Her work advancing immune cell therapies and exploring the powerful role exercise plays in cancer treatment made a lasting impression on our walkers.

Join us in March as Daniel Laubitz PhD , shares information about Genomics and Microbiome Research.

Saturday March 14th @ 8:00am

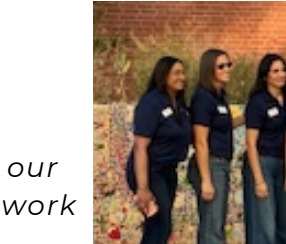
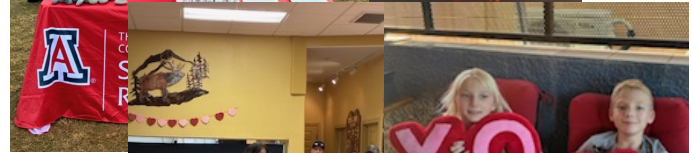
Start your morning off right!

Some mental health benefits of walking:

- Reduces stress & anxiety
- Lowers risk of depression
- Improves mood
- Helps you sleep better
- Improves energy levels
- Improves cognition & creativity
- Lowers risk of dementia & Alzheimer's
- Improves overall quality of life

Interested in leading a walk or know someone in another department who would?!

Contact Lori Castro at
loricastro@arizona.edu or 520-626-1614



**Saturday, March 14, 2026
8:00 AM**
**The Rillito River Park ramada east of Swan Road
on the south bank just north of Camp Lowell.**
From Swan go east on Paseo De Los Rios (you'll see the blue Rillito River Park wall). Once on Paseo De Los Rios take the immediate left. That road will take you into the parking lot.



This walking program is a fun and safe place to take a walk (at your own pace), learn health tips from local healthcare providers, and meet new friends. The event is FREE and all are welcome!

Future walks will be held on the 2nd Saturday of every month.

Questions?
contact Lori Castro at
loricastro@arizona.edu or
520.626.1614



Don't forget / Upcoming action items:

- FREE lunch & learn for Pediatric Healthcare Providers
 - Thursday March 26th from 11:30-1:30pm at Pima CC Downtown
- Faculty portfolio (UA Vitae annual reviews)
 - Division chiefs will be meeting with each faculty member to complete the annual review process. All meetings must be finished by the end of April, so that reviews can be entered into the system by 4/30/26.
- **Share your science:** If you're publishing a study or have received a \$1M+ research grant and wish to share your news with the larger community, please contact the COM-T Brand Communications Team to discuss options for telling your story. We may feature your news in this newsletter, on our social media channels, or as a feature story or press release published on the web. Stories that are impactful and interesting to the general public are favored. Please contact Anna Christensen, MPH, with questions.
- Accounting team group email:
peds-finance@list.arizona.edu
- UA Life & Work Connections
- Don't forget to recognize employees (both faculty & staff) doing an excellent job!
 - You can recognize faculty, staff, residents, anyone in the Peds department!
 - Recognition can be sent to that person's direct supervisor.
 - Then the supervisor should email to Casey Nelson at caseycastle@arizona.edu.
- Creative Arts For Lowering Mental Stress (CALM) - hosted by the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health ([click here for more info!](#))
 - 3/3/2026 from 12:30-1:30pm: Zen Doodling
 - 4/7/2026 from 4:00-5:00pm: Healing Dance
 - 5/7/2026 from 12:30-1:30pm: Sound Bath Meditation

Thank you for reading!

For suggestions contact:
Casey Nelson
caseycastle@arizona.edu
medicine.arizona.edu/pediatrics

Free Lunch & Learn for Pediatric Healthcare Providers

Unlocking the Biology of Resilience: How Understanding Childhood Adversity Can Transform Pediatric Care

Featuring: Margery A. Shoptaugh, MD
Medical Director, Center for Resiliency & Wellbeing,
Phoenix Children's Hospital



Date:
Thursday, March 26th

Time:
11:30am - 1:30pm

Location:
Pima Community College Downtown
Campus-
Amethyst Room
1255 N. Stone Ave.
Tucson, AZ

Description:
This may be one of the most important topics you never studied in school. Dr. Shoptaugh will share how learning about the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the developing nervous system transformed her approach to medicine. Participants will learn how ACEs-informed care will strengthen patient relationships, improve communication, and support better long-term health outcomes.

Register & learn more :



Sponsored By:



ROUND UP TODAY TO SAVE A CHILD'S LIFE




Your donation today helps researchers at the Steele Children's Research Center in Arizona find cures for devastating childhood diseases.



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PANDA



Open positions in Pediatrics:

Banner:
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UA:
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Operational reminders:

- Planning to travel? Don't forget to notify your Banner Coordinators and UA Admins.