

Gabrielle Hoelzer and Nina Hernandez Lead Rainbow Girls in Raising Over \$38,000 for Shriners Hospitals

Gabrielle Hoelzer and Nina Hernandez spearhead a remarkable fundraising effort by Illinois Rainbow Girls, raising over \$38,000 for Shriners Hospitals.

CHICAGO, IL, UNITED STATES, July 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Gabrielle Hoelzer and Nina Hernandez, illustrious leaders of the Illinois [Rainbow](#) Girls, have achieved an extraordinary milestone by raising over \$38,000 for [Shriners](#) Hospitals. Their inspiring journey underscores the power of youth in philanthropy and the profound impact of the Masonic community. Through unwavering dedication and innovative fundraising



Nina Hernandez at Ansar Shrine

efforts, Hoelzer and Hernandez have set a shining example of service and compassion, exemplifying the core values of the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls. This remarkable feat not only highlights their commitment to charitable causes but also strengthens the bonds between the Rainbow Girls and the Shriners, fostering a legacy of support and generosity.

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We cannot express our gratitude to the Shriners for all of the support they have given to the Masonic youth”
Nina Hernandez

Founded in 1922, the International Order of the Rainbow for Girls is a nonprofit youth organization that empowers girls with the tools, training, and encouragement to let their individual spirit shine bright. Rainbow welcomes girls of every race, religion and culture, and has locations

throughout the United States and Canada, in addition to Aruba, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the Philippines.

The International Order of the Rainbow for Girls, otherwise known as Rainbow or IORG, is a

Masonic youth group for girls ages 10 to 21. It uses the seven colors of the Rainbow to teach its members lessons for how to be a good and strong woman, member of society, friend, and sister. Each ray of color represents a different important lesson we believe will help us to live a fulfilled and well rounded life. They are, in order, as follows: Love, Religion, Nature, Immortality, Fidelity, Patriotism, and Service. The organization teaches its members—through the values of Faith, Hope, and Charity— leadership skills, public speaking, confidence in themselves, and the importance of service. The members of Rainbow refer to each other as sisters and place a great deal of emphasis on forming lifelong friendships with one another and helping each other to grow as individuals.

Within the organization, there are assemblies, which are local chapters of the organization, the state level, referred to as Grand Assembly, and the international chapter, referred to as Supreme. Illinois has 23 active assemblies throughout the state, who support local charities that are picked by the Worthy Advisor of the assembly. The Grand Assembly supports a charity picked by the Grand Worthy Advisor, who often has personal ties to the charity that is picked. Illinois Grand Assembly votes in their top five offices: Faith, Hope, Charity, Worthy Associate Advisor, and Worthy Advisor, which makes us very different from most states, who have their top officers appointed by their adult advisors. However, despite the differences of each state, Rainbow as a whole has great connections with each other and all of the other affiliated Masonic organizations.



Illinois Rainbow's Grand Charity total for the Shriners Hospital, 2019



Nina Hernandez at the Ashley Whippet Dog competition

Among the several lessons Rainbow teaches the girls, charity is the most important. Similar to our sponsoring bodies, we aim to give back and serve the community. In helping our community, some Rainbow assemblies and jurisdictions decide to volunteer with and raise money for the Shriners and their hospitals. Some examples of various jurisdictions that have contributed to assisting the Shriners within the past couple of years are: Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee, and more.

In Connecticut, their 2023 Grand Worthy Advisor, Brenna W., and her state raised \$2,056 for the Shriners Children's in New England. In Illinois, the 2019 Grand Worthy Advisor, Gabrielle Hoeper (now Hoelzer), and her state raised \$12,047 for the Shriners Children's in Chicago. A couple years later in Illinois, the 2023 Grand Worthy Advisor, Nina Hernandez, and her state raised \$26,685 for the Shriners Hospital Transportation Fund for the five Shrine units throughout Illinois. In Massachusetts, their 2023 Grand Worthy Advisor, Caera Gonyea, and her state raised \$2,800 for the Shriners Hospitals in Massachusetts. In Michigan, their 2022 Grand Worthy Advisor, Cheyenne Brannon, and her state raised \$9,300 for the Shriners Children's in Ohio. In Missouri, their 2023 Grand Worthy Advisor, Gracie Yarbrough, and her state raised \$5,766 for the Shriners Children's in St. Louis Transportation Fund. In Tennessee, their 2023 Grand Worthy Advisor, Gabrielle Hall, and her state raised \$6,137 for the Shriners Children's in Lexington. These states and the other jurisdictions heavily value our sponsoring bodies and the work they do for those in need.

Gabby's Story- Patient to Active Supporter:

"My story started when I was born with a port wine stain birthmark on the left side of my face. When I was 2 ½, I had my first surgery in Boston, MA at the Shriners Hospital for Children. My mom always says that, on our first trip to have surgery, I turned to her and said, "Mom, there are other kids here who look



Gabrielle Hoelzer at the Shrine Bowl parade where she was crowned Shrine Bowl Queen, 2017



Gabrielle Hoelzer post birthmark surgery, 2010

like me," and that my statement was how she knew we made the right choice. Throughout my many times there, I quickly formed a second family; I finally had a community of people who did not judge me for looking different, who allowed me to be a normal kid, and who supported me and my family in our toughest times. " -Gabrielle Hoelzer

"We flew out to Boston, with all costs being paid by Kaaba Shrine, 3-4 times a year until there was an opening at the Cincinnati, OH hospital when I was 12 years old (for those keeping track, that is roughly 30-40 surgeries, give or take a few). Once I was at the Cincinnati Hospital, I had roughly 6 more surgeries before the doctors felt confident I didn't need many more." -Gabrielle Hoelzer

"Around the time I changed hospitals, my primary care physician, in addition to my chiropractor, determined that I had severe enough scoliosis to consider surgery. Instantly, my family and I began looking into having that surgery done at one of the Shriners Hospitals, knowing how much care they put into their patients. In March of 2014, at 13 years old, I had two metal rods, several screws, and a few pins put into my back to correct my scoliosis. It was due to the Shriners that my dad became a Mason; he believed, as did the rest of my family, that due to how much good the Shriners had put into our lives, how much my experiences helped my confidence, and how much the Shriners supported us, that it was time to give back to them. It was not long after he joined Masonry that I became a Rainbow Girl. I worked my way up the ranks of my local assembly and, as soon as I could, I became a State Officer. Eventually, in 2018, I was elected Grand Worthy Advisor for Illinois Rainbow, which was truly a dream come true and something I strongly believe I could never have accomplished if it was not for the Shriners. When picking the charity for the year I led the state, there was no other option other than the Shriners Hospital for Children. Throughout that year, I challenged the members to raise as much money as they could and to collect their pop tabs to donate at the end of the year. By the time Grand Assembly of 2019 came around, we had raised \$12,047.83 and had 709.8 pounds of pop tabs turned in to donate. To say my entire experience was remarkable would be a vast understatement; I received so much support from the members of Illinois Rainbow, but also from the Masonic Community, specifically the Shriners. I am, and will forever be, eternally grateful for all of the kindness, support, and love my family and I have received from the staff at the hospitals and the Shriners themselves." -Gabrielle Hoelzer

Nina's Story- Ties That Bind

"My Rainbow journey started long before I could join. I grew up a Mason's daughter, surrounded by Masons, Shriners, Scottish Rite members, and more. The strong connections and bonds I witnessed while growing up stirred a want to take part in their connections. When I joined Rainbow at the age of eleven, I knew that was where I wanted to be. I loved going to Masonic installations to show the Masons that I had finally become a member of the Masonic Family. Through Rainbow I was able to take part in community service, charity work, and general volunteering; my favorite event to volunteer with the Rainbow Girls was the annual Shriners Hospital holiday party in Chicago. I fell in love with joining in the patients' joy and fun, and I

couldn't wait for the following year to go back and do it again. So when my dream of becoming Illinois' Grand Worthy Advisor, I knew that I wanted the state to raise money for something involving the Shriners Hospital." -Nina Hernandez

"I asked my dad to reach out to the Medinah Shrine in Addison, IL to ask them how the Rainbow Girls could help the Shriners out financially. They told me about the transportation fund. With my ambition to help Shriners patients, helping them to and from their appointments was our new goal for the year. I thought it was crucial to remember the sponsoring bodies that not only support us, but also supports our society as a whole. The girls throughout the state did everything in their power to raise money for the patients, and the Masons also appreciated our decision to raise money for the transportation fund. The girls took immense initiative and organized events like a silent auction and trivia night at the Springfield [Ansar](#) Shrine with all of the proceeds from raffle baskets donated to the fund. The girls also served breakfast and lunch at the Ashley Whippet Invitational Dog Competition with all of those proceeds donated to the fund, as well." -Nina Hernandez

"It was my honor to present each of the five Shrine units throughout Illinois with approximately \$5,000 to help Shriners' patients. Junior Past Potentate Tracy Burcham accepted the Medinah Shrine check, and Chief Rabban Jonathan Williams accepted the Tebala Shrine check. These two men not only work hard for their Shrine, but they also heavily support the Rainbow Girls and the Masonic youth groups to this day.

If I could go back to the day I made my decision to raise money for the transportation fund, I would do it again in a heartbeat. To give to those who need help is the most important lesson I learned in Rainbow, and I know the girls of our order feel the same." -Nina Hernandez

"We cannot express our gratitude to the Shriners for all of the support they have given to the Masonic youth groups and the support they have given to the community. The Shriners have touched the lives of so many and the love exemplified by the Shriners is something that we can only ever hope to exhibit in our own lives. We speak for so many when we say thank you! Thank you for supporting us, for supporting the community, and for changing the lives of children and their families all over the United States. Thank you." -Nina Hernandez

James Dobbs
Wilmette Park Lodge
[email us here](#)

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