

Support Your Local Nail Fairy

Every other Friday the young patients at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma, Wash., receive a special visitor — none other than the Nail Fairy. Wearing wings and bearing polish, Martina Ngo is welcomed with broad smiles as she dispenses manicures and good cheer. A volunteer since 2014, Ngo, the owner of Tacoma-based Tina's Traveling Nails, is looking for donations to support her efforts. She is also hoping other nail techs pick up the mantle and deliver similar services in their areas.

We asked her how she got started.

What motivated you to volunteer?

Ngo: I worked for my family's nail salon in Tacoma prior to taking the leap and starting my own business as Tina's Traveling Nails. I remembered how excited and happy children would get when their parents brought them in for a mani/pedi. I love kids and I love helping people. So I just thought maybe I could volunteer at our nearby children's hospital and paint their nails to hopefully brighten up their day a bit.

How did you get started?

Ngo: I contacted the volunteer services department, told them my idea, and they loved it! We had to talk about precautionary protocols given all the different health situations in the hospital. I suggested to them that I would polish each child with a brand new bottle and they would then get to keep that bottle of polish.

What keeps you going?

Ngo: It's amazing to see how happy the children get when I arrive at their rooms. Their faces light up instantly. There are other volunteers at the hospital, but I'm the only one wearing a tutu and wings, which immediately catches their attention and makes the parents and kids smile.

When I first started, not many kids were interested because they just didn't know what I did. Now I've become popular to the point where moms call me on my cell phone and ask me to come by. Nurses catch me in the hallways and tell me so-and-so really wants to see me. I feel overwhelmed with happiness to be able to make those children smile and change their mood even just a little bit.

What's the hardest part of being the Nail Fairy?

Ngo: The hardest part is seeing the babies. They are weeks old — maybe months — and they're already fighting for their life in some cases. So I try my best to put on the biggest smile I can and offer to paint the moms' nails sometime while the baby is asleep. It gives them a little break to enjoy some pretty nails.



What about the boys?

Ngo: I recently started offering temporary tattoos for the boys because I did not want to leave them out. They love them! I also purchased a ton of fairy wings to give out because a lot of the girls believe I am real and wish they had wings like mine.

How can we help? What kind of donations are you looking for?

Ngo: I am looking for any unused nail polish bottles, nail art stickers, temporary tattoos, and pretty much any nail-related supplies since I go through them pretty quickly. I see about 30-50 kids a month typically and I give them each a bottle of polish. I have set up a gofundme site: www.gofundme.com/nailfairyfund. I use these funds to purchase polish remover and other supplies, plus wings and tutus.

What's in your future?

Ngo: I hope to inspire others to become a nail fairy at their local children's hospital. I would love to have Nail Fairies at all the children's hospitals. I would be willing to answer any questions anyone has as to how I became the Nail Fairy so they can become one too. As I receive donations, I hope I can share my supplies with other hospitals that would like to start their own program. Nail polish is something so simple, but to these children it means so much more than that, and they will always remember that one time they were ill and a Nail Fairy in a puffy tutu and wings visited them to make them smile.

You can contact Ngo at tinastravelingnails@yahoo.com. Donations can be made at www.gofundme.com/nailfairyfund.