SUMMER ENRICHMENT
Local programs for your child

Where to travel with kids this summer (and tips for keeping your sanity)
New diagnostic center allows parent to hold child’s hand during MRI

As a father himself, Brad Childs saw the benefit of having an open-air MRI that would allow parents to sit with — and even hold the hand of — a child having the diagnostic test performed.

It’s partly why he opened Medical Imaging Express in Greenville, a new diagnostic imaging center that features the state’s first true open, weight-bearing MRI machine.

“As a parent, I can say there’s nothing worse than seeing your child hurt and then seeing their anxiety at having to do an MRI on top of that,” he said. “We try to do same-day appointments and same or next day reports, especially when it comes to children.”

Childs said the MRI technology at his center doesn’t have a conventional tube design, which many patients experience anxiety using.

Set inside an open room that has been designed with relaxation in mind, the MRI machine consists of a tilting table that can be elevated to an upright position to allow for a standing MRI underneath the diagnostic tool.

Patients aren’t strapped or confined, which can also help patients who experience claustrophobia, or anxiety over tight spaces, he said.

“We had a patient who was claustrophobic come in and say afterward this was the best thing ever invented,” Childs said.

“It’s also safe for anyone, such as a parent, to sit inside the MRI room while images are being obtained, he said.

Medical Imaging Express also offers ultrasounds and X-rays, and the MRI technology is among the quietest to be found. Childs said patients can wear headphones and listen to TV, music or Internet videos, and the function of the MRI machine is never heard.

“That real loud clanging sound that can be so loud is cut in half on this machine,” he said. “This technology can only be found here in Greenville in South Carolina, and it’s only one of 13 in the United States.”

Another unique feature is that patients can move certain limbs during imaging to see how well surgeries or treatments have worked in terms of giving them flexibility.

Mary Ann Childs and daughter Brooke Childs, 11, demonstrate a true open-MRI machine at Medical Imaging Express in Greenville. NATHAN GRAY/STAFF

Childs said the technology doesn’t use contrast, so it can’t be used to spot tumors. It’s used primarily for diagnosing physical and sports injuries.

He pointed out that patients always have a choice when it comes to choosing where such diagnostic tests are performed.

“All you have to do is ask your doctor to send us the order,” he said. “We’ve also had patients call us directly to schedule procedures.”

Childs said the facility is locally and family owned, and customer service is key.

“We treat you like we’d treat our moms or grandmoms,” he said.