



Brain Surgery at Age 5

For 5-year-old Levi from Thorold, the summer of 2020 marked the beginning of a life-altering journey.

“Levi started having severe constipation, migraines and leg pains,” recalls Levi’s mother, Amanda. “I took him to the local hospital, where he had a CAT scan. When an unusual growth was found in Levi’s brain, we were transferred to McMaster Children’s Hospital.”

Additional testing led to a diagnosis of medulloblastoma

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Brain Surgery at Age 5

(Continued from page 1) – a tumour of the central nervous system. Levi's tumour was situated around his brain stem, and fortunately, it hadn't spread elsewhere in his body.

"It was scary to learn that Levi would need brain surgery, but I knew he was receiving the best possible care," says Amanda.

Before the operation, Amanda was told that Levi might experience posterior fossa syndrome – a condition that can develop after a patient undergoes surgery to remove a tumour in the posterior fossa region of the brain. The syndrome can result in a loss of motor function in the face or body. Despite the risks involved, surgery was necessary to stem the tumour's growth.

"The procedure was eight hours long, and they were able to remove 95% of the tumour," explains Amanda.



Levi undergoing chemotherapy.

"Unfortunately, Levi did experience posterior fossa syndrome afterwards, but I was grateful to the surgical team for their expertise and doing what was needed."

Levi lost motor function throughout his body, and he wasn't able to speak. He spent several weeks in physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy. Within a few weeks, Levi regained the ability to smile and laugh. By late November, he regained the ability to move his arms and legs.

"A second surgery was required when Levi developed hydrocephalus, and they were able to drain the spinal fluid in his brain," says Amanda. "After that, we saw major improvements in his mobility."

Levi was discharged home in December when he was strong enough to sit in a car seat – but his care at Hamilton Health Sciences wasn't over yet. He also underwent 30 rounds of radiation therapy at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre and six rounds of chemotherapy at McMaster Children's Hospital.

"His fine-motor skills are improving every day and now he can use a walker," says Amanda. "We'll continue visiting McMaster Children's Hospital every few months for MRIs."

As Levi's journey continues, Amanda looks to the future with hope and resilience.

"We couldn't have asked for a better team. The care we received was amazing, and it's made a real difference in our lives."

Back in Action with *MacKids Walk & Wheel!*



This summer, all of the fun, festivities, and food are returning to Bayfront Park! Join us for *MacKids Walk & Wheel* on June 4 and help us fundraise for vital medical equipment.

This will be our first in-person event since 2019, and we're excited to see the community come together for this family-friendly fundraiser. Please join us for the Tikes on Trikes bike ride (for participants 5 and under), the Wonders on Wheels ride (for participants 6 and up), and the all-ages Trailblazers Walk.

These activities are followed by Miraclefest – a celebration that includes lunch, fun games and activities, bouncy castles, the ever-popular Teddy Bear Hospital, and much more.

Since 2012, the community has raised more than \$1.5 million through *Walk & Wheel* to enhance patient care at McMaster Children's Hospital, including Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre.

Register, fundraise or donate today at mackids.ca/walkandwheel.

Honouring Andrea Tkaczyk by Sharing the Joy of Music



Bonnie Brittain brings the joy of music to patients.

“Andrea was an extraordinary person who loved children, and we miss her dearly.”

Peter and Karen Turkstra, and Turkstra Lumber, made a significant donation in memory of Andrea Tkaczyk to support the Child Life and Music Therapy Programs at McMaster Children’s Hospital, where her first child had been born.

Andrea passed away earlier this year following a journey with brain cancer, and the Turkstras wanted to honour her in a meaningful way to celebrate the joy and kindness she shared with everyone.

“We wanted to give back and help children going through a challenging time,” says Peter. “We’re also passionate about supporting the arts, so we decided to support the Child Life Program and music therapy for kids.”

At McMaster Children’s Hospital, music therapist Bonnie Brittain brings the joy of music to patients and families on the inpatient units.

“In our sessions, we might sing together, make up silly songs, or play musical instruments together,” explains Bonnie. “I’m able to use music to help kids be kids, connect with non-verbal patients, or help take their minds off their pain. It’s an honour and a privilege to do this work.”

Bonnie is extremely grateful for this generous gift, which will make a real difference in patients’ lives.

“The Music Therapy Program is made possible by donor support, and I’d like to thank you for making music therapy accessible to more patients.”

Celebrating 30 Remarkable Years of CMN Partnership

For three decades, RE/MAX has made a major difference in the lives of pediatric patients through its partnership with Children’s Miracle Network (CMN). As a CMN partner, RE/MAX has raised more than \$185 million for member-hospital foundations across Canada, including McMaster Children’s Hospital Foundation.

This incredible achievement is possible because of the Miracle Home Program, which sees agents donating a portion of house sales to the foundation of their local children’s hospital. These funds support vital equipment purchases and medical research.

Local brokerages participating in the Miracle Home Program include RE/MAX Escarpment, RE/MAX Real Estate Centre, RE/MAX Niagara, RE/MAX Erie Shores and RE/MAX Garden City.

“RE/MAX Canada is proud to support the communities in which we live and work,” says Christopher Alexander, President of RE/MAX Canada. “Through our long-standing partnership with Children’s Miracle Network, RE/MAX agents and offices in south-central Ontario have been committed to supporting McMaster Children’s Hospital Foundation to enhance pediatric health care in the region.”

RE/MAX



Special thanks to our top Miracle Home Program fundraising agents of 2021:

RE/MAX Escarpment Realty Inc.

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Rachel Morgan
Wayne Schilstra
Julie Swayze
Lori Vandinther
Conrad Zurini

RE/MAX Niagara Realty Ltd.

Carmelina DelDuca

RE/MAX Real Estate Centre Inc.

Greg De Denus
Chris Maynard
Harv Sague

Cards for Cancer Care: An Artist's Gift

You can't help but smile. The paintings of cats and dogs, beautifully rendered in watercolour, leap off the paper with sheer joy. It's this sense of joy that Heather Harrison McRae loves to capture and convey through her paintings of family pets.

"In October 2021, my friends Colleen Shipp and Ang O'Neill called me on the same day to let me know they'd been diagnosed with cancer," recalls Heather, who paints from her home studio in Paris. "On top of that, Ang's husband Jake was diagnosed with cancer a couple of years ago, and he received great care at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre."

Inspired to help, Heather decided to create greeting cards and sell them for \$5 each, with all proceeds supporting Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre Foundation. The cards feature

Heather's portraits of pets that are helping their families deal with cancer.

Many businesses in the region are selling the cards, including The Paris Bohemian Gallery and Jiggs-n-Reels Seafood Market in Paris; Inspirational Hearts and MedicWear in Brantford; and Baskets 'N' Bundles in Ancaster.

"I'm having fun selling cards in the community," says Colleen. "This gives me something positive to focus on as I continue my cancer treatment."

As word spreads about the cards, Heather hopes that more businesses will begin to sell them.

"It's fantastic that Heather is using her talents to support cancer care," says Ang. "Her efforts are sure to help so many patients."

To see more of Heather's inspiring pet portraits, visit heatherharrisonmcrac.ca.



Heather Harrison McRae and Colleen Shipp



Getting into Character: Bringing Smiles to Pediatric Cancer Patients

You never know who you'll meet at Penny Pincher Costumes. You might encounter Big Bird, Mickey Mouse or your favourite superhero at the costume-rental shop on Concession, just down the street from Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre.

Brenda Eszenyi, owner of Penny Pinchers Costumes, and her boyfriend, Terry Rhodes, began to walk Concession St. every week in 2019 to promote the business. Terry would dress up in costume, and Brenda would take photos and videos.

"During one walk, a staff member from Pediatric Radiation Therapy approached me," recalls Terry. "He asked if I'd be willing to visit children receiving radiation therapy to cheer them up. I agreed right away."

Terry and Brenda have enjoyed visiting the Cancer Centre numerous times since the pandemic lockdowns ended.

"It's amazing to see how he brings smiles to everyone when he's in costume," says Brenda. "We feel it's important to give back to the community however we can."

The Pediatric Radiation Therapy Program staff are incredibly grateful for the visits.

"Our goal is to make things just a little easier for patients and families," says Melanie Carrigan, Pediatric Radiation Therapist. "Thank you to our friends at Penny Pincher Costumes, who are truly part of the Juravinski Cancer Centre superhero team."

Terry and Brenda are also fundraising for The Foundation to support vital equipment purchases and medical research.

"It's great knowing we can brighten someone's day," says Terry. "In life, there's no 'me' – just 'we.' And we can accomplish a lot together."



Terry Rhodes and Brenda Eszenyi



Terry Rhodes unmasked



Helping Others is “About the Humanity in All of Us”

Lisette Kingo knows a thing or two about the importance of health care. In addition to being a patient of Hamilton General Hospital, she is the founder of a charity called the Angel Project.

“We assist with purchasing important items like wheelchairs and speech computers when patients cannot cover their portion of the expenses,” explains Lisette. “We also assist with basic needs such as providing soap and shampoo for patients in need.”

In 2016, Lisette was diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS), which weakens the body’s connective tissues. Numerous surgeries were required at Hamilton General Hospital when her EDS caused extensive bleeding in her digestive tract.

“My surgeon, Dr. Samir Faidi, saved my life, and he is truly one of my heroes,” she says.

Lisette was also diagnosed with postural tachycardia syndrome (PoTS), a blood-circulation disorder that results in dizziness and fainting. She was referred to the Cardiac Arrhythmia Unit at The General because it specializes in testing for this rare disorder, and a pacemaker was implanted to help control her condition.

“I’m forever grateful to Dr. Juan Guzman and his team in the clinic for the amazing care I received.”

As a way of giving back, Lisette gave a generous gift of \$12,000 to the Cardiac Arrhythmia Unit. The gift is in honour of Dr. Faidi and Dr. Guzman.

“It’s important to help others in need,” she says. “It’s about the humanity in all of us.”



Lisette Kingo

Meaningful Moments in Palliative Care

Meet Lyndsey Charles, a recreation therapist on the Palliative Care Unit at St. Peter’s Hospital.

Q: Could you please describe the work you do on the Palliative Care Unit?

A: My main goal is to bring quality of life to patients during the end of their life. I want to provide meaningful interventions to them – helping them have the most enjoyment they can before they pass away.

Q: What kinds of programs do you provide?

A: Before the pandemic, we had entertainers, yoga classes and music therapists. We had barbecues in the courtyard with an ice-cream truck. Since the pandemic started, many of the programs went virtual. For example, we have music therapists on iPads and pet therapists on Zoom.

Q: Are you looking forward to resuming in-person programs as society opens up again?

A: Yes, but we need to do it safely. Since things started opening up, I can have programs for three or four patients with social distancing, which is nice.

Q: What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

A: I like seeing patients engaged in a leisure activity they enjoy. It’s an honour to be a part of the palliative process with them.



Lyndsey Charles (right) with patient Dianne Bridges

The Power of a Good Cough

A clear airway can mean the difference between life and death. If your throat is blocked by an obstruction like mucus or a foreign object, your body cannot get the oxygen it needs, and the situation becomes life-threatening in a matter of minutes.

Coughing is an extremely important reflex activity, as it clears mucus and irritants from the airway and enables the body to oxygenate.

Unfortunately, some people lack the muscle strength to cough effectively, which can be dangerous if the airway becomes obstructed. People with conditions like muscular dystrophy, myasthenia gravis, spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) and motor neuron disease (MND) experience muscle weakness that prevents a strong cough.

Thanks to generous donations from Reg and Georgina Swamy, Jon and Janice Jurus, and Marnie and Bill Brehm, The Foundation was able to support the purchase of cough-assist ventilators, which were much-needed at Hamilton General Hospital.

The machine applies positive pressure to the airway, then rapidly shifts to negative pressure. The rapid drop in pressure forces air from the lungs, imitating a natural cough and clearing the airway.

“We are extremely grateful for the support of our generous donors,” says Pearl F. Veenema, Chief Executive Officer of Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation. “Donor support makes a real difference in patients’ lives every day at Hamilton General Hospital.”

Returning to Regular Life

The pandemic took its toll on everyone. After two years of lockdowns and new variants of COVID-19, we’re all looking forward to a sense of normalcy. The easing of public-health restrictions is a welcome reprieve and an important step toward the reopening of society.

As you plan activities and gatherings in the coming months, please consider your safety and the well-being of those around you. Dr. Dominik Mertz, Medical Director of the Infection Control Prevention and Control Program, suggests that you ask yourself:



How many people will be there?



Will the activity or gathering be indoors or outdoors? If it is indoors, will it be well-ventilated?



What is the level of COVID-19 activity in my region?



Am I or is anyone in my close circle at a higher risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19?

Depending on your comfort level, you may choose to maintain social distancing and consider wearing a mask to reduce the risk. Although we’re all excited about returning to the activities we enjoyed before the pandemic, we must stay vigilant and do our part to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Please stay safe and healthy as we continue moving forward.

Making a Difference One Month at a Time

Every gift counts. Throughout our community, donors are supporting health care excellence at Hamilton Health Sciences – one month at a time.

One such person is Patricia Vanwinjin, who was inspired to become a monthly donor in 2004 after she received care at Hamilton General Hospital. A fall in her home resulted in a broken ankle and a visit to The General for diagnostic testing. This led to the accidental discovery of a heart defect.

“I never had any symptoms, so I never knew I had a faulty heart valve,” says Patricia. “I was lucky they discovered it when I happened to be at The General. Otherwise, I might have died from an aortic dissection one day.”

Surgery was conducted to replace her faulty valve and prevent future heart issues.

“I became a monthly donor because I wanted to give back,” says Patricia. “It just felt like the right thing to do.”

Thank you to our monthly donors like Patricia, who play a vital role in supporting the purchase of life-changing medical equipment at Hamilton Health Sciences.

Becoming a monthly donor is:



Simple. To start now, visit hamiltonhealth.ca/monthlygiving



Convenient. Your gift can be made automatically through your bank account or credit card in any amount you choose.



Flexible. The amount of your monthly gift can be changed easily online.



Impactful. Your gift will make a real difference in health care for our community.

The Right Tools for the Job

Your donations support the purchase of life-changing medical equipment for patient care at Hamilton Health Sciences. These gifts help to put the right tools in the hands of health care workers so they can provide the best possible care. Donors like you help purchase vital equipment like:



Heart rate monitors

Measure the electrical activity of the heart and help health care workers monitor a patient's cardiac status



Ventilators

Help critically-ill babies and premature newborns to oxygenate when they have difficulty breathing



Infusion pumps

Deliver liquid nutrients or medications into a patient's body in controlled amounts

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PO Box 739 LCD 1
Hamilton, ON L8N 3M8
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