

# Connections

A newsletter for donors and friends of

niagarahealth  
— ECG — foundation



SPRING | 2024



Elizabeth

**“The past year has taught me that nothing else matters if you don’t have your health.”**

When Elizabeth received the notification on her phone that her CAT scan results had arrived, she remembers sitting by herself, trying to make sense of the words on the screen. “I saw terms like ‘spiculated mass’ and ‘no cavitation,’ and in each Google search of those terms, I was seeing the word cancer,” she explains. “And then everything moved very quickly.”

Elizabeth was sadly diagnosed with lung cancer.

The road to this diagnosis started with a routine reflexologist appointment. “It was November 29, 2022,” Elizabeth remembers. She had just retired from teaching that September, when her reflexologist pointed out that the area in her foot that corresponds with the lungs wasn’t feeling right. Elizabeth followed her advice and asked her family doctor for a chest x-ray. **When the results showed a shadow on her left lung, a CAT scan was ordered, and here she was facing this diagnosis, trying to make sense of the words that changed her life.**

“As someone who had never broken a bone, never had a stitch, and had always been fairly healthy, being told you have lung cancer caused by a gene mutation... It literally knocked the wind out of me. But the way my healthcare team treated me made all the difference.”

Soon after her diagnosis, Elizabeth was scheduled for surgery. “After the surgery, I was told two things,” she explains, “one, that the margins of the mass looked good, and two, that one of my lymph nodes was showing cancer cells.” Elizabeth would need further treatment. Her four chemotherapy and 30 radiation treatments are what brought her to the Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC).

**“It’s funny; I have come to the hospital many times to visit people, but when you make that left turn before the main entrance and walk through the cancer centre entrance instead,” she says, her voice breaking, “it is a totally different feeling.”**

“My oncologist, Dr. VanderMeer, is one of the most caring, patient and knowledgeable people I have met. When I felt scared of what lay ahead, she gave me hope.”

I brought a long list of questions to every appointment, and she always took the time to answer each one.”

Along with Dr. VanderMeer, her oncology nurse Deb was one of the first people Elizabeth was in contact with at the WFCC. “I couldn’t have imagined a better person to have met when I walked through that door,” Elizabeth says. “I knew that I was in the best possible hands.”



In Elizabeth’s experience, extraordinary care is more than a slogan at Niagara Health. **“The kindness and compassion I received, right from the start, was phenomenal,” Elizabeth explains.** “If I didn’t feel well after chemo treatments, I could call the WFCC number and somebody would call me back within half an hour; it was just amazing.”

Along every step of the way, Elizabeth felt like she was part of her healthcare team. “As a patient, I was treated as a whole person; they saw me as more than my cancer. I was very involved in my care. When I had a concern or needed advice, my team was there for me. They listened, answered my questions, and took the time.”

At the end of 2023, Elizabeth crossed the finish line, and she is filled with gratitude for the four radiation technicians (Catherine, Jenny, Jessica and Stephanie) who were by her side until her very last treatment.

“On that day, I needed to do something to celebrate, something bigger than going out for dinner, so I made a donation. It is my way of saying ‘thank you.’ If my donation can be used towards adding another linear accelerator to treat more patients or purchasing another recliner for chemotherapy, then that is wonderful! I saw Niagara Health Foundation donations at work first-hand. I’ve experienced it.”

Today, Elizabeth is excited for the spring, the summer and the prospect of finally being able to enjoy retirement. She is thrilled to be officially discharged from the WFCC now that her tests show no further signs of cancer.

Elizabeth encourages others who haven’t had that direct experience to also consider giving.

**“For me, donating to the Niagara Health Foundation was about showing appreciation for an exceptional group of healthcare workers.”**

“But even more than that, the past year has taught me that nothing else matters if you don’t have your health, and supporting your local healthcare system not only shows appreciation and support for the incredibly dedicated people who work there but also helps to ensure they can continue to provide exceptional care and have state-of-the-art technology and equipment when you or a loved one needs it.”



Avery

**“Thank you for taking  
such good care of me.”**

Avery is an energetic and sporty four-year-old who likes to keep his parents, Taylor and Carly, on their toes. “He is a fearless little guy,” laughs his dad Taylor. “He does everything with a smile on his face and is as positive as can be,” he adds. “We’re very proud of that.”

Even during Avery’s recent stay at the Children’s Health Unit at Niagara Health, he managed to stay as positive as possible, and a big part of that was thanks to the amazing care he received. “We had to stay at the hospital for four days following Avery’s asthma attack and we just have to say that the healthcare team was wonderful,” said Carly.

**From the moment they got to the Emergency Room until the moment Avery went home, the family felt like they were in good hands and that Avery was safe.** “As soon as we got there, the registration clerk, Christina, made a hand balloon for him,” Taylor remembers. “Avery smiled as much as a kid could under the circumstances.” Christina was accommodating and attentive, something for which Taylor and Carly are incredibly grateful.

Once they were in the Children’s Health Unit, one of the nurses went out of his way to get a toy for Avery right away, which made his little patient’s day.

“There were a lot of things that were just over and above,” Carly says of her son’s care. She describes a healthcare team that did more than just check the boxes. Not only were they struck by the gentleness they saw in the way the nurses looked after Avery during the day, but also the care that was shown at night so as not to disturb his sleep.

“They brought in crafts for him to do, and an amazing play mat that took up half of the room. It gave him a space to sit and play instead of just being in bed the whole time,” explains Carly. “We didn’t have to ask for

those things; the staff initiated them. We were really grateful.”

**It meant a lot to Carly and Taylor that the nurses took the time to talk Avery through the different steps that were required for things like his chest x-ray, adjusting his IV or performing a swab test.**

“He is four, so he needs to understand what is going to happen, and needs a minute to process it. If you just put a mask on him and say ‘breathe,’ that would be very scary for him,” says Carly. “All of those things add time to the nursing staff’s duties but at no point did I ever feel like it was an inconvenience to them.”

**“This is why we wanted to share our story,” adds Taylor. “To tell healthcare workers that those little things they do make a difference. After all they have been through during and in the aftermath of the pandemic, it was amazing to see that the compassion is still there. It made a world of difference for us.”**

After four days, Avery got to go home but not before

giving all the crafts he made during his hospital stay to his nurse, Amanda.

Avery also has a message to share with his healthcare team, which sums it up best: **“Thank you for taking such good care of me.”**



**Avery's last day in the hospital**

**June 8, 2024  
Burgoyne Woods,  
St. Catharines**

**All proceeds  
support the Children's  
Health Unit.**

niagarahealth  
foundation

**KIDS**  
**Ultimate Challenge**

presented by

 **Desjardins**



**Register Today at [KIDSULTIMATECHALLENGE.COM](https://www.KIDSULTIMATECHALLENGE.COM)**

# Monthly Donors Make It Possible



**“Making a contribution to the Niagara Health Foundation is making a contribution to our community.**

**If you have a lot of people donating small amounts, it adds up!”**

*- Dominic V., Monthly Donor to the Niagara Health Foundation*



Scan with your smart phone to watch our Monthly Donor Video



## **Why monthly giving?**

As a monthly donor, you can choose the site or unit you want to support, and if you ever need to change your monthly donation amount, we are only a phone call or email away. Monthly gifts allow the Foundation to plan ahead as we address critical needs at our local hospitals.



## **Minimum effort for you – Maximum impact for local healthcare!**

Monthly giving is a simple and easy way to support your local hospitals. You sign up once and we do the rest. As a monthly donor, you will receive regular updates about the impact of your loyal gifts and, once a year we will send you a consolidated tax receipt right in time for tax season.



## **Sounds great, sign me up!**

Start making a difference today and sign up for a monthly gift to the Niagara Health Foundation at [www.MonthlyDonor.ca](http://www.MonthlyDonor.ca) or by calling us at **905-323-3863**.

# Vascular Surgery Gets A New Imaging Table

One of the most commonly performed vascular surgeries is an angioplasty. Vascular surgery addresses blood vessel problems and an angioplasty is a procedure that opens blocked coronary arteries. "We use wires and catheters to guide through the arteries in the body," explains Dr. Craig Durant, Vascular Surgeon at Niagara Health. As with most vascular surgeries, the procedure requires x-ray imaging throughout to visualize the insides of the blood vessels for the surgeon.

"If the patient was on a metal table, all the x-ray would show would be the table," illustrates Dr. Durant, "so for our work in vascular surgery, we require a fluoroscopy table - a table that is radiolucent and allows us to get the images we need to safely perform procedures."

**Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Niagara Health was able to purchase a much-needed new table for our Vascular Surgery department.**

"Not only does this new table have a much improved range of motion," says Dr. Durant, "but having the additional table also increases our capacity."

This purchase is an important example of how the support of our donors directly impacts the healthcare we have available to us, close to home.

**"I hope donors can see how their support makes a huge difference for patient care," Dr. Durant remarks. "It allows us to treat more patients quicker and perform advanced procedures. We appreciate any help the community can provide."**

His dream for the future is a hybrid operating suite, in which this new table would be compatible. "It's an operating room that is equipped with fixed imaging devices." With your continued support, one day this can become a reality.



**Dr. Craig Durant**

# The Big Move cancer ride™

Now in its 16th year, the annual Big Move Cancer Ride (BMCR), in support of the Walker Family Cancer Centre, has become a cherished tradition for many Niagara residents.



**Anyone is welcome to participate in the bike ride, being held on September 8, regardless of whether you are a competitive cyclist or simply an enthusiast who hasn't dusted off their bike in a while.**

By registering for the Ride, participants pledge to raise funds for the Walker Family Cancer Centre. The Ride begins and ends at White Meadows Farms, and riders can choose between different routes, ranging from the

beginner-friendly 12K to the more demanding 75K.

**Whether you are riding in celebration of a cancer survivor, in support of a cancer patient or in memory of a loved one lost, riders and donors can take pride in knowing that every dollar raised supports local cancer care.**

The Ride will be followed by a lunch and celebration at White Meadows Farms, and we encourage you to invite your family and friends to join you at this event and cheer you on along the way.



If you are new to long rides, you don't have to do this alone. Each year, the amazing BMCR Planning Committee organizes and leads training rides in the weeks leading up to the big event.

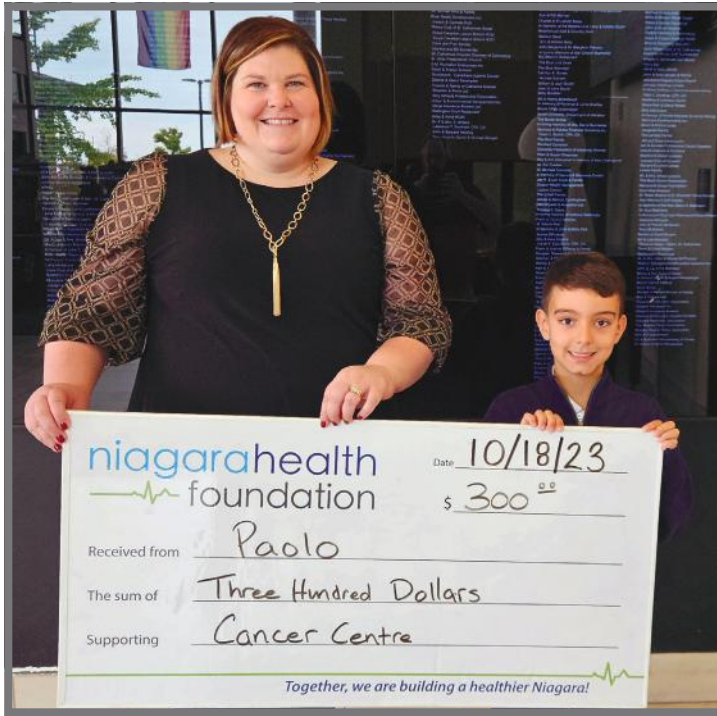
However, the BMCR isn't just about cycling. It's about coming together as a community in support of a cause that touches us all. All proceeds from the event go directly to the Walker Family Cancer Centre, where they are used to purchase much-needed equipment and support vital research initiatives.

Over the past 15 years, BMCR has raised more than \$7 million for local cancer care, and we hope you will consider joining this year's Ride.

**To learn more and to register, please head to [BigMoveCancerRide.com](http://BigMoveCancerRide.com).**



# You're Never Too Young to Give



We had an extra special surprise when eight-year-old Paolo, who could barely look over the counter of our reception desk, came to our St. Catharines office to drop off his generous \$300 donation last fall.

**Rather than receiving birthday gifts from his friends, Paolo instead unselfishly asked them for donations for the Walker Family Cancer Centre.**

"I know that people suffer a lot, so I am happy to know that it is going towards the cancer centre and helps people suffer less," said Paolo.

We asked the young philanthropist if it was hard giving up his birthday presents. Beaming with pride, Paolo said not at all.

It was such an incredible pleasure meeting such a kind, generous and empathetic young donor. We are so grateful for you, Paolo. Your donation will help cancer patients from all across Niagara. Thank you!

## Celebration of Lights

**We are thrilled to announce that our 2023 Celebration of Lights campaign raised more than \$155,000 for Niagara Health.** Thanks to the generous support of Alectra Utilities and so many of our wonderful donors, these funds will go directly towards urgently needed equipment at our local hospitals.

Throughout the holiday season, we attended tree lightings across the region to launch this important campaign, which symbolizes our community's unity in supporting those that rely on our local healthcare system. **Thank you for coming together to "Celebrate Recovery, Support Healing, Honour Someone Special."**



**Fiona Peacefull (Niagara Health), Stanton Sheogobind (Alectra), Regional Chair Jim Bradley, Andrea Scott (Niagara Health Foundation)**

# Making a Difference for Niagara Health

The Peart family, known for their legacy in music and philanthropy, is making a difference in Niagara.

In partnership with the Niagara Health Foundation, the Peart Family Events team, led by sisters Nancy Peart Burkholder and Judy Peart-Howe, is proud to announce their commitment to supporting the Walker Family Cancer Centre.

“After years of supporting charities beyond our hometown, we have returned to our roots in the Niagara Region,” says Judy. “We are now channeling our efforts towards causes that directly impact our community.”

**Inspired by their late brother Neil (legendary drummer of Rush who bravely battled Glioblastoma until 2020) and their father, Glen Peart (a prominent Niagara business owner and community supporter who passed away of Pancreatic Cancer in 2021), the Peart sisters are determined to continue the legacy of giving back.**

In support of this, two exciting events are on the horizon, promising fun and fundraising for a worthy cause.

The **2024 Peart Family Annual Golf Tournament**, being held on August 26, 2024 at the Royal Niagara Golf Club, will see golfers from far and wide come together for a day of friendly competition and charitable giving.

A **Ladies Disco Divas Weekend** will be held October 4 - 6, 2024 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and this getaway promises a blend of relaxation and entertainment, with pampering sessions, tasting events, delicious food and a glamorous Disco Gala.

“Both events are open to the public,” Nancy explains,



**Nancy Peart-Burkholder, Danny Peart, Judy Peart-Howe, Betty Peart (front)**

“and we invite everyone to learn more and register at [PeartFamilyEvents.com](https://PeartFamilyEvents.com).”

Along with these events, the Peart Family Events team is also dedicated to organizing additional fundraisers throughout the year to further support healthcare initiatives in the Niagara Region.

The Niagara Health Foundation is thrilled about this partnership and eagerly anticipates the positive impact these events will have on their mission to advance healthcare in the community.

**Stay tuned for more updates as the Peart family and the Niagara Health Foundation work together to make a meaningful difference.** Together, let’s support the Peart family’s efforts and contribute to a healthier future for all in the Niagara Region.

# New Partnership with Niagara Fresh

Our friends at Niagara Fresh Market are pleased to announce a new initiative in support of the Niagara Health Foundation.

Explore the finest produce and goods that Niagara has to offer by placing an order at **NiagaraFresh.ca**. From canned goods to ready-made meals, they have it all, with convenient Niagara-wide delivery.



**When you use code "NHF2024" at checkout, 5% will come back to the Niagara Health Foundation. A delicious way to give back!**

## Remembering Your Loved Ones



**The Niagara Health Foundation is pleased to introduce its new Memorial Bench Program.**

Remembering a loved one by dedicating a bench with a gift of \$2,500 to the Niagara Health Foundation is the newest way for you to create a lasting memory and reflective place at the St. Catharines Hospital.

A personalized memorial plaque is affixed to one of our benches, featuring "in loving memory of", and the person's full name, year of birth and year of passing.

**Our bench availability is limited at this time.  
For inquiries regarding our Memorial Bench Program,  
please contact us at [foundation@niagarahealth.on.ca](mailto:foundation@niagarahealth.on.ca)  
or 905-323-3863.**

## Upcoming Events

**Rankin Cancer Run (Virtual)  
Spring 2024**

In support of the Walker Family Cancer Centre

**Kids Ultimate Challenge  
June 8, 2024**

*Burgoyne Woods*  
In support of the Children's Health Unit

**Niagara Golf Marathon  
June 24, 2024**

*Sawmill Golf Course*  
In support of urgent equipment needs

**Niagara Cycling Marathon  
July 11, 2024**

*120km route across scenic Niagara*  
In support of urgent equipment needs

**Peart Family Memorial Golf Tournament**

*August 26, 2024*  
*Royal Niagara Golf Club*  
In support of the Walker Family Cancer Centre

**Big Move Cancer Ride  
September 8, 2024**

*White Meadows Farms*  
In support of the Walker Family Cancer Centre

**Thank you for your generous support!**

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