

# Connections

A newsletter for donors and friends of

niagarahealth  
— ECG — foundation





Fernande

**“I always have a good experience when I go to the hospital.”**

Fernande, a Niagara Falls resident, is constantly on the move, so when her knee began to trouble her last year, she knew it was time to take action. **“I went to my family doctor because my knee was in a lot of pain, and he referred me to Dr. LeRoux, an Orthopedic Surgeon at Niagara Health.”**

Based on Fernande’s ultrasound and x-ray images, it was evident that surgery would be necessary. “Dr. LeRoux looked at the images and told me that it was no wonder that I was in so much pain – it was bone-on-bone. **There were days when I woke up, and I could not walk.** I had to push myself with a walker.”

On May 3, Fernande and her sisters arrived at the Welland hospital where she was prepped for day surgery. “I remember being prepared for surgery, and being put into this machine that made me feel so comfortable and warm,” she says.

“I remember going to the operating room and getting the needle in my back for the freezing, but then I don’t remember anything up until the memory of my sisters getting me home.”

A few months after the procedure, Fernande still experiences some pain and stiffness in her knee when she wakes up in the morning, but she understands recovery takes time.

“I did physiotherapy for eight weeks and have exercises I can do at home,” she explains. “I walk a lot during the day – even just walking from my apartment to the elevator is a long distance - so I don’t want to push myself to a point where I hurt myself.”

**Eager to stay active and independent, Fernande is already undergoing tests to prepare for replacing her other knee.** “I have the same pain in the other knee, so I already had my x-rays done and, next week, I will get the ultrasound done as well.”

Fernande will once again be in Dr. LeRoux and his team's care. **She is grateful for the positive experience she has had with her first knee replacement, as well as other surgeries and hospital stays in the past.**

"I always have a good experience when I go there, and I know it's for my own good, so I'm not scared when I go to the hospital."



**Thanks to a recent knee replacement, Fernande can continue to live independently**

## Monthly Donors Make It Possible



**"My donations make an impact on healthcare, which is important to me. It isn't a big amount of money on a monthly basis, but over the course of my life, it will add up."**

*- Jeff N., Monthly Donor to the  
Niagara Health Foundation*

Start making a difference today and sign up for a monthly gift by visiting [MonthlyDonor.ca](https://www.MonthlyDonor.ca) or calling us at 905-323-3863 .



## Coming Soon: Donor Survey

This Fall, we will be sending you our Donor Survey and we hope that you will take some time to send us your feedback.

Help us get to know you to improve your donation experience!



David

**“He has work to do and we’re going to finish it for him.”**

Sadness sneaks up on Dave and Michelle MacKinnon at the most unexpected moments.

“The other day, it happened in the grocery store,” says Michelle. “I was buying jam, and I happened to notice the seedless jam. The last time I bought seedless jam, David was still alive, and a flood of emotion came over me. So there I was, crying in the jam aisle.”

**In 2011, Dave and Michelle lost their son David to kidney disease when he was only 18 years old.**

“He was such a special boy,” says Michelle. “He was funny,” she adds with a smile. “So witty, such dry humour. And he was smart and kind... and I just knew, even as I was sitting with him when he was dying, that we would not allow death to be the end of him. I just thought that he is too amazing and that he has work to do, and we’re going to finish it for him.”

**To honour their son, the MacKinnons established the David Gregory MacKinnon Memorial Foundation in 2012, which has raised more than half a million dollars.** Their Foundation supports several charities, including the Niagara Health Foundation, to help ease the burden on families affected by kidney disease.

“Kidney disease and dialysis were hard for David. He was the one who was dealing with the disease, he was the one who had it, but what a lot of people don’t realize is that it affects the entire family. My husband Dave, myself, our son Andrew - we were all involved in his care. Our goal is to make a patient’s and their family’s lives just that little bit easier. When you first start dialysis or start living with kidney disease, there is so much to worry about. **What makes our work so rewarding is the thought that we can take away some of that worry for people in some small way.**”

The David Gregory MacKinnon Memorial Foundation’s impact on local kidney patients and their families has

been staggering. **Thanks to their generosity, local renal clinics have been able to purchase urgently needed equipment, and patients can focus on their health rather than worry about the financial burden.**



**Dave, Michelle and Andrew MacKinnon with friends at their annual Golf Tournament**

“There is a start-up cost that comes with dialysis, especially when you’re doing home dialysis. You may have to cut back on hours at work to accommodate your dialysis appointments, you need equipment at home - things like a thermometer, a blood pressure machine, scales... so one of the things we do is provide care packages for people who start that journey, just to give them one less thing to worry about.”

One of their largest fundraising initiatives is an annual golf tournament, which brings together more than 120 golfers, some of whom fly in from as far as Alberta, to support the MacKinnon’s work.

**This past June, they hosted the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual David Gregory MacKinnon Memorial Golf Classic and raised close to \$25,000.**

“We aren’t even golfers,” Dave laughs and explains that their role with the event is pretty much everything but the golfing itself. “We do all of the work behind the scenes, from setting up in the morning, to keeping the golfers happy during the day, to taking everything back down again at the end of the day,” adds Michelle, who is grateful that their entire family is involved in making every year a success.

Beyond their significant financial contributions, they also hope to raise awareness. “I would love for people to understand how important it is to care for their kidneys,” says Michelle. “There are so many families whose lives have been touched by kidney disease, yet it is not something that is talked about a lot because it is not always visible. You don’t necessarily look sick.”

For people who are affected by kidney disease, education is key. “Ask so many questions,” she says. “Information is important because it makes this diagnosis a little bit less scary.”

**She also encourages people to register for organ donation.** “I myself donated my kidney to a beautiful then two-year-old boy, and it really is not as difficult as you might think. It is very manageable for the donor and for the recipient, it is life-changing.”

Dedicating so much of their time to fighting the disease that took their son has been hard, Dave and Michelle reflect; rewarding, but hard. **Each day a song, a scent or a jar of jam serves as a reminder of the void David left in the MacKinnons’ lives. And yet, it is work they need to do to honour the most precious thing of all - David’s memory.**

# Endoscopy Gets Cutting-Edge Equipment

Niagara Health's Gastroenterology team performs up to 100 endoscopic procedures each day, ranging from preventative to life-saving. Endoscopy is a minimally invasive method where the gastroenterologist uses specialized cameras to examine the digestive tract.

These procedures, unlike other imaging methods such as MRI scans, allow a specialist to interpret, diagnose and treat in real time. **Thanks to our wonderful community of donors, the entire fleet of Niagara Health's scopes and monitors was recently replaced with brand-new equipment.**

"This is the most up-to-date technology on the market," explains Dr. Neel Malhotra, Head of Service of Gastroenterology at Niagara Health. "It is new and cutting-edge. It has 4K resolution to visualize the insides of the stomach and intestine, which helps us find even the smallest lesions and catch things early."



The new equipment has thinner scopes for upper endoscopies that look into the stomach and longer scopes for colonoscopies. "With these new scopes, we can connect the cameras to carbon dioxide," says

Dr. Malhotra, who explains that the inflation of the digestive tract improves visibility.



**Niagara Health purchased new scopes and monitors for the Endoscopy Department**

"It is really interesting because using carbon dioxide also helps provide patients with less cramping and pain, so the comfort level is much higher. **We always strive to provide quality care for our patients, so to be able to send them home with little or no abdominal pain is really important to us.**"

Dr. Malhotra and his team are incredibly grateful for your generous support of our local hospitals. "We are really lucky to have this equipment in the region. It enables us to find and detect abnormalities sooner."

"It improves our detection rate for polyps, allows us to remove larger polyps and reduces the chance of potential surgery down the road. It's been a huge advantage for us, and I want to thank Niagara Health Foundation donors so much for improving the quality of care for patients in the region."



Niagara Health Foundation  
Legacy Society



## You Can Make a Lasting Impact on Patient Care With a Legacy Gift

By including Niagara Health Foundation in your estate planning, you join generations of caring people, like Joseph, who create a legacy that supports the entire community and your loved ones.

Let's talk about the role you want to play in advancing healthcare and leave a lasting mark on the community you call home.



Visit  
[NiagaraHealthFoundation.com/Legacy](https://NiagaraHealthFoundation.com/Legacy)



Call  
**905-323-3863**



Email  
[Foundation@niagarahealth.on.ca](mailto:Foundation@niagarahealth.on.ca)

# Matters of the Heart

The first time 84-year-old Joseph came to the hospital as a patient was in February 2020, and he has been back a few more times since. **"I am very much aware of how good the health system has been to me and my relatives,"** he says, adding that he made his first impactful donation to the hospital in memory and honour of his parents when it was under construction in 2013.

"What I like about donating towards my local hospital is that I don't just help one person but many people. I help the people who work there as well as the patients."

Joseph has lived and worked in St. Catharines for most of his life and has been a supporter of our local hospital many times. **Most recently, he has joined our Niagara Health Foundation Legacy Society and plans to leave a gift in his Will to benefit the Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines.**

**"This is important to me, and when something is important to you, I believe it's worth pursuing. Gratitude and kindness are easy to find. They are always a matter of the heart."**

-Joseph C.,  
Niagara Health Foundation Legacy Society

Knowing that the hospital is there for him when he needs it brings Joseph peace of mind and fills him with gratitude. "This is important to me, and when something is important to you, I believe it's worth pursuing. Gratitude and kindness are easy to find. They are always a matter of the heart."

# Cherishing William O's Memory

Eleanor and William O lived a beautiful and exciting life together. They lived in several countries, including the USA and Saudi Arabia, but always considered Niagara to be home. They loved going to their favourite restaurant, Mai Thai, and spoiling their children and grandchildren when they visited them at their Niagara Falls home.

**Life was good, so when William started experiencing back pain, he didn't think much of it.** Nobody did. "He was a healthy man," says Eleanor. "He went to his family doctor regularly and looked after himself. So it was treated like back pain; there was no reason to suspect anything more." After trying to address the back pain with physiotherapy and chiropractor visits without success, William's family doctor ordered him an MRI in Mississauga.

"That was hard for me to comprehend," Eleanor remembers. "The availability was so bad locally that we had to drive to Mississauga with a man who had severe back pain... that was ridiculous to me." Eager to find the source of William's pain, they made the trip. **"When the MRI results came back to our family doctor, it was clear something wasn't right."**

More tests and imaging followed, and William began attending a pain clinic. "There was a period when everyone was waiting for test results to figure out the next steps, and his pain was just getting very severe," Eleanor remembers. "And then we found out that William had cancer."

Referred to the Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC), William received care from Dr. Hallock and her team. **"She was so wonderful. She was very generous with her time.** William obviously wasn't her only patient. Yet, whenever we had questions or wanted my daughter to

join virtually, she was always present and helpful, and happy to answer our questions. We were really grateful for that."

Dr. Hallock ordered a CT scan to determine the source of William's cancer and "the prognosis wasn't good. It had started in his lungs but it had spread to his bones, his brain..." **After seeing the CT images, Dr. Hallock told William he only had about four more weeks to live.** "When we heard that, we just wanted to go home. There was talk of possibly doing a biopsy but it would not have changed the outcome, so we just wanted to go home."



Eleanor and William left the hospital at around 5:30 p.m., and by the time they got home, everything was arranged for them. **"The hospital was so great with that transition.** By the time we got to go home, they had everything arranged - the Personal Support Worker (PSW), the grief counsellor, the bed came by 7 p.m., the oxygen tank... everything was arranged. The Community Care Coordinators were so on top of it. It was just amazing."



For Eleanor, having these arrangements made by the Ontario Health atHome team meant she could be with her husband instead of planning or arranging his care during those last four weeks.

**“They didn’t just think about the patients; they also thought about the families.** The instructions were very clear; the PSW was there. My journey with him for the four weeks was hard, of course, but without that help, it would have been so much worse.”

William spent the last few weeks of his life surrounded by people who loved him and in the early morning of December 9, 2023, he passed away in his home. He was just 69 years old.

**“How long you live doesn’t matter as much as what you do with it,”** said Eleanor. “If you live to be 100 but weren’t doing what you wanted in life, it really doesn’t matter. He had children, grandchildren. He got to travel and enjoy the finer things in life... he had a really good life.”

Following William’s passing, Eleanor made a generous donation in support of the WFCC and collected further donations from friends and family members at William’s Celebration of Life. “The staff at the hospital and the WFCC were so wonderful. **Everybody was so kind and generous with their time.** That’s why I thought that while the outcome was bad, and nothing can reverse that, I should show my appreciation to them.”

Knowing that her donation will support the purchase of equipment is important to Eleanor. **“We had no idea these machines didn’t come from the government.** I was shocked that the family doctor sent us to Mississauga because that was the only available

place. Going through all of that is the inspiration for my donations. It’s not for one particular person but for anybody who needs it. We never thought this would happen to us, so I want to remind people that just because you don’t need it today, doesn’t mean you or someone you love may not need it tomorrow.”

Today, Eleanor is slowly figuring out life without her husband of more than 40 years. **She is grateful for the time she had with him and the support they had from Niagara Health at the end of his life.**



**A bench at The Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines was dedicated to William**

“I praise their staff for all that they give. Anybody can just do their job but they put 100% into it. **They had sympathy, empathy, kindness, and when people are in the hospital, kindness is the most important thing.** If they can go that little extra mile for another person, then that is wonderful, and they did that for us.”

# 2024 Outstanding Philanthropist Award

**We are thrilled to announce that Tony Lucciola, a prostate cancer survivor and devoted community leader, will receive the prestigious Outstanding Philanthropist Award by the Golden Horseshoe Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP).**

This award, recognizing Tony's exceptional dedication to philanthropy and community engagement, will be presented to him on National Philanthropy Day, November 15, at Liuna Station in Hamilton.

Inspired by his own cancer journey, Tony founded the annual Fight Prostate Cancer Golf Invitational (FPC), and now his tireless work has earned him this significant recognition.

The AFP Golden Horseshoe Chapter established this award to honour individuals or families who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to their community through their philanthropic efforts. **Winners of this award are recognized not only for their contributions but also for their ability to motivate others to take on leadership roles in philanthropy.**

Tony's success with the FPC Invitational is a testament to the power of community and family support. **Over the past five years, the tournament has raised over \$80,000 for the Prostate Clinic at the Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC).**

But Tony hasn't done it alone. His dedicated family has played a crucial role in organizing the event and developing creative fundraising initiatives, such as the FPC bracelets and a year-round donation website. Their

combined efforts have not only provided essential support to the WFCC but have also set an inspiring example of what can be achieved through passion, perseverance, and teamwork.

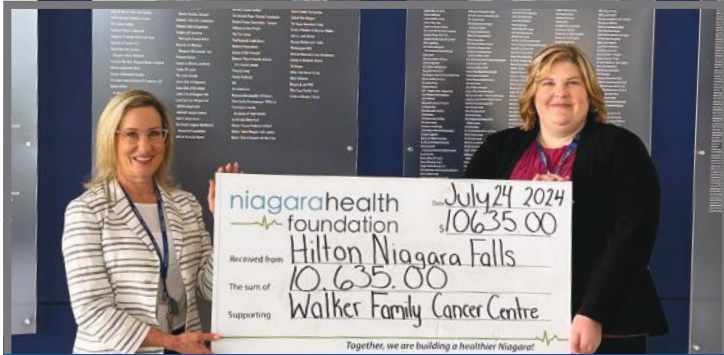


**Tony Lucciola with his family**

**As Tony prepares to receive this well-deserved award, we extend our heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to him and his family for their unwavering dedication to making a difference.**

Tony's recognition as the Outstanding Philanthropist is a testament to the family's remarkable impact and will undoubtedly inspire many others to follow in their footsteps.

# Thank you to our amazing community!



We thank Hilton Niagara Falls, for raising \$10,635 at their Purse Bingo for the Walker Family Cancer Centre.



Congratulations to Saint Paul High School students who raised \$4,020 for the South Niagara hospital.



The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Niagara Golf Marathon at Sawmill Golf Course on June 24th saw more than 70 golfers raise over \$170,000 for local charities.



Thanks to JKC Restaurants for raising \$9,240 at Wendy's restaurants for the Children's Health Unit.



We are grateful to Mayor Mat Siscoe for donating \$25,000 through his SCORE Golf Tournament.

**Thank you for your generous support!**

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