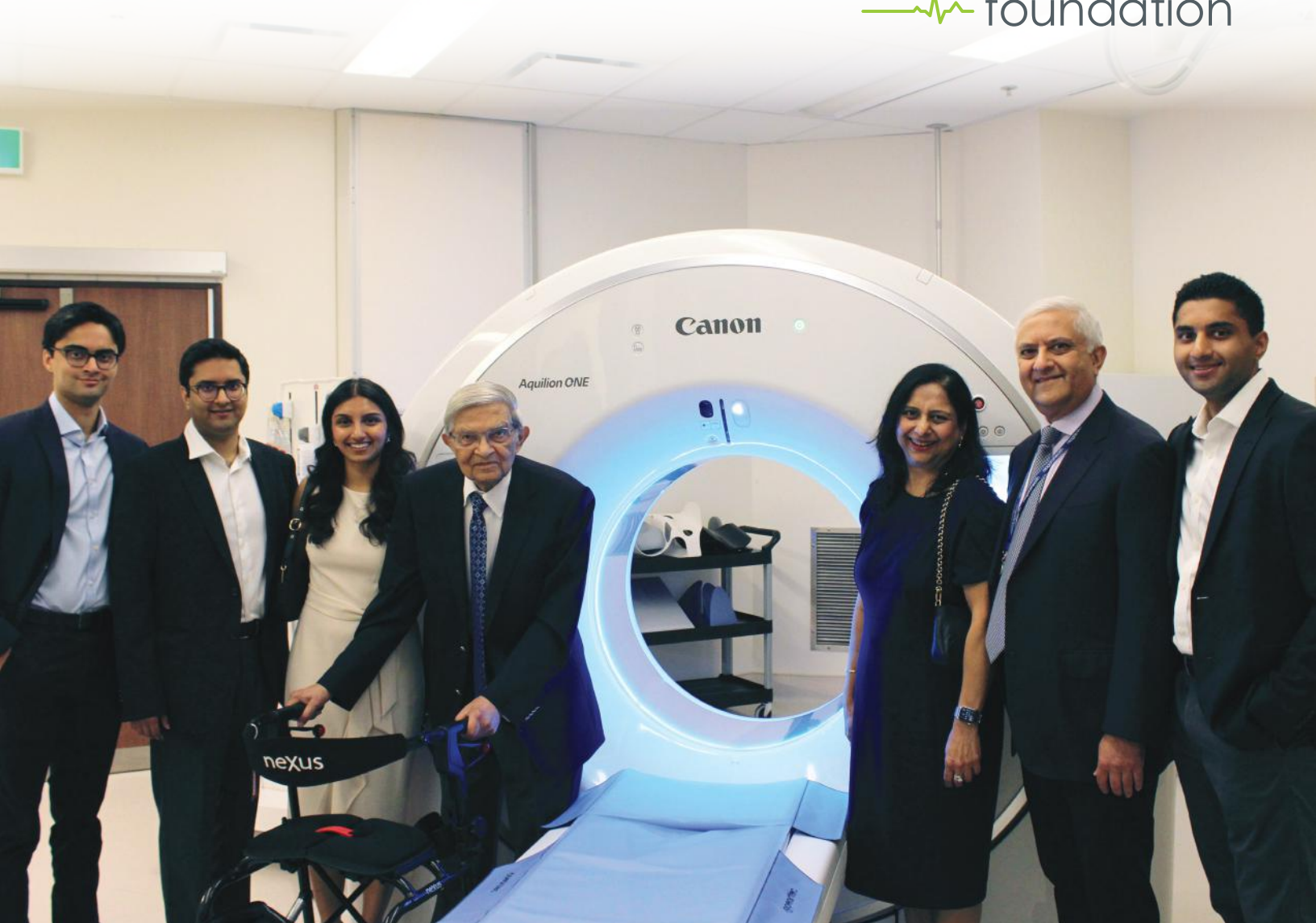


Connections

A newsletter for donors and friends of **niagarahealth**
foundation





“I am grateful for the professionalism, effort and for every smile.”

Sylvain & Miu

Niagara Falls resident Miu was sleeping when she was suddenly awoken by her husband's screams.

“It was early in the morning,” Miu remembers. “I came down to the kitchen, and there was Sylvain, his head and face covered in blood. I was scared, but I remembered my First Aid training and headed straight to the freezer to get him some ice.”

Miu learned that Sylvain had gotten up early to fix the panels on their pergola. “It is not very high,” Sylvain explains. “But I needed to stand on a little aluminum ladder. I stood at the top, so I was fairly high up when the ladder failed. It bent, and I landed on my head from about 10 feet high.”

Sylvain was bleeding profusely and since the couple lives close to the Niagara Falls hospital, they decided to drive to the Emergency Department instead of calling an ambulance.

When Miu and Sylvain arrived at the hospital, terrified by the amount of blood he was losing, they were seen by Triage Nurse Red, who met them with compassion and competence.

“We were so impressed and grateful for Nurse Red. “He was very patient and calm, and wanted to ensure we were okay,” says Miu. Once Nurse Red completed his initial assessment and dressed Sylvain's wound, the couple returned to the waiting room. “We did have to wait there for quite some time,” Miu admits, “but our entire experience in the emergency department took about eight hours. I think that is really good compared to the current provincial standards.”

Sylvain, who lived in Quebec for most of his life, feels the same way. “The wait times in Quebec are much worse. I think based on my experience there, I have a whole different level of appreciation.”

"I am grateful for the support, professionalism, effort and for every smile."

"One of the nurses who helped us was Nurse May," Miu says. "There was no break for her during the hours we were there. She was so busy. And yet, when she came to us, she still had a smiling face, spoke to us with a comforting voice and was just so caring. I really appreciated her."

Sylvain needed a head CT and an X-Ray to ensure he had not broken anything.

"Thankfully, they found no injuries," Sylvain says, adding that, unfortunately, with every scan, they do find *something* and this time, it was arthritis in his neck. "So that is too bad," he laughs, "but it's the fun of getting old."

Sylvain did need several stitches and was impressed with the treatment by his Emergency Physician, Dr. Salim Ahmed.

"When we came back from the CT scan, I just tried to catch his eye," Miu recalls. "He looked over to me, and when I signalled that we were back, he gave me an "OK" sign, and he came to us as soon as he was able to."

"Here I was, interrupting him while he was trying to take notes on his computer, and yet he remained kind, responsive and caring. **The staff in the emergency room that day was truly a model team, so while I was waiting, I saw the sign for *Gifts of Gratitude* and decided to donate.** I can only imagine how difficult of a job that would be, and for them to still do it with a smile meant a great deal, so I wanted to show my appreciation."

While Sylvain has mostly recovered from his fall, some of his concussion symptoms linger.

"In terms of concentration, I am still not back to 100 percent," he explains, "but hey, when you're an old chicken, you lose feathers," Sylvain chuckled.

"The hospital is a place we all benefit from," Sylvain adds. "It makes sense to support it. We were happy to do it, and we will continue to donate to the Niagara Health Foundation in the future. It is money well spent." -Sylvain

Grateful for their care at the Emergency Department, the couple has added Niagara Health Foundation to the list of local charities they support.

"There is so much suffering right here in our communities," says Miu, "so we try to invest in charities who help people in our hometown."

"The hospital is a place we all benefit from," Sylvain adds. "It makes sense to support it, and we were happy to do it. We will continue to donate to the Niagara Health Foundation in the future."

"It is money well spent."





Drs. Amit & Labh Mehta with their family

“I want patients in Niagara to get the best quality care close to home.” - *Dr. Amit Mehta*

When Dr. Labh Mehta first set foot in the St. Catharines hospital more than 50 years ago, no one could have predicted the remarkable evolution of medical imaging in the decades that followed. Nor could they have foreseen how instrumental Dr. Labh and his son, the then six-year-old Amit Mehta, would become in bringing the best and latest technology to Niagara.

“I started at the St. Catharines General Hospital in 1971,” says former Niagara Health radiologist Dr. Labh.

“We had two radiologists and I was the third to join the team. X-Ray was the only technology we had available here in Niagara at the time.”

The first time Dr. Labh and his team considered introducing more medical imaging options to Niagara was in the late 1970s.

“Only Hamilton and Toronto had ultrasound machines. We wanted to bring this technology to Niagara, but it wasn’t easy to get in those days.”

Dr. Labh and the head technologist drove across North America to learn about the equipment and source the best option for Niagara.

“They are museum pieces now,” he laughs, “but they were top of the line at the time.”

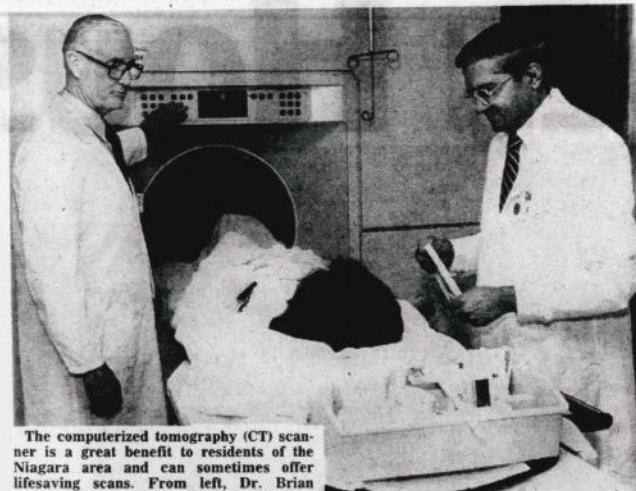
Dr. Labh oversaw every aspect of the process, from selecting the equipment to teaching the technologists how to use it, to teaching himself and his colleagues how to interpret the images.

“Then, in 1983, we wanted to bring CT scanners to Niagara,” Dr. Labh explains. “We knew it would be a big expense and require significant fundraising.”

Once again, he and the head technologist travelled to hospitals and manufacturers across North America to learn about their options.

“Choosing the equipment, knowing that we would be spending the public’s money, was quite a heavy burden for us,” he remembers.

Still many tests before CT scanner is used



The computerized tomography (CT) scanner is a great benefit to residents of the Niagara area and can sometimes offer lifesaving scans. From left, Dr. Brian McPhillips and Dr. Labh Mehta, radiologist at the St. Catharines General Hospital, who oversees operation of the CT scanner, prepare a patient for a CT scan. “It is a valuable tool in the interpretation of patient illness,” says Dr. Mehta. —Staff photo by Les Siorach

The City of St. Catharines at this

A newspaper article from 1984 shows Dr. Labh Mehta testing out Niagara’s first CT Scanner

Adding a third imaging method also meant more training and hiring more radiologists.

“I myself was still learning how to interpret the images, so I hired radiologists who had worked with the technology to increase our capacity.”

Today, just over 40 years after receiving that very first CT scanner, Niagara is acquiring the newest diagnostic imaging technology and, once again, the project is spearheaded by a Dr. Mehta.

“I started working in St. Catharines in 1998,” says Dr. Labh’s son, Dr. Amit Mehta. “They were looking to purchase an MRI, and although I was doing my fellowship in the US at the time, still in training, they recognized that I had more experience with the technology than the radiologists in Niagara.”

Dr. Amit was brought in to select the best MRI and launch the MRI program in Niagara. He also felt the weight of the responsibility that his father had carried, spending hours reviewing specifications and consulting with physicists to ensure he made the right choice.

“This is how it began for me, and I have been involved in almost all major procurement projects for Diagnostic Imaging equipment ever since,” says Dr. Amit.

“For me, the desire to help the residents of Niagara was instilled in me by my father, and it has remained my compass. I was very fortunate to work with a dedicated team from the hospital for each equipment purchase. As each project was time-consuming, the support I received from family and colleagues made it possible for me to be involved. Yes, we aim to improve the workflow for the technologists but, first and foremost, it is about patient care.”

“That question has always guided my decisions on every procurement project – how will this improve patient care for the people of Niagara?”

Recognizing the importance of bringing new technology to Niagara, Dr. Labh and Dr. Amit have a history of supporting equipment purchases through their own generous donations.

This year, they have continued their legacy of giving, each committing \$50,000 toward the replacement of aging CT scanners.

"I'm of the mindset that patients should not have to leave the region, but I know that these major projects come at a huge cost," Dr. Amit says, "so I personally had to contribute."

When he told his father about the new scanners coming to Niagara, Dr. Labh also wanted to help.

"The St. Catharines General Hospital provided me with all of the things I wanted to do in my career," he says. "I had excellent CEOs, excellent technologists, and people to work with. I donate to Niagara Health Foundation to leave something behind for the place where I not only worked but also had some of the happiest times of my life."

"I donate to Niagara Health Foundation to leave something behind for the place where I not only worked but also had some of the happiest times of my life." - Dr. Labh Mehta

Niagara Health Foundation President & CEO, Andrea Scott, is touched by the Mehta family's investment.

"These doctors have dedicated their lives and careers to helping patients in Niagara. Diagnostic Imaging at our local hospitals has seen a remarkable evolution over the decades and Drs. Amit and Labh Mehta were big drivers behind that growth."

"I am so grateful for their incredibly generous gifts towards this latest addition of CT scanners."

After conducting extensive research, Dr. Amit selected new scanners that he is very excited about.

"We have over 30 radiologists at Niagara Health. Our work has changed and grown immensely over the years and equipment is a huge part of that. The scanners we have chosen are state-of-the-art," he explains.

"They have a higher image quality while decreasing radiation, and have an incredible integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI). That is something we paid close attention to when evaluating different vendors. The devices we've chosen utilize AI to create 3D reconstructions and improve the image quality and workflow for the technologists."

To Andrea Scott, having physicians involved in fundraising sends an important signal to Niagara Health Foundation donors and our community.

"Their donations not only help the Foundation meet the hospital's needs, they also add a level of accountability. Their investment shows donors that our physicians stand behind this purchase and have put a lot of consideration and research into finding the best technology for people in Niagara."

Both doctors hope that their philanthropy will inspire others to do the same.

"I encourage others to step up and also contribute," says Dr. Amit. "For me, I will do as much as I can because I want patients in Niagara to get the best quality care close to home."

The Joy of Giving

Volunteers are the first people you meet when you come into the hospital. They are there to greet and guide you during moments that are often stressful or intimidating. One of those friendly faces at Niagara Health belongs to Barb Cornelius, who started volunteering at the Marotta Family Hospital seven years ago.

"The hospital is the heart of the city. Most of us start here, and many of us end here," Barb says. "To me, that thought makes it a meaningful volunteer opportunity."

Volunteering at the hospital has also shown Barb how needed donations are to support the purchase of life-saving equipment. In 2021, she made a generous one-million-dollar donation towards a new MRI for the Marotta Family Hospital.

In honour of her gift, the area where Barb usually volunteers was named the *Kerry Cornelius Outpatient Clinic*, in memory of her late husband.

"Kerry was a wonderful and generous man. Seeing his name every time I volunteer gives me a lot of comfort."

Since investing in the MRI, Barb has continued to support Niagara Health Foundation, most recently, with a generous donation towards transport chairs.

"Over the past few months, I noticed that we kept running out of transport chairs while I was volunteering," Barb says, adding that having the chairs is an important service for patients.

"When we kept scrambling to find chairs, I wanted to help."

Thanks to her donation, 30 new transport chairs and an additional 10 new wheelchairs have been purchased for the Marotta Family Hospital.

"Barb is a remarkable woman," says Andrea Scott, Niagara Health Foundation President & CEO. "She is generous both with her time and donations, and this recent gift is another example of her great kindness. She identified a need and took action to address it. This donation directly and immediately improves the patient experience, and I am incredibly grateful for her."

To Barb, making donations is about the joy of giving. "We are so fortunate to have the financial resources to give back." It is a belief she also instills in her children and grandchildren.

"I want them to feel part of the legacy that their father, or grandfather, and I have created, and I want them to know the joy of making somebody else's life just a little bit easier."



A Niagara Health volunteer gets one of the new transport chairs for a patient

Restaurant Marks Three Decades of Giving

Since opening its doors in 1993, M.T. Bellies' mission has been to give back to the community. "John Clark and his wife Rebecca started the restaurant and have made a significant contribution to their community ever since," says Justin Daboll, Co-Owner and General Manager, who has worked just about every job at the restaurant over the years.

"When I first started working at M.T. Bellies, over 20 years ago, I thought this was going to be a temporary, part-time job," he laughs. "But here I am!"

During his time at the Welland fixture, he has learned a lot about the generosity and importance of their community.

"We have weathered a storm or two - most recently the pandemic - and it is all thanks to the community's commitment to us and our commitment to them. Showing people our gratitude by giving back has always been extremely important to John and Rebecca, and it is a legacy I want to continue."

This year, M.T. Bellies again decided to give back by donating the proceeds of their East Coast Kitchen Party to the Welland hospital.

"Whenever we put on an event that will support a local cause, we want to address an urgent need that we see ourselves, and that comes up when we chat with our patrons. So when we suggested the Welland hospital this year, it was a no-brainer. It is definitely a cause that is on people's minds."

Supporting Niagara Health Foundation and the purchase of life-saving equipment is close to Justin's heart. "I myself have seen the struggle

that our Welland hospital faces. We have the rapid population growth on one hand and staffing shortages on the other, so we wanted to do our part to help."

The May event raised a remarkable \$35,000. Combined with many other fundraising efforts over the years, including their continued generous support of Niagara Health Foundation's annual Elimination Draw, M.T. Bellies has raised more than \$110,000 for the Welland hospital.

"We're incredibly proud of that and the people who support us. I'm grateful for everyone working in the healthcare system, and we will continue to do what we can to help out."

Andrea Scott, Niagara Health Foundation President & CEO is grateful for their continued support. "Their efforts have provided vital equipment that directly benefits patients in our community. We sincerely appreciate the dedication of Justin, John, Rebecca, and the entire M.T. Bellies team to making a real difference in local healthcare."



Liam Clark, Justin Daboll and John Clark

Desjardins Joins *It's Our Future*

One of the highlights of our summer was visiting the worksite for the new South Niagara hospital.

Only two years after the groundbreaking, we are thrilled to share that over 70% of the concrete structure has been poured and some of the first mechanical and electrical services are being installed on the lower floors. Work on 10 of the 12 storeys is underway and hundreds of workers are on site every day.

It was humbling to walk through this building as it is coming together, knowing that it will serve the region for generations to come. None of it would be possible without the generosity of our community, which is truly awe-inspiring.

We are grateful that this summer, Desjardins has stepped up to invest in this transformational project with a generous \$500,000 pledge.

"At Desjardins, we care deeply about the health and well-being of our communities. Supporting the South Niagara hospital is about more than funding a construction project - it's about creating a space

for healing, hope and compassion. This project reflects our values of solidarity and mutual aid, and we're honoured to be able to contribute to a healthier future for generations to come," says Billy Boucher, CEO of Desjardins Ontario Credit Union.

"It is fantastic to have Desjardins join our *It's Our Future* campaign," says Niagara Health Foundation President & CEO, Andrea Scott. "This new hospital will transform care in Niagara, and the more we worked with Desjardins, the more they got excited and wanted to help make it a reality."

In honour of their generous gift, one of the Complex Care terraces, which will bring an abundance of warmth and light to the building, will be named after Desjardins.

"When we toured the worksite, I was able to really picture the rooms and what everything will look like," says Andrea Scott. "I am grateful that one day, not too far from now, families will be sitting in that space with loved ones, knowing that they are supported by generous donors like Desjardins."



Generosity Beyond a Lifetime

We were deeply touched to receive a remarkable \$200,000 estate donation earlier this year from an anonymous donor who included the Niagara Health Foundation in their Will, ensuring a lasting impact for Niagara patients.

"The donor asked to use \$100,000 each towards urgent needs in Kidney Care, and Mental Health and Addictions at Niagara Health," says Niagara Health Foundation President & CEO, Andrea Scott, who was thrilled to share the good news with the teams in both programs.

"This new equipment will help us provide the best patient care we can." - Laura Morrison

"We are so grateful for this incredibly generous donation," says Laura Morrison, Director, Kidney Care and Ambulatory Programs.

Kidney disease affects thousands of individuals across the Niagara region. Niagara Health operates dialysis units in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland, along with a Renal Clinic and Home Dialysis Program that provide care throughout a patient's journey.

"There are many reasons people need dialysis," Laura explains.

"Kidney failure occurs when the kidneys can no longer filter waste and excess fluid from the blood. When kidneys fail they cannot perform these vital functions and dialysis may be required. In addition to removing waste, your kidneys also maintain healthy levels of electrolytes, control acid-base

balance, maintain hormone levels and help make red blood cells."

In 2024, Niagara Health supported over 5000 Renal Clinic visits and approximately 60,000 in-hospital dialysis treatments. The Kidney Care Program supports 370 patients who receive dialysis treatments in a hospital setting along with an additional 65 patients who are dialyzing in their home.

"These patients are like family," says Samantha Jack, Manager of Clinical Services. "They come in three times a week for four hours - we often see them more than their own families. It creates a close bond between staff and patients."

Providing renal patients with the best care and most efficient dialysis they can is the team's top priority.

"Thanks to this generous gift, we will be able to purchase three new ultrasound machines - one for each dialysis site," says Laura Morrison.

Ultrasound machines are used in Kidney Care to visualize the vessels to support nurses with cannulation or accessing these vessels.

"The patient's dialysis access is their lifeline," explains Laura. "These ultrasounds are used daily and are vital in ensuring we are preserving their vascular access."

"We're extremely grateful for this support because Kidney Care is not often at the top of people's minds. This equipment will allow us to continue providing the best possible care to the many families who rely on our services every day."

"Receiving such a generous donation will have an incredible impact on patient care and comfort." - Lucy Batt

Providing patients with the best care possible is also a priority for Lucy Batt, Director of Mental Health and Addictions.

"We offer services all across Niagara and throughout the continuum of care," she explains. "We are here to support Emergency Department visits, inpatient admissions and outpatient services and programming, which can also extend to withdrawal management and residential treatment programs for addictions."

Niagara Health's Mental Health and Addictions team serves more than 20,000 patients annually.

"Receiving such a generous donation will have an incredible impact on patient care and comfort," says Lucy.

"Operational funding is always limited, so we heavily rely on donations for equipment needs, such as ECG machines and vital sign monitors, and for items that impact patient comfort."

Thanks to this legacy gift, our Mental Health and Addictions team will be able to purchase state-of-the-art clinical equipment, as well as comfort items such as new mattresses, pillows, and art that will brighten up spaces in the unit.

"We always try to create a home-like environment – a place where people can come to rehabilitate and recover, and studies have shown that patients can do that better in spaces that are bright and calming."

"This donation allows us to create that environment for our patients and invest in therapeutic programs, which are so crucial, especially for patients who use our services over a significant period of time."

Both departments are grateful for the impact this donation will have on the people they serve, and are humbled by the generosity and kindness of this Legacy Donor, who chose to include Kidney Care and Mental Health & Addictions in their estate plan.

By joining Niagara Health Foundation's Legacy Society, you can choose which hospital or department will benefit from your gift.

"This donation will have a ripple effect for years to come," says Andrea Scott. "To profoundly improve patient care here in Niagara is a beautiful thing to leave behind."



Niagara Health Foundation
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