

Connections

A newsletter for donors and friends of

niagarahealth
— ECG — foundation





Sarah

**“I have to do this,
because I’m still here
and others aren’t.”**

Sarah had just had a baby when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. “At the time, I didn’t know anyone who had had cancer other than the girlfriend of a high school friend. You don’t think much about cancer until it affects you. I had so many questions. What do I need to do? Who has beaten this? What do I need to learn?”

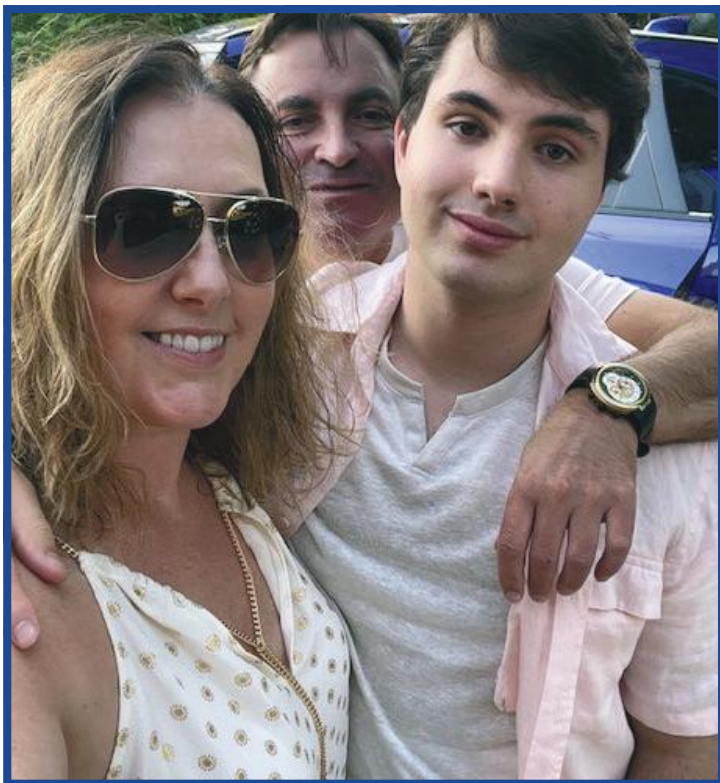
Scared and overwhelmed by the diagnosis and everything it brought in its wake, Sarah began looking for answers, hope and some confirmation that her diagnosis didn’t have to be a death sentence. “I thought I was going to die. So at the time, hearing that someone had four years, five years, six years gave me so much hope. It made me feel like this is something I can live with.”



Sarah had a lumpectomy to remove a tumour in her breast. Then she had to have another. When the margins were still not clear after the second surgery, she made the difficult decision to have a bilateral mastectomy and a full hysterectomy (the surgical removal of both breasts and the uterus).

“Those are big surgeries, but I followed my intuition and did what felt right for me. It’s all you can do.”

In the fall after her hysterectomy, Sarah wanted to participate in The Big Move Cancer Ride, an annual fundraising event that the Niagara Health Foundation continues to host to raise funds for local cancer care.



“My chemotherapy treatments took place at the old St. Catharines General, so I was able to see first-hand that there was a big need for funding and more equipment.”

Sarah had everything planned: surgery in the spring, time to recover, time to train and get a new bike. She was ready to go. Unfortunately, Sarah had to undergo an emergency appendectomy surgery before the Ride. Sarah remembers shaking her head in disbelief of the never-ending health issues she had to face at the time.

Sarah was unable to participate in the Ride on event day, however her friend set up a 100-kilometre bike

ride for her later in the fall. “My friend’s parents were our sweepers; they prepared their own little rest stop... it was amazing. It was a sense of satisfaction for me. I had made this commitment and I didn’t want cancer to take that away from me too.” It was the first of many Big Move Cancer Rides in which Sarah participated. **“I figured I’m strong enough, so I can and will do this. But after a few years, I got to a point where I wanted to distance myself from the cancer thing. It felt so negative; I didn’t want to ride again.”**

The fear of the cancer returning consumed Sarah for quite some time. Even after finishing the medication, she was convinced that as soon as she stopped, she would die. “I stopped the medication, and nothing happened. Then I thought once it was fully out of my system, I might die. All those thoughts have passed now, but here I am.”

Sarah has a love-hate relationship with the Ride. As much as she wanted a break from the event and everything that reminded her of her diagnosis, each time she heard from someone who was diagnosed with cancer, the Ride would be back on her mind, “I would think – I have to do this again because I’m still here.”

Sarah is now 15 years cancer-free, which also coincides with the 15th anniversary of The Big Move Cancer Ride. Sarah decided that 2023 was the year to return to the Ride. “Two or three ladies I’ve met through chemotherapy aren’t here anymore. It’s a reminder for me that I am lucky to be here after all this time.”

For Sarah, the Big Move Cancer Ride isn’t about speed. It’s a time of meditation, practicing gratitude and thinking of those who are not here anymore. “It may sound cliché, but I ride for those who can’t.”



Mia with baby Ina

“It brought us comfort knowing that the hospital had the tools, resources and equipment to keep her safe.”

It should have been one of the happiest times in their lives. Mia and her husband were expecting their first child and were so excited. Early on during Mia's pregnancy, they learned that their baby was quite large considering the baby's gestational age, “but that wasn't really a surprise,” Mia laughs, “my husband is 6 foot 6 and was an 11-pound baby!” Aside from some additional ultrasound appointments, Mia had a normal pregnancy and the couple couldn't wait to meet their baby. “I needed to be induced due to complications with preeclampsia, and ultimately I was required to have a C-section.”

Their baby girl, Ina, was born three weeks early and weighed nearly ten pounds. “Since she was a big baby, she was tested right away for blood sugar,” Mia remembers. Ina was tested within an hour of being born and her blood sugar was undetectable. “She was severely hypoglycemic,” explains Mia, meaning her sugar (glucose) levels were too low. Glucose is the main source of fuel for the brain and the body. **Ina was immediately admitted into the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the St. Catharines hospital, where she spent the next 31 days.**

Mia tries to focus on the moments of light and joy when she thinks back to Ina's first few terrifying days. “Everyone was so helpful. I couldn't even hold my baby without help, but I got to be with her at the NICU whenever I wanted. The nurses' support really mattered. They helped me to hold my baby, feed my baby. **They helped me figure out how to be a mom.**”

Ina quickly became famous in the NICU as the biggest baby there and the one with the loudest voice. “It was really funny because the nurses in the NICU don't usually deal with such big babies,” Mia smiles at the memory. “She was strong and thriving, strong enough to pull out her tubes... she knew very early on what she wanted and wasn't afraid to show us, even during those first weeks of her life at the hospital.”

After trying several different approaches, Ina's doctors found the right combination of medications that stabilized her blood sugar and Mia finally got to bring her baby home. It was discovered that Ina's blood sugar challenges are caused by a chronic condition due to a genetic mutation. She has routine appointments and her blood sugar is tested daily but, thankfully, it can be monitored and controlled with medication.

Eighteen months have passed since those first weeks in the NICU. Today, she is an independent,

feisty and fearless little explorer who loves to run, climb and swim.



To show appreciation for her daughter's care, Mia became a monthly donor to the Niagara Health Foundation. "Donating to Niagara Health is directly impacting someone's life. By donating, you're giving my baby the chance to have a bigger crib to sleep in. You're giving another baby the isolation unit they need. You're giving the tools that keep a baby breathing." During her 31-day stay, Ina went from sleeping in an incubator to a baby cot to a crib.

"All that equipment was so important," says Mia, whose

monthly gift goes specifically towards needs in the Women, Children and Babies Unit.

"The nurses and the attention they gave to our baby and all of the babies in the NICU really stood out to us. Their incredibly good care is what we choose to honour. There were very scary moments but also so many moments where we had help and support."

The early intervention made all the difference in Ina's life and making that monthly gift is Mia's way of saying "thank you."

"For us, it's a small amount we give once a month. If we all just donated a small amount, it could build into big dollars to buy life-saving equipment. Nobody wants to be at the hospital – we sure didn't. It was crushing going home the first night without my baby and leaving her there. It brought us comfort knowing that the hospital had the tools, resources and equipment to keep her safe when we couldn't be the ones to be there with her."

Lifesaving equipment – thanks to you!

With more than 3,000 babies born at Niagara Health in the past year alone, we are so grateful to support the purchase of 17 Neonatal Vital Sign Monitors, one for each of our labour rooms. **Thanks to your donations, we can ensure that our incredible team in Women and Babies has state-of-the-art equipment to look after our youngest patients.** Having these monitors readily available in each labour room means that newborns can be monitored right away and if an infant is struggling, they play a vital role in neonatal resuscitation.

Your donations change and save lives, thank you for your continued support!



Breaking Ground

The *It's Our Future* campaign to raise funds for the building of the new South Niagara hospital reached an important milestone in July when we held the official groundbreaking ceremony at the new site.

The event was attended by over 300 people, including Premier Doug Ford, Health Minister Sylvia Jones, Infrastructure Minister Kinga Surma, Niagara Health leadership and staff, local politicians and Niagara Health Foundation Founding Donors. **Thanks to you and your support, this new hospital will soon be a reality, a resource and a state-of-the-art healthcare facility serving all of Niagara.**

"We are immensely grateful for the overwhelming support we have already received for the *It's Our Future* campaign," says Niagara Health Foundation President and CEO Andrea Scott. "As we continue on this incredible journey, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to every individual and organization who has embraced our vision, and who will join us on this campaign.

Your donations and support reinforce the power of collective impact and the profound change it can bring."

The hospital will take five years to complete, with the official opening planned for summer 2028. To learn more about the *It's Our Future* campaign, visit www.ItsOurFuture.com



New MRI Arrives at Niagara Health

A new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine has arrived at Niagara Health thanks to the collective efforts of the community which saw over six million dollars raised for the purchase and installation of this new unit. Every step along the way of its arrival had to be carefully planned and we are thrilled that this new piece of equipment is now operational.

Your ongoing support of the Niagara Health Foundation has made this a reality and we cannot thank you enough.

The new state-of-the-art MRI, equipped with the latest technology and software, will enhance patient comfort by reducing the time patients spend getting their scan. Its efficiency will reduce wait times, allow for faster scans and will increase the number of patients who can be served.

With this new addition to Niagara Health, together we are bringing high-quality medical imaging closer to home.

Watch the video of the new MRI's delivery and installation at NiagaraHealthFoundation.com/MRI



Niagara Health Foundation Events

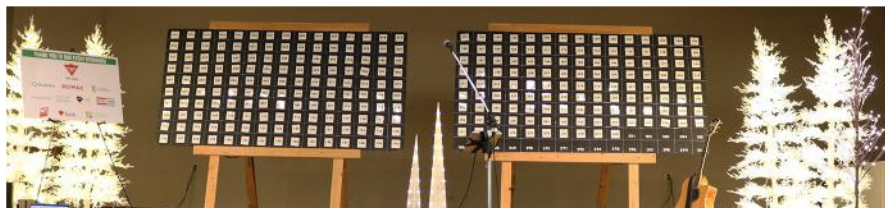
KIDS Ultimate Challenge

presented by

 Desjardins



OVER
\$130,000
RAISED FOR THE
CHILDREN'S HEALTH UNIT



WELLAND TAILGATE
ELIMINATION DRAW
ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE WELLAND HOSPITAL

WHEN: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

WHERE: CROATIAN NATIONAL HOME

LEARN MORE AT ELIMDRAW.COM

Celebrating Milestones: A Remarkable Year for the Niagara Marathons!

Congratulations to the Niagara Golf and Cycling Marathons for raising \$1 million since their inception - all in support of local charities, including the Niagara Health Foundation.

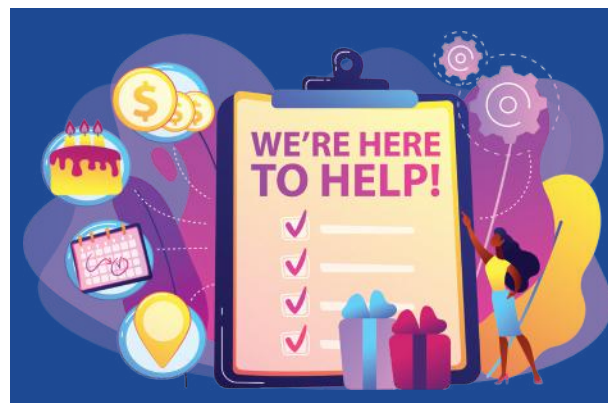
The Niagara Golf Marathon was established in 2014, challenging golfers to complete an impressive 100 holes in just one day. **This year's event, held at Peninsula Lakes Golf Course, featured 80 dedicated golfers who raised over \$220,000.**

In 2021, the Niagara Cycling Marathon was established as an event where cyclists conquer 120 km in a single day. This past July, twenty-eight enthusiastic cyclists embarked on a scenic ride from Beamsville-based Bench Brewing to Niagara-on-the-Lake and back, collectively raising over \$40,000.



Our appreciation extends to the visionary co-founders, Chris Sinclair and Adam Shields, as well as the dedicated committee members. Their enthusiasm and commitment have been instrumental in achieving this remarkable milestone. We also wish to thank the dedicated participants, sponsors, volunteers, and donors, all of whom have played pivotal roles in the success of these events. **Your generous contributions have made a lasting impact on healthcare, enhancing the well-being of our community.**

For more information about these events and their impact, please visit **NiagaraMarathons.com**



Ready to make a difference? Whether you're a business, a dynamic group, or an individual with a heart for giving, consider organizing an event to support Niagara Health.

Reach out to Lisa today and let's start something amazing together.

Email: lisa.branston@niagarahealth.on.ca



“This gift is made possible by my father, Allan Slaight.”

When we received the message that Diane and Greg Slaight would be donating \$60 million to the Niagara Health Foundation, we were in shock and disbelief. And still to this day, now that a few weeks have passed, it is hard for us to grasp the magnitude of the gift our local hospitals just received.

We share the news of this incredible gift with a profound sense of gratitude for Greg and Diane.

“This gift is made possible by my father, Allan Slaight,” Greg Slaight said about the unprecedented donation. “His business success and his generosity allow us to make this gift.”

While \$45 million will be used towards critical patient care equipment across Niagara Health, \$10 million will support the Walker Family Cancer Centre and \$5 million will go towards the *It's Our Future* campaign. In recognition of the gift, the diagnostic imaging unit at the new South Niagara hospital will be known as the “Slaight Family Diagnostic Imaging Unit.”

“This momentous contribution marks a turning point in the history of Niagara Health Foundation, we are immensely grateful to Greg and Diane whose profound generosity will leave a lasting impact on the health and well-being of countless individuals in our region. With this remarkable gift, we can continue to support and grow our mission to provide Niagara Health with the critical, urgently needed patient care equipment necessary to deliver exceptional care and improve health outcomes,” said Foundation President & CEO Andrea Scott.

Diane and Greg, from the bottom of our hearts, thank you for this selfless gesture and for showing us all the power of compassion and generosity.



Andrew Kurcz
Retired Private Wealth Professional

**Leave your mark on
the community you
call home.**

Learn How You Can Leave a Legacy That Will Impact Local Healthcare

It is truly humbling when a donor decides to leave Niagara Health Foundation a Legacy Gift. Whether through a Will, life insurance policy or a stock donation, there are many different ways to impact local health care and join the Niagara Health Foundation Legacy Society.

Someone who has helped individuals leave their mark on the community they call home for many years is Niagara resident and retired BMO Private Wealth Professional Andrew Kurcz.

He believes that leaving a gift for the Niagara Health Foundation is an opportunity. "What I often heard from clients was that it made them feel good to help those who have helped them."

Make your lasting impact on patient care!

By leaving a legacy gift, you can **reduce or even eliminate the tax burden** on your estate. While this might seem like a daunting task, the Foundation has the resources and is here to help you and your family make a gift that fulfills your wishes and supports local healthcare.

**To learn more about legacy giving, please
contact Franca Palummieri at 289-241-8756 or
visit NiagaraHealthFoundation.com/Legacy**



Niagara Health Foundation
Legacy Society

Thank you for your generous support!

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