

Connections

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





Miles and Hunter

Giving Back for Excellent Care

Bringing new life into the world is one of the most amazing miracles to experience. For expectant mothers, the time leading up to the birth of a newborn is filled with many changes and emotions as they prepare to become a new mom.

2020 was a whirlwind year for 36-year old Patricia. In early January, she found out she was pregnant. A month later, she learned she would be having twins. In March, she received confirmation that the babies were boys.

“For a lot of reasons including the pandemic, last year was pretty bad for many people. But for me, it was the best year of my life because I finally became a mom,” Patricia said.

Just 31 weeks into her pregnancy, Patricia woke up at five-thirty in the morning on July 14 to discover her water had broken. She was rushed immediately to Niagara Health’s Labour and Delivery Unit in St. Catharines. Several hours later, Patricia and her care team were surprised to see she was almost seven centimeters dilated despite having no contractions.

“My entire care team mobilized to make sure I was being monitored along with my unborn twins. It was scary and very stressful but I knew we were in good hands,” added Patricia.

The doctor found that one of the twin boys was breach and could not be turned around, so an emergency Caesarian Section was performed. At 4:19pm and 4:20pm respectively, Patricia gave birth to twin boys, Miles and Hunter. They were taken immediately to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

The early birthing experience was overwhelming for Patricia, who was finally able to see her newborn babies at midnight.

“I was surprised to see how small my babies were and knew this was just the beginning of a difficult hospital stay,” Patricia added. “So much happened in such a short period of time and while I don’t remember everything, I will say the nurses and the entire NICU team were kind, caring and patient with me.”

Patricia had peace of mind knowing she could keep a watchful eye on her newborns while they were in the NICU. She could

monitor the babies at all times thanks to her adjoining room with a sliding glass door and a sleeping cot, that allowed her to stay with them around the clock.

During the six-week stay in the NICU, the excellent care and kindness of the staff reminded Patricia of how fortunate she was that her boys were born in a country with such an amazing healthcare system. After days and weeks of growing stronger,



Miles

Patricia took Miles and Hunter home on August 25.

“It was such an exciting morning with so many things to do,” said Patricia. “The NICU staff has a tradition on discharge day - they dress up the babies in a graduation cap and gown to celebrate moving from the NICU to the home nursery. I was excited, proud and very happy to finally be bringing my twins home.”



Hunter

Carol Munro, Manager, Clinical Services of the NICU team, points out that the NICU at the St. Catharines Site is the only one of its kind in the Niagara Region, and cared for 635 newborns this past year.

Preemie Care, Close To Home

“As a level 2C facility, we provide early newborns with a sophisticated level of intensive neonatal care locally. Instead of having to

travel out of town to McMaster Children’s Hospital in Hamilton or SickKids in Toronto for the same type of specialized care, families can come to St. Catharines to receive the care their babies need,” said Carol.

The St. Catharines NICU care is made possible thanks to generous Niagara Health Foundation donors. Their contributions are used to purchase specialized equipment like full-featured incubators and radiant warmers. These items eliminate the stress of moving critically-ill infants from bed to bed and cribs. There are other important equipment items that are funded by donors, such as baby monitors and waterless milk warmers.

To celebrate the first birthday of Miles and Hunter, Patricia created an online fundraising initiative in support of the Niagara Health NICU. The event raised more than \$600 for Niagara Health Foundation.

“I couldn’t think of a better way to give back to my community than raising funds for our local hospital,” Patricia said. “Hospital funding from the government doesn’t cover the cost of specialized hospital equipment, so funds raised by the Foundation are vital.”

“Thanks to Niagara Health, my two beautiful boys have been thriving since the day I brought them home. I can’t say enough about the outstanding care experience and will always be grateful to the NICU team.”

About the NICU

NICU offers 17-beds with glassed-in rooms equipped with incubators, special monitoring equipment and sleeping cots for parents so they can stay with their babies overnight.

The Unit provides specialized care to newborns 30 weeks and above. With a large care team of highly trained and skilled staff, babies in the NICU receive intensive care for a wide range of health conditions.



Cheryl Vangameren

Cheryl Enjoys Improved Quality of Life After her Hip Replacement in Welland

Sometimes good things come to those who wait. For others, waiting too long can result in pain and limited mobility.

77-year old Cheryl Vangameren of Fenwick had been in pain and had walked with a limp for five years.

"I knew my hip joints were in bad shape and decided it was time to be assessed by an orthopedic specialist," said Cheryl. "I went for a consultation where I was assessed and discovered that both hips had deteriorated, largely due to my own procrastination. At the time, they advised me of a lengthy wait time, but I was happy just to get on the list."

Cheryl's family doctor referred her to Dr. John Song who specializes in a less invasive procedure known as Direct Anterior Hip Replacement Surgery. The main difference between the conventional and anterior approach is, the incision is often smaller and the cut is made at the front of the hip instead of at the side or back.

Anterior surgery may have other advantages, including less pain and muscle trauma, a shorter hospital stay, easier and faster recovery time, less limping and decreased chance of hip dislocation.

Dr. Song brought anterior hip replacement surgery to Welland in 2015 after the hospital was equipped with a donor-funded operating table designed with specific attachments that make surgery possible for all body types.

"The equipment is very expensive – twice the cost of a standard operating table," Dr. Song said. "Thanks to the support of our donors through the Niagara Health Foundation, people who need hip replacements have the option to undergo surgery using an advanced, cutting edge approach locally at the Welland hospital."

According to Cheryl, one of her friends encouraged her to go to Toronto for hip replacement surgery, but several others recommended local surgeon Dr. Song as the "go-to" for the anterior approach.

"Just the thought of having to go out of town for surgery was overwhelming to me. I was happy and relieved to know there was a top-notch surgeon close by who would do the procedure at the Welland hospital," said Cheryl.

Her wish came true on December 9, 2020, when the surgery was completed. Cheryl said she received extraordinary care from Dr. Song and his team. What stood out most for Cheryl was the welcoming and friendly hospital staff.

“I received excellent care, and everyone on the team took the time to explain things to me. I can’t say enough about the wonderful care provided before, during and after my procedure. The physicians and care team kept me informed every step of the way, and Dr. Song even called me at home at eight-thirty one morning to see how I was doing.”

Cheryl also made special mention of Dr. Song’s office staff. “Chris checked in with me regularly, and I knew I could call her any time I had a question. She was patient and kind and made sure I had everything I needed.”

Cheryl points out her care experience at Welland hospital was refreshing, and she tells her family and friends at every opportunity about her care journey. She raved about the anterior hip replacement procedure and Dr. Song, who she describes as “professional, gentle and kind.”

Since the surgery, Cheryl has recovered well and says her right hip and mobility are much better now with no visible limp. She is now looking forward to the day when she can have a second surgery to replace her left hip.

For anyone who may need hip replacement surgery, Cheryl

recommends not to wait too long to have an assessment because the longer they wait, the greater chance of causing further damage.

“I waited so long to have an assessment and ended up paying for it, suffering pain and limited mobility. I would say to anyone with hip problems to get checked as soon as possible and get on the list if you need surgery.”

For those who may be hesitant about receiving hospital care during the pandemic, Cheryl has some sage advice:

“There’s no need to be afraid to get hospital care. I have been so impressed with the level of safety precautions followed by the care team and other staff at Niagara Health. Everyone has been extraordinarily careful throughout my care experience, especially during my surgery and for my post-op check-ups.”

Extremely grateful for the care she has received at Niagara Health, Cheryl encourages people to consider supporting local hospitals by donating to the Niagara Health Foundation.

“People can get the care they need locally at any one of our hospital sites. I have had a wonderful experience and highly recommend Niagara Health to anyone.”



PORTABLE DIGITAL X-RAY SYSTEM

An x-ray is a procedure used to view the inside of the body without having to make an incision.

There are over 139,000 x-ray procedures conducted at Niagara Health last year.

A new Portable Digital X-Ray System will allow patients to be scanned at their bedside. Quality images are received in seconds, allowing more patients to be scanned in less time. It also reduces the levels of radiation for some patients who require multiple scans during their hospital stay.

This will allow healthcare providers the ability to better predict, diagnose, inform and treat diseases to help patients live their life to the fullest.

Please help support the purchase of a Portable Digital X-Ray System by making a donation today.

An x-ray is ordered by a physician to:

- Examine an area where pain or discomfort is being experienced
- Monitor the progression of a diagnosed disease, such as osteoporosis
- Check how well a prescribed treatment is working

Positive Impact on Prostate Cancer in Niagara Region

Tony Lucciola, a resident of St. Catharines, is proof that getting an annual prostate examination can save your life. At his fall 2019 exam, at the age of 63, tests revealed that Tony's Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) levels were elevated. PSA is a protein produced by cells that line the small glands inside the prostate. As a result, he was referred to the Prostate Clinic at the Walker Family Cancer Centre (WFCC) at Niagara Health.

“DEVASTATED is the only way I can describe how I felt,” said Tony.

Treatment by the cancer care professionals at the WFCC was swift and comprehensive. “I have had a biopsy, bone scan, CT scans, chest x-rays, radiation therapy and hormone injections. Hormone injections are ongoing for three years with PSA being monitored every 3-6 months,” said Tony.

Cancer treatment can be daunting, but Tony credits his supportive family, his primary care nurse, Marti, and his entire healthcare team with keeping him calm, informed and feeling positive. “All of the radiation staff, clerks and volunteers were wonderful. And

of course, Dr. Cuthbert, Dr. Shoebridge and Dr. Levesque, who designed and followed my treatment program and care.”

On April 9th, 2020, Tony rang the bell at the WFCC, signaling the end of his successful treatment program. Relieved, thankful and feeling great, Tony has one piece of advice he wants everyone to hear; “I cannot stress enough the importance of having your annual PSA test. I had no symptoms and no family

history of any kind. My cancer had already metastasized when it was detected in my blood work during my annual test.”

A Swinging Celebration

To celebrate the positive outcome of Tony's treatment and to bring awareness to the disease, Tony's sister, Bridget, and her husband Troy, planned the Fight Prostate Cancer Golf Invitational (FPC) in support of the Walker Family Cancer Centre. Tony loved the idea, “I've been golfing for over 40 years, so it fit my personality and seemed like a fun way to raise money.” The first annual FPC took place in September 2020 during strict COVID-19 protocols and raised an incredible \$11,807.68.

“This year, we planned to surpass our fundraising goal while still hosting a fun golf tournament to raise awareness for Prostate Cancer and give back to the Prostate Clinic. Each year we hope the event is bigger and more successful.”



True to their word, this now annual golf event took place at Rockway Vineyards Golf Course on June 26th and raised \$16,466.42 for the Walker Family Cancer Centre!

For this avid golfer and cancer survivor, life is sweet every day. “I am relieved and thankful. I physically feel great and am fortunate to continue my life as normal and to take each day as it comes. I am so grateful to share my story”.

Community Fundraisers

Our community is the heart and soul behind the Niagara Health Foundation. The funds raised through community events help us provide Niagara Health with state-of-the-art equipment for all our hospital sites. If you are interested in learning more about hosting a fundraising event, please call 905-323-FUND (3863).



SEVEN YEAR-OLD, JACK TURL DREW UP A PLAN TO END COVID-19

He took his love for drawing and sold his pictures on Facebook for \$5.00 each. Thanks to the incredible support from his friends, family, and community, Jack raised \$2,400 for COVID-19 relief at Niagara Health.



100 HOLES FOR LOCAL CHARITIES

On August 17, over 100 golfers and riders took part in the 12th Annual Niagara Golf Marathon and the inaugural Niagara Cycling Marathon. Golfers played 100 holes in a day while riders rode 100km. The event has raised over \$650,000 in 12 years and has supported the Niagara Health Foundation and many other local charities.



GLORIA LAWSON WINS BIG

Niagara Health Foundation is pleased to announce the winner of the Niagara Health Lottery. The lucky ticket number NH-1629412 belongs to St. Catharines resident Gloria Lawson. Gloria took home \$78,780! Proceeds from the 50/50 raffle will support urgently needed equipment at Niagara Health.

Leave a Legacy



**I care about my family.
I also care about local
healthcare.**

You don't have to choose.

A gift in your Will allows you to leave a larger gift than what would be possible during your lifetime while still taking care of your family.

Even 1% of your estate can have an enormous impact on our local health-care while still leaving 99% for your family and loved ones.

Leaving a Legacy Gift to Niagara Health is an act that is generous, powerful and surprisingly simple.

For more information about leaving a legacy gift, please visit [LegacyNHF.com](https://www.legacyNHF.com)

Thank you for your generous support!

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