

Chez nous

MCH EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

November 14, 2013



A life-changing brain surgery for David

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Hôpital de Montréal
pour enfants
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de santé McGill



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Photo: Owen Egan



Brain surgery saves six-year-old from countless daily seizures — By Stephanie Tsirgiotis

When you're faced with a difficult challenge, you can either become bitter or better. It's a thought that often crosses Nathalie Richard's mind. Luckily for her and her family, she has always chosen the latter.

When she was 32 weeks pregnant, Nathalie's son David had a stroke in her womb. Her doctor at the Royal Victoria Hospital referred her to the Montreal Children's Hospital, where she met neurosurgeon Dr. Jeffrey Atkinson. Then at two months old, Dr. Atkinson had David undergo an MRI, and the results confirmed a severe brain malformation on his right side. A month later, David began to seizure and was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and epilepsy. "The first year was the worst. It was bad news after bad news," admits Nathalie.

David was also declared legally blind and he developed gastroparesis, which causes partial paralysis of the stomach and an inability to digest. Doctors had to insert a gastric tube into his nose to feed him. "The fact that my son couldn't eat really bothered me," says Nathalie. "I dealt with his inability to walk and talk, but eating is just so natural and he couldn't do it." At the age of two, David's doctors removed the tube from his nose and inserted a gastrostomy tube into his stomach.

The longest day

Then last winter, his seizures started to get worse – much worse. David's doctors tried switching his medication to stop the seizures but it didn't work. Eventually David was having up to 60 seizures a day. At this point, Dr. Bernard Rosenblatt recommended brain surgery for David.

In March this year, Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Jean-Pierre Farmer operated on David for 13 hours, performing a right-functional

hemispherectomy and complete corpus space callosotomy. "In order to control his epilepsy we cut all the connections between the right and left side of the brain to prevent the damaged, epileptic right side from affecting the more normally functioning left side," explains Dr. Atkinson. After a long and stressful wait, Nathalie and her family received word that the operation was a success. The hope was that David would now remain seizure-free.

A new life for David

Since his brain surgery, Nathalie has noticed a big change in her son. Most surprising is that David can now eat on his own. "He can actually hold a spoon and feed himself," says Nathalie. "It's the first time in his life that he's experiencing different flavours and textures. He just wants to eat all the time!"

David is also physically stronger which allows him to sit straighter and crawl on all four limbs. His speech and vocabulary



Nathalie (right) and David (middle) chat with Dr. Jeffrey Atkinson (left) before his appointment.



Nathalie and David share a special moment while waiting to see his doctor.

have improved as well. "He's talking more and using different words to express himself," explains Nathalie. "Instead of being constantly drained from all the seizures, he can now sit and read a book." David is also more social and has developed a strong connection with his classmates at school. "Before the surgery, David didn't really seem interested in the kids in his class, but now he talks about them all the time," says his mother.

Inspired by her son, Nathalie has decided to start her own non-profit group to help support parents whose children have recently been diagnosed with a disability. "I can truly say that I am at peace now. I hope I can help other parents," she says. "I wasn't ready to lose David and I'm so thankful we did this surgery. It gave me a second chance with David and it gave us a chance at a normal life. We finally have a day-to-day routine and it feels great." •

Nathalie's non-profit group is called *L'Etoile de Pacho - Réseau d'entraide pour parent d'enfant handicapé*. Pacho is the family's nickname for David.

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Making life easier for MCH residents

— By *Maureen McCarthy*

Every July 1, there's a group of fresh faces arriving on the scene at the Montreal Children's Hospital, ready to embark on their pediatric residencies. Over 100 medical school graduates come through our doors every summer, and like anyone else starting out they need to get the lay of the land, find out what's what and who's who, and even where to go for lunch. They're taking care of so many of our patients—but who takes care of them?

Enter Josee Warda, a veteran MCH employee and champion of the MCH residents. Josee performs a hundred different tasks and several small miracles every day. "I problem-solve for the residents," she says, "and look after their needs so they can focus on their work."

Josee started at the MCH in the early 1990s after completing a stage while she studied office systems technology. She first worked in Neurology as a replacement, then went to Medical Genetics. Before long she moved to Molecular Genetics and spent the next 14 years working for Dr. Rima Rozen, and then Dr. Patrick Scott. "The opportunity to work in the Residents' Office came up in 2010 and it sounded like something I'd like to try," she says. "My three positions at the Children's have been so different, from working with patients and families in Neurology, to only working with medical staff and nurses in Molecular Genetics, and then to working with our newest doctors as they start their careers," she says. "I feel like I've seen many different sides of life at the hospital!"

A juggling act

It's not only on July 1 that there are line-ups outside Josee's office. The academic year is divided into four-week cycles and there are many residents and fellows who come to the Children's for short periods to further their education and experience. The majority of residents are from McGill. "Some people are here for as long as five years, others as little as four weeks,"

says Josee. "We see residents from other universities such as Sherbrooke and Laval and from outside the province and outside Canada. With different departments, specialties, fellowships and lengths of stay, it's never the same from one month to the next."

When the new group of residents arrive, a typical day for Josee finds her dealing with any of the following: orientation, contracts, health insurance and payroll, explaining benefits, ensuring the residents are up-to-date with their immunizations, timesheets, on-call schedules, and providing updates to McGill's faculty of medicine. When Josee started in the Residents' office, there wasn't a lot of time for training. She credits Cathy Martell and Gisèle Goguen for their constant support and advice while she learned the ropes. "The work is so different to what I did

>> *Continued...*



Josee Warda



... Making life easier (cont'd)

before,” she says. “If not for Cathy and Gisèle, I’m not sure how I would have succeeded.”

Josee also feels strongly about the support her bosses and colleagues have given her over the years. “I’ve been lucky to work with people who have shown a lot of trust in me, and given me opportunities to implement change and develop new ways of getting things done. I’ve always found that really motivating.”

When Josee is not at work, she enjoys spending time with her husband and three teenage children, who have always been very supportive of her work too. Now, after several years in the Residents’ office, she is happy to see some of the residents return as staff. “Our residents are a big part of the hospital’s future. They study and work so hard—I admire them a lot. I’m just happy to make sure they’re well looked after.” ●

You asked, we answered!

Answers to frequently asked questions about the Glen

WILL THERE BE A DAYCARE ON THE GLEN SITE?

There will not be a daycare on the Glen site in 2015. The RVH daycare will move to a facility close to the Glen site. Daycare leaders are currently working on a plan with members of our redevelopment team.

HOW DO YOU GET TO THE GLEN SITE FROM THE VENDÔME METRO STATION?

There will be one functional link between the Glen site and the Vendôme metro station in 2015. When arriving at the station, you can walk towards the train platforms and enter an underground tunnel that will lead to the underground visitor/patient parking lot on the North side of the Glen site. Once there, you can take an elevator up to the hospital and head to your destination. The walk should take no more than 5-10 minutes. To ease rush hour traffic, measures are being considered with the aim of facilitating the flow of people.



The MUHC, along with the STM and AMT are also working on getting a second tunnel built that would lead directly into the main plaza of the Glen site and would be universally accessible. This second link will not be ready for 2015, but teams are working diligently to secure funding from the government to plan construction as soon as possible.

HOW BIG IS THE EMPLOYEE PARKING LOT?

There are 1,260 employee parking spaces at the Glen site. The employee parking lot is situated on the South side of the Glen site and is housed in an 8-level structure with elevators and pedestrian walk-ramps. A computerized system will be installed in the parking lot to indicate number of free spots and where they are to make it easy for staff to park their cars. There will also be bike racks and electric car charging stations.



Thinking outside the box

Becoming 'Champions for Patient Safety' — By Stephanie Tsirgiotis

"Unless someone like YOU cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better...it's not." These wise words from Dr. Seuss resonated with staff during the inaugural 'Champions for Patient Safety' meeting held on October 17. Drs. Sasha Dubrovsky, Nadine Korah and Samara Zavalkoff teamed up to head the new interest group in an attempt to improve patient safety around the hospital.

The conference room was packed with medical, surgical, nursing and support staff from almost every department in the hospital. Instead of a "creative discussion," the group launched into a "creative destruction" by recognizing what elements of our current system are dysfunctional and then brainstorming on ways we can eliminate them in an innovative way. "Our goal is to create a just and safe culture in a family-centered hospital," says Dr. Dubrovsky. "And, we plan to do this by promoting awareness, educating our staff and families and fostering collaboration between all departments." The group continues to meet once a month and all staff members are welcome to join. For more information, contact Sylvie Sahyoun at sylvie.sahyoun@muhc.mcgill.ca •



Drs. Zavalkoff (left), Korah (middle) and Dubrovsky (right) debrief after their first 'Champions for Patient Safety' meeting.



The OR's Tony Franco (left) and pediatric surgeon Dr. Pramod Puligandla (right) in the middle of a "creative destruction."



A multi-disciplinary group gathered for the first 'Champions for Patient Safety' meeting on October 17.

A goodbye message

from MCH nursing coordinators Sandy Bradford-Macalanda and Peggy Lamb

We would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye and thank you to all the amazing and dedicated friends and colleagues we have worked with over the years. The Montreal Children's Hospital has been a wonderful place, for both of us, to work and play in over the last 30 years.

In April this year, we learned that our positions were being closed. While it was difficult to hear at first, our involvement in the GPO and budget reduction meetings had prepared us for the possibility. The decision had nothing to do with competencies or the value of our jobs. The government had made requests to the MCH and our Nursing department to make adjustments to achieve budget targets. We had been part of many discussions about harmonizing staff numbers and working hours of nursing professionals across the MUHC sites so we understood the reasoning behind the decision.

Throughout the process, we've received tremendous support from the Human Resources Department and many others who have been in the same situation. Both of us see this as an opportunity to explore other career possibilities and we are excited about our future endeavours. We leave knowing that we've worked hard over the years and made positive contributions to the MCH and the MUHC.

From the very beginning of our careers, we were blessed with terrific mentors, Evelyn Malowany, Gwen Olivier and Diane Borisov, who offered us opportunities and encouraged us to grow and develop professionally. We have had the privilege of working with colleagues, in many different departments, across



*Peggy Lamb (left) and
Sandy Bradford-Macalanda (right)*

the MUHC, all of whom also give 100% each day, to ensure the very best care is provided to our patients and families.

We wish you all the very best and we are excited for the MCH to make the move to a state-of-the-art complex at the Glen. •

We will be here until December 6 and look forward to having the chance to say goodbye to many of you in person. Feel free to email or call us at the following: sandy.bradford-macalanda@muhc.mcgill.ca (local 22907) and peggy.lamb@muhc.mcgill.ca (local 22242)



Helping our patients... one app at a time!

DR. BAIRD'S MY FIRST SURGERY APP!

On October 29, MCH surgeon Dr. Robert Baird wowed staff and media with the official launch of his app, *My First Surgery*. He



Dr. Baird at the official launch of My First Surgery.

came up with the idea after his own daughter had to undergo surgery and felt there was a need for a communications tool to help ease parents' and patients' anxiety about the process. The interactive app breaks down each step by explaining what will happen before, during and after the surgery. The app is currently only available in English, but developers are seeking funding to translate it into other languages, starting with French. Check out *My First Surgery* on iTunes!



Dr. Robert Baird runs through My First Surgery with his patient, Andrew Feng and his family during October's press conference.

NEW WEBSITE GIVES ED PATIENTS THE LOWDOWN ON WAIT TIMES

At the MCH, we constantly think of innovative ways to improve the patient experience. Our Emergency department, in partnership with the MUHC's Information Services team, recently created a website to better inform families and patients about wait times and triage levels. "I think it's important for families to know how long the wait will be and hopefully this information will help them make informed decisions during their stay," says Dr. Harley Eisman, Director of the MCH ED. The wait times are updated automatically every couple of minutes and kiosks are located in each ED waiting room so that patients can access this information via the website while on-site. A second phase of this project will offer patients and families a notification service. They will be able to receive a short text message (SMS) indicating their triage level and average waiting time directly on their mobile phone.



A mother scrolls through the website during a recent visit to the ED.

Decisions, decisions

Helping employees manage the document life-cycle

The calendar might say 'November' but many people at the MCH are already in spring cleaning mode. Anna Colicchio from Document Services at the MUHC has been meeting with staff throughout the MCH to help each department learn about the review process for document retention.



Zoe Cowie (left) and Ginette Lebel (middle) from Transfusion Services meet with Anna Colicchio (right), from Document Services, during a recent MCH visit.

Deciding which documents to keep and for how long is something that requires attention on a fairly regular basis but it takes on extra importance now that the move to the Glen is a year and a half away. To help employees decide what and what not to keep, Document Services has created Document Retention guidelines which can be found on e-muhc. There is an MUHC classification scheme of 14 series, which covers Administration, Space and Building, Human Resources, etc. These are further divided into sub-series for categorizing documents. Most types of documents used at the MUHC are listed in these series.

Employees are also being encouraged to sit down with their team members to review their needs such as setting up document management filing systems to assign length of time for retaining and storing documents.

For more information on document retention requirements and setting up a system in your department, visit the Document Services section of the intranet site. •

Have a heart... Do your part, get the flu shot!

The MUHC flu campaign is in full swing and our Occupational Health and Safety department is making the rounds from unit to unit to make sure staff get their flu shot this year. No appointment is needed and OHS will be at the MCH until November 22. You can also schedule an appointment after November 22 by calling extension 44358. The full schedule can be found on the intranet under the Occupational Health and Safety menu on the Human Resources page. •



The OR's Tony Franco gives a thumbs up after receiving his flu shot from nurse Eleonora Zarbo.



EVENTS

Achievements

Our very own **Debbie Friedman**, MCH Trauma Director, recently won the McGill Faculty of Medicine School of Physical and Occupational Therapy inaugural Alumni Award for exceptional leadership and community service.

Ten years ago, **Dr. Sarah Campillo** and rheumatology nurse **Gillian Taylor**, started a summer camp, ArticulAction, for children with rheumatic diseases. The Arthritis Society's Quebec division recently thanked both women by creating a bursary in each of their names. Each bursary will help sponsor a child, every year, by covering the camp's registration fee.

Halloween is not just for kids!

MCH staff members got their best costumes on for our annual Halloween Party and Costume Competition. Check out our first place winners!

Associate Executive Director, Martine Alfonso (left) with 1st place winner for Best Individual Costume, Patricia Boyer, the hospital's Ombudsman, for her Scuba Diving costume.



The 1st place prize for Best Group Costume went to the Dentistry Department for their 'Saturday morning cartoons' theme, which included Mickey & Minnie Mouse, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, the Flintstones and the Smurfs, among others.



Smiles are free...

Our new app *Turning Frowns Upside Down at the Children's* has already led to many smiles so far, but we need your help. Help us collect over 5,000 smiles and we'll post the Wall of Smiles in

our hospital as a reminder to our patients and families that they are not alone. Click here to learn how to lend your smile to a great cause today: <http://apps.facebook.com/murdesourires>

Turning frowns upside down

Smiles are free, so don't save them - share them!

Check out *Turning Frowns Upside Down* for the Children's

PILATES AT THE MCH - *A perfect way to end the day*

Join Karen Kunigis for the next session of Pilates Classes at the MCH. Karen has been guiding classes at the Children's for many years helping people improve muscular strength and flexibility in the core of the body including abdominals, back, neck, hips, and shoulders. Why not give it a try and see how much better you feel?

When: Mondays or Wednesdays, 5:00 to 5:55 p.m. for 10 weeks (from Nov. 25)

Where: Physiotherapy gym, D-292

Cost: \$100 (one class per week)

Register: contact Karen (514) 489-7717 or karenkunigis@gmail.com before Nov. 22.



*Karen Kunigis,
Pilates instructor*

HOLIDAY CARDS



The MCH Auxiliary will be selling Holiday cards at the front entrance of the hospital and in the Boutique until December 13 from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily. Children's designs are \$1.00 per card, corporate cards are \$1.30 and packages are \$10.

GIFT WRAP

Once again this year there will be two sites for holiday gift wrapping: Place Montreal Trust from November 30 to December 24 and Simons from December 6 to December 24. If you would like to lend your gift wrapping skills to a good cause, as well as give 3 to 4 hours of your time, please contact Lucette Bennett, MCH Auxiliary at 22384 or GiftWrap2013@hotmail.com



The Tiny Tim Fund

Angela Stéphanie was two-and-a-half years old when she was referred to the Montreal Children’s Hospital by a doctor at the Lachine General who was concerned about her recurring high fever, general weakness and frequent colds. A specialist at the Children’s soon gave her mother, Erendida, the awful news: it was leukemia. Specifically, Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), a form of cancer where white blood cells over-produce in the bone-marrow. “My heart was broken,” Erendida recounts. “To my mind, it was a death sentence. I was crushed.”

Another problem quickly became evident as Erendida began her round-the-clock bedside vigil in May 2012, when Angela

was diagnosed with ALL: the young, single mom could ill-afford the frequent taxi rides and the countless meals outside the home.

Enter Linda Blanchette, a social worker at the MCH. Erendida’s face lights up upon mentioning Blanchette’s name. She’s the one who told Erendida about the Tiny Tim Fund. Money from the fund paid for taxi fare and for hospital cafeteria vouchers for Erendida’s many meals away from her Lasalle home. It even covered grocery vouchers so Erendida could buy food to prepare her own meals in a kitchen at the hospital.

Little Angela has spent almost half of the last year-and-a-half at the MCH. She continues chemotherapy at home, and is doing better. But she is not cured. If Angela relapses, her doctors would have to contemplate a bone-marrow transplant. “We take it one day at a time,” says Erendida. Hopefully, the Tiny Tim Fund will be there for her along the way.

For Angela and for Erendida: please help us make it a reality. You can donate to the Tiny Tim Fund at childrenfoundation.com.



Angela Stéphanie Lopez Campos, 4 years old, and her mother

Every year, the Tiny Tim Fund helps some 500 families concentrate on caring for their hospitalized loved ones by helping cover extra costs for things like transportation, meals, medical equipment, utility bills and accommodation.

Holiday Bazaar 
We invite you to attend our Holiday Bazaar, **Thursday November 21** at The Montreal Children’s Hospital, 2nd Floor, B Wing, from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Baking, preserves, gifts, jewelry, toys and children’s knits. All proceeds are donated to the hospital.

Upcoming sales on 2B
Monday, November 18Knits
Wednesday, November 27Books
Thursday, November 28Artstravaganza
Wednesday, December 4Miscellaneous
Wednesday, December 11Knits