

# Chez nous

MCH EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER | FALL 2019

*Alyssa Barbarush,  
13 years old*

**SPECIAL EDITION:**  
**Awards of Excellence**  
**2019 Winners**

Hôpital de Montréal  
pour enfants  
Centre universitaire  
de santé McGill



Montreal Children's  
Hospital  
McGill University  
Health Centre

Photos:  
Ryan Blau, Ashley MacPhee

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation is very proud to present the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the Awards of Excellence. This wonderful peer recognition event allows us to highlight the work of the staff who help improve the lives of our young patients thanks to their team spirit, talent and commitment to the Children's.

Once again, there were a multitude of outstanding candidates from all sectors of the Hospital, highlighting the range and impact of the outstanding work our employees accomplish each day. Many of you took the time to applaud the work of your peers, exemplifying the high level of synergy at the Montreal Children's Hospital. This community spirit shows that no effort is spared when helping a child heal.

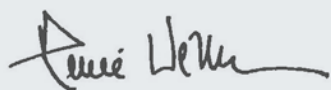
We'd like to thank all of this year's award recipients. You exemplify excellence in health care by constantly anticipating and meeting sick children's needs. We'd also like to thank the recipients of our volunteer awards, whose passion and

dedication is a source of inspiration, with a special mention for the late Bruce Charron, the recipient of the Broccolini Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence. A committed volunteer who spent over 20 years advocating on behalf of the Montreal Children's Hospital, Bruce died suddenly in a ski accident last February. As director of Andy Collins for Kids, he led a team of engaged volunteers who, thanks to their annual golf tournament, raised over \$4.5 million in support of various initiatives, including music therapy, Dr. Clown, the trauma program, the Tiny Tim Fund and the On the Tip of the Toes Foundation.

Finally, we'd like to thank our sponsors: the Air Canada Foundation, Bell, Broccolini, the Gustav Levinschi Foundation, National Bank, Pfizer and TFI International, whose confidence in the Children's allows us to remain on the cutting edge of pediatric care in Quebec, but especially to heal, love and bond with our young patients and their families.



Photo: Kant Photo



**Renée Vézina**

*President*

*Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation*



Photo: Nadia Zheng



**Katrin Nakashima**

*Chair, Board of Directors*

*Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation*



# Alyssa Barbarush

Recipient of the Air Canada Foundation Nicolas W. Matossian Junior Community Award of Excellence



"I like knowing that I'm helping someone instead of just sitting around knowing that I could be, but I'm not," says 13-year-old Alyssa Barbarush, recipient of this year's Air Canada Foundation Nicolas W. Matossian Junior Community Award of Excellence.

Alyssa is a big sister to Rachel, eight, who has what she describes as a "broken heart". Her little sister's broken heart is actually a congenital defect known as tricuspid atresia, which means only one of her two ventricles functions.

Rachel has undergone three open-heart surgeries, including her first at just 16 months old, as well as numerous heart procedures. She's still in a fragile state and will need further medical attention. A heart-lung transplant remains an eventual possibility.

While Alyssa saw firsthand the state-of-the-art care Rachel was given during her hospitalizations, she also experienced how the Montreal Children's Hospital helps kids be themselves. The Family Resource Centre's educational and entertainment resources provided Rachel with much-needed distractions.

"The Montreal Children's Hospital brings in clowns, and they bring in people to do arts and crafts with Rachel and it's really fun because they also let me do it, or my mom or my dad, and it makes her happy," says Alyssa. Her little sister is why Alyssa has raised more



**FONDATION  
AIR CANADA  
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than \$15,000 for the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation. "I want to help save Rachel's life. Rachel's my best friend and I love her so much!"

Alyssa is also motivated by other children and families just like hers. After discussing with her sister and her mother, Karolyn, about how to allocate the award money, Alyssa says, "It will help kids who are staying in the hospital."

Alyssa has just completed her first year of high school where she's on the cheerleading team, but that hasn't slowed her ability to continue fundraising. "I started an Instagram page and I think I'm also going to start a Facebook page to try to get the word out there again."

While Rachel is doing well, the family still takes everything one day at a time. When Rachel has a bad day or a meltdown that leaves her struggling to breathe, a hug from big sister Alyssa is often all she needs to calm down.

"We were just so proud," says Karolyn of the reaction that she and David, Alyssa and Rachel's dad, had upon learning of Alyssa's award. "It's very nice that she's recognized for being who she is."

Congratulations, Alyssa!

*Air Canada has been committed to the community since its inception more than 80 years ago. The Air Canada Foundation was created in 2012, and part of its mission is to help connect sick children to the medical care they need and help make their wishes come true. That is why we are proud to support the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation and its Awards of Excellence, which recognize the efforts of exceptional people like Alyssa Barbarush.*

*Alyssa is a young, big-hearted girl and devoted big sister who never hesitates to dedicate her time and energy to raising funds for the Children's young patients. We are very happy to present Alyssa with the Air Canada Foundation Nicolas W. Matossian Junior Community Award of Excellence.*

# Michèle Paquette

Recipient of the Bell *Coup de coeur* Award of Excellence - Mental Health



"When I was little, I contracted a severe infection. At the Children's, my parents learned I came very close to death. They always told me the Children's saved my life," says Michèle Paquette, retired Nurse Manager of Pediatric Psychiatry, whose career at the Montreal Children's Hospital spanned 27 years. "I guess the stars were aligned," she adds with a smile.

Michèle has always been interested in mental health. She worked for 10 years as a psychiatric nurse before accepting a job in pediatric psychiatry in the Children's Emergency Department, which provided her an opportunity to work with kids. "I wanted to work in prevention, help parents understand, and maybe even make a difference for kids with psychological issues."

The new role allowed Michèle to make her mark, working to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, managing family consultations, following up with community partners, reviewing treatment plans, ensuring the smooth running of her unit, and overseeing scenarios in the case of overcrowding. And she did it all while working in close collaboration with colleagues



throughout the hospital. "The work environment at the Children's is incredible!" Michèle says. "Everyone uses their expertise to find the best solution for the child and family."

In recognition of this passion for her work and devotion to the well-being of her patients, Michèle is receiving the Bell *Coup de coeur* Award of Excellence - Mental Health. "I'm extremely touched to be recognized in this way by my colleagues. The Awards of Excellence are synonymous with quality. I never dreamed I'd receive one someday," she says.

Feeling a profound sense of accomplishment, Michèle retired in June, although it would be more accurate to refer to her as "semi-retired" since she remains devoted to mental health. "Among other things, I plan to continue practicing in the private sector as a family and relationship psychotherapist. I also plan to teach in the pediatric psychiatry program for nurses."

Happy retirement, Michèle, and thank you for your extraordinary, decades-long commitment to mental health.

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*At Bell, we understand that nobody is immune to mental health issues. That is why we launched Bell Let's Talk, to raise awareness and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, as well as provide support for increased access to care and accelerate research. And it's why we are proud to present Michèle Paquette with the Bell Coup de coeur Award of Excellence - Mental Health, recognizing her more than 37 years of dedication to improving mental health.*

*We commend Michèle for the skill and compassion with which she has touched the lives of countless young patients and their families.*



# Bruce Charron

Recipient of the Broccolini Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence



Bruce Charron was a friend to all who knew him and he took pride in putting the “fun” into fundraising. He led the organizing committee of Andy Collins for Kids, raising over \$4.5 million for a variety of programs at the Montreal Children’s Hospital over the past 22 years.

All of this was in honour of his friend Andy Collins, who died unexpectedly in 1996. Known for his love of children, Andy inspired the organization that Bruce, and several other friends, worked so hard to build. Always a great time for everyone coming together to contribute to the organization, families and friends gather in the hundreds every July for the annual golf tournament and cycling event. Coming from as far away as Vermont, Ontario, Western Canada and Europe, they all know that the “Funday” becomes even more fun at night!

When Bruce was selected as the recipient of the Broccolini Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence in recognition of his outstanding commitment, his friends and family organized a surprise for the announcement.

## BROCCOLINI

Unfortunately, Bruce would never learn about this honour. He died in a skiing accident at Jay Peak, Vermont, on February 10 – one day before the celebration.

Leslie Bronstetter, who has been involved with the Andy Collins for Kids fund from the beginning, stepped in to replace Bruce as chairperson following his unexpected death. “Bruce certainly left a legacy of giving back and mentoring,” she says. “You learned from Bruce by watching him.”

Andy Collins for Kids is now one of the largest community-based fundraisers at the Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation.

“Bruce was a man for all ages,” says Leslie. “He was wonderful with children and had a way of drawing people into the action, both during the events, and planning them. While it has been challenging for the group to continue without him, they will continue his legacy. And the fun will continue because, as Bruce would say, ‘By now, you know the drill.’”

*Broccolini is a family-owned business that has been in operation since 1949, celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. Our success in construction, development and real estate has been the result of staying true to our founder Donato Broccolini’s original vision: foster enduring relationships. We are pleased to sponsor the Broccolini Award of Excellence for a kindred spirit.*

*Bruce Charron understood the importance of enduring relationships, having founded Andy Collins for Kids with several close friends 22 years ago. As the uncontested President, Bruce embodied the spirit of leadership through Andy Collins for Kids. We are proud to honour the memory of a true champion of sick children and their families with the Broccolini Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence.*

# Michele Zegray

Recipient of the Gustav Levinschi Foundation Nursing Award of Excellence



Michele Zegray’s office is filled with letters from grateful families, all of whom agree she is – as one parent writes – “one of a kind!”

A nurse clinician in the Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery departments, Michele accompanies families from the moment of diagnosis – whether it’s when a baby is just hours old to a child in elementary or high school – as they begin their journey toward a healthier future. Michele is a constant link throughout.

“It’s really difficult having a child born with a health problem. As a family, it’s probably one of the hardest things you can go through,” Michele says. “I help them on their journey to make it healthier and smoother.”

From assessing patients, taking vital signs and coordinating care with other specialists, Michele prepares families before and after surgery, and helps them on their return home following hospitalization.

Michele knows it’s the little things that are so appreciated like offering to take a photograph the first time a mom gets to hold

## *The Gustav Levinschi Foundation*

her infant, or providing her pager number to parents so she can be their lifeline and connection to the hospital.

“She was calm and compassionate. Exactly what a mother wants in a nurse for her 13-day-old baby who just underwent a life-or-death procedure,” is how one young mother describes Michele.

After receiving a science degree in Physiology at McGill University, Michele quickly fell for her current profession as soon as she started a Master’s program in Nursing.

“We work with really amazing people,” Michele says. She gives credit to her colleagues from cardiology and cardiac surgery, everyone in the neonatal and pediatric intensive care units, and the surgical team, all of whom work as a close-knit unit.

“It’s a pleasure to work here even if seeing a family suffer is the hardest part,” she says. “Our job is to accompany them in their journey, remembering to be respectful and to point out families’ strengths and their resilience.”

After 19 years, some of those babies and children have grown up and out of the department. A former patient, a 19-year old man who is at college in Toronto, called her recently just to chat.

“It’s nice to feel you’ve made a difference,” Michele says.

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*The Directors of the Gustav Levinschi Foundation understand that the importance of nursing cannot be conveyed in a few short paragraphs. Therefore, we appreciate the opportunity afforded by the Awards of Excellence to celebrate the exceptional work of an exceptional individual: Michele Zegray.*

*Admired and respected by her colleagues, Michele plays a crucial role in taking care of cardiac patients and their families, offering the help and support they need in a myriad of ways. We are honoured to recognize the dedication of such a remarkable health professional and proud to present Michele with the Gustav Levinschi Nursing Award of Excellence! Congratulations!*

# Lisa Grilli

Recipient of the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation Professional Staff Award of Excellence



Lisa Grilli was in university when she learned about pediatric physiotherapy as a specialty, and on her first rotation, she knew she'd found her place. "I really wanted to work with kids and families," she says.

In her role as Clinical Trauma Coordinator and head physiotherapist, Lisa has spent the past 10 years working in the Children's Trauma Department, involved in the evolution of concussion management in the Concussion Clinic.

"We recognized kids were not necessarily experiencing concussions just through sports and it wasn't just about the return to sports readiness, it was also about the impact on their schooling," Lisa recalls. "Some children had a lot of post-concussive symptoms. They experienced headaches and there was an impact on both school and home functioning."



Managing the symptoms and getting kids back to their activities became a constant question.

"We used to think that rest was the cornerstone of concussion management; now we're reducing that period of rest to slowly reintegrate activities within the child's symptom tolerance," she says.

Among her various research commitments, what has been most rewarding for Lisa in the past year is her participation in two supervisory committees, where she works with PhD students. She was involved in the process from start to finish, from recruiting patients to helping design certain elements of the studies.

"The outcomes of the research that emerged from the clinic actually changed our practice here. It really had an impact on our standard of care.

"We all work hard here so just to get the recognition, it's such an honour," she says of being named the recipient of the 2019 Professional Staff Award of Excellence.

"I truly do this because I love what I do. I'm here for the kids. We have a wonderful team here at the Children's in the Concussion Clinic."

*The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation is happy to stand with Lisa Grilli, Clinical Trauma Coordinator and Head Physiotherapist of the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury / Concussion Clinic at the Children's. Lisa is held in the highest regard by her colleagues for her dedication, compassion and professionalism. We are pleased to support the innovative projects put forward by Lisa and her team, thanks to the remarkable contribution of our loyal donors.*

*In that spirit, we present Lisa Grilli, an exceptional health professional, with the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation Professional Staff Award of Excellence.*

# Dr. David Mitchell

Recipient of the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence



"Awards make me feel uncomfortable," Dr. David Mitchell says with a laugh before admitting, "this is a very nice honour and recognition."

Dr. Mitchell learned early in his career that kids were his calling. "Before going into pediatrics I worked in adult medicine and sometimes found it hard to deal with illnesses that were brought on by lifestyle and, despite these illnesses, patients continued with that lifestyle. But kids don't usually bring these things on themselves and they're a great group to work with."

Dr. Mitchell credits improved technology for providing better ways to diagnose patients and determine how they respond to treatment. "Right now we're going through a very interesting and innovative period," he says.

New DNA-based technologies make it possible to see what is wrong with cells and to attack them at their vulnerable points. Improved immune-based strategies are improving outcomes in cancers once thought untreatable.



"We're learning a lot more about what's driving cancers. These are much more innovative and rational therapies," says Dr. Mitchell, who compares it to the early days of chemotherapy. "In five decades we have made great strides with standard chemotherapy, and 10 to 15 years from now we'll be using these innovative therapies much more wisely."

Dr. Mitchell is concerned with his young patients' future and the need to better bridge the transition gap into adulthood. That is why he has chosen to put the award money towards long-term follow-up care.

"If you have a child who was diagnosed at two years of age and they receive one to three years of complex treatment and then you follow them until they're 18 – that's quite a file."

Transition to adult care is important for children who have had cancer since they continue to require care and monitoring as adults because of existing and potential side effects from the treatment they received.

Dr. Mitchell says it takes a lot of time and effort to compile the patient's file so that a physician on the adult side can make sense of it. "If you don't do that well, patients will fall through the cracks after all the effort it took to get them to that point," he says.

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*At National Bank, we invest ourselves in the communities we serve through an array of fund- and awareness-raising activities. We also support numerous organizations including the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation and its Awards of Excellence.*

*This year, we honour Dr. David Mitchell for his dedication to his patients, families and staff. For his outstanding work, we present Dr. Mitchell with the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence.*



# Dr. Daniel Dufort

Recipient of the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence



Nodal which, through the regulation of the immune system and the inflammatory factors associated with it, appears to determine when contractions will start.

Based on several assumptions, their hypothesis was confirmed, but in their study of mice models, they also saw that in each case, the decrease in the Nodal gene led to a preterm birth.

He describes what they've subsequently discovered. "Women who have changes in the amino acid of the protein Nodal, which cause it to be less effective or less active, are at higher risk of giving birth prematurely if they had some sort of infection. From our mouse work, we now know that the Nodal gene is involved in regulating the immune system during pregnancy," says Dr. Dufort.

"Research is ongoing and potential therapies are being developed."

Perhaps by the time his granddaughter is considering motherhood, these therapies will be widely available.

Dr. Daniel Dufort has a lot to celebrate these days. "I'm very flattered actually, I wasn't expecting this," he says of the Research Award of Excellence during an interview just one day after his first grandchild was born.

His daughter's pregnancy had a significant impact on a man who has dedicated his career to researching preterm birth. "It was nerve-wracking actually," he admits with relief, after watching his daughter go through her pregnancy while knowing that any number of things could occur.

"I put myself in the shoes of other parents. Their daughters are going through a pregnancy so I can see why this is so important, to continue my work and basically try and prevent anything from happening to the pregnancy," he says. "It's important for me and all the other parents who are going through the same thing."

Dr. Dufort and his team made headlines last fall with a breakthrough into a possible cause of preterm births. They studied a gene called

*Dr. Daniel Dufort is an award-winning research scientist in the Human Reproduction and Development division of the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (RI-MUHC). Internationally respected, his team's recent discovery of a link between the Nodal gene and premature delivery may help develop therapies that allow more women to go full term in their pregnancies.*

*We proudly present the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence to Dr. Dufort and thank him for his successes to date, and for those to come. At Pfizer Canada, we strive to profoundly impact the health of Canadians through the discovery, development and delivery of medicines, which is why we are proud to support Dr. Dufort's Award of Excellence.*

# Amanda Fitzgerald

Recipient of the TFI International Administrative and Clinical Support Staff Award of Excellence



opportunity to do something like this again," says Amanda, who is eagerly looking forward to the cold debrief in September, which provides an opportunity for more than 50 evaluators to review the Code Orange experience and discuss the issues and best practices.

Amanda, who has been working at the Children's for 15 years, started as a part-time clerk on the medical wards while studying education. She initially thought of becoming a teacher until an internship as an elementary school teacher changed her thinking. Some of those pedagogical skills, however, are now being put to use creating resource material for patients and families.

In addition to her Code Orange role, Amanda also takes great pride in her work on the Concussion KiT. "It took many years and countless revisions to complete. We are very proud of it and it's been well received. It's widely sought after."

Of the award she says: "It's exciting. I'm very surprised, shocked, and humbled; I did not see this coming at all."

And there is something else to look forward to in 2019; her award comes with two tickets to the Ball for the Children's. "It'll be my 10-year wedding anniversary and it will be a nice outing to celebrate."

"I told all my colleagues 2019 is my year. I'm feeling good, things are going my way and now it has started off very nicely," Amanda Fitzgerald says after learning of her Administrative and Clinical Support Staff award. Yet many of her colleagues might suggest 2018 was her big year, actually.

Not only was she coordinator of the first Trauma Resuscitation in Kids (TRIK) course in Montreal and one of the editors-in-chief of the third edition of the Concussion KiT, Amanda was also project manager in the buildup to October's Code Orange simulation. All of this came in addition to her usual responsibilities as an Administrative Procedures Specialist in the Trauma department.

The Code Orange event was possibly the biggest event at the Children's since the move to the Glen site from its old home on Tupper Street. The simulation was widely hailed as a success with Amanda among those at the centre of it all.

"It was exciting! It was my first experience collaborating on such a large-scale project. I think it went great. I hope I will have the

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*Through its operating companies, TFI International provides the full complement of transportation and logistics services. It strives to engineer safe and effective solutions to minimize costs and risks and to add value and functionality for its partners. TFI cares about people: employees, customers, partners, and community members. We are inspired by the work of the Montreal Children's Hospital and the dedication of those who provide life-changing and life-saving health care.*

*TFI is a key partner in the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation Awards of Excellence and happy to recognize one of the Children's finest: Amanda Fitzgerald, an Administrative Procedures Specialist in the Trauma Program. TFI International proudly presents the Administrative and Clinical Support Staff award to Amanda, someone who is described as "pursuing excellence in all she does." Congratulations!*

# The Occupational Therapy Team

Recipient of the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation Teamwork Award of Excellence



Front row (l. to r): Mélanie Bazin, Sarah Milton, Nathalie Carr, Line Parent, Christine Tremblay, Marta Czyzykiewicz; Back row (l. to r): Anne Lachance, Megan Smith-Morin, Rena Birnbaum, Sophie Laniel, Christine Labelle, Miranda Giambra, Emily Tran.



teams with the goal of ensuring better continuity of care for children and their families.

Sophie is proud that her team serves as a reference for all hospital sectors since they are always looking for solutions. "The team is extremely creative and can adapt to any situation," says Dr. Élise Couture, pediatrician in the Neonatal Follow-Up Clinic. "They always find ingenious ways to solve problems when we're at a loss."

The highly-skilled occupational therapy team shares a common passion for their work, and their patients.

Being given the chance to improve someone's life is a privilege. The Occupational Therapy team has that privilege. Their mission? To maximize children's active engagement in their daily activities. In short, to do good every day.

"Our priority is to help them gain autonomy and get better," adds Sophie. "I couldn't ask for a better team to help our patients accomplish small miracles each day."

"Our work is so rewarding. Whether we're helping a teen gain the dexterity needed to cook, or helping to build a custom-made orthotic device for an extremely premature infant, we help our patients get the most out of their daily lives," explains Sophie Laniel, professional coordinator of the Occupational Therapy department.

*The specialists in Occupational Therapy work tirelessly, sharing their clinical insights, performing evaluations, coordinating care, teaching, and developing activities and exercise programs to help patients meet their therapeutic goals. Through their work, they always seek to improve the quality of life of sick children and their families. Thanks to their collective efforts, they achieve extraordinary things and optimize clinical care and child development while maintaining high standards of practice.*

What comprises a typical day for an occupational therapist? There is no such thing! Each day, the department's team members assist patients who have developmental issues, have experienced a trauma, or suffer from a congenital disorder. Occupational therapists can be found throughout the hospital, from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to Psychiatry, Plastic Surgery, and Rheumatology.

*The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation is proud to sponsor this group of dedicated professionals who, on top of healing and loving their young patients, builds lasting relationships that are based on trust. Congratulations to the Occupational Therapy team! Your reputation for excellence helps make the Children's an internationally recognized healthcare centre.*

On top of their commitment to child development, feeding and swallowing issues, and splinting and trauma care, several members of the department work in collaboration with multidisciplinary

*Thank You!*

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