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MCH EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER - FALL 2020



SPECIAL EDITION: Awards of Excellence 2020 Winners

Hôpital de Montréal
pour enfants
Centre universitaire
de santé McGill



Montreal Children's
Hospital
McGill University
Health Centre

PRIX D'EXCELLENCE
AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

2020

Fondation de l'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants
Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation

Twenty-twenty has been shaped by the pandemic and its challenges, but also by an outpouring of compassion and solidarity, which is the hallmark of all great societies. In this spirit, the Children's has distinguished itself by embracing innovation, adaptability, and a willingness to meet each challenge in order to provide world-class care to its young patients and their families, while prioritizing everyone's safety.

We are therefore doubly proud and grateful to present The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation's 21st Awards of Excellence to five staff members, one team, and a volunteer, who, through their actions and dedication, contribute to the well-being of our patients and their parents when they need comfort and support more than ever.

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation's current \$200-million campaign will help these extraordinary employees and their colleagues continue to pave the way in establishing new standards of excellence in patient-centred pediatric care.

Once again, we are inspired by the admiration and recognition you have shown for your peers. In these uncertain times, cooperation and flexibility are essential to the sustainability of the hospital's operations. Our award recipients have excelled by generously collaborating with various hospital services, and always going above and beyond their job descriptions. At the heart of their success is teamwork, a Children's core value that impacts patients and families every day.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the hospital staff, volunteers, and to our valued sponsors who make these awards possible: the DGDM Family Foundation, the Gustav Levinschi Foundation, National Bank, Pfizer Canada and TD Bank Group. Your generous contribution helps the Children's find unexpected ways to heal.

Congratulations to all!



Photo: Kant Photo

Renée Vézina

President

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation



Photo: Nadia Zheng

Katrin Nakashima

Chairperson, Board of Directors

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation

Jonathan Amiel

Recipient of the DGDM Family Foundation Community and Volunteer Award of Excellence



To find the new face of philanthropy, one need look no further than Jonathan Amiel, who goes beyond supporting the Children's financially and uses the skills that make him a successful entrepreneur to strengthen The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation as an organization.

After joining the Foundation's Board of Directors in 2011, Jonathan helped to prepare the Foundation's future by grooming the philanthropic leaders of tomorrow through the creation of the Young Leader's Circle, which encourages young professionals to make a positive impact on pediatric care.

In 2015, Jonathan accepted a first mandate of Chairman of the Board which was renewed. During his two terms, from 2015 to 2019, the Foundation has had its best years of fundraising. Jonathan led the search for a new Foundation president with the mandate to launch the most ambitious fundraising campaign in Quebec history, create a seven-year strategic plan and develop new branding that eventually won prestigious awards. Jonathan also served as the representative for the MUHC foundations at the MUHC Board of Directors meetings and sat on the selection committee to review new candidates for the MUHC Board.

Jonathan and the Amiel family are also exemplary donors. As grateful parents, they were among the first to support the *Best Care for Children* campaign with a \$1-million gift to help build the new hospital. Speaking about the former hospital

on Tupper St., Jonathan says, “The quality of the people taking care of us was not reflected in the quality of the facility.”

Jonathan stepped down as Board Chair in 2019, but his commitment to support the Children’s continues, earning him the DGDM Family Foundation Community and Volunteer Award of Excellence. As a member of the Honorary Council and of the Foundation’s Campaign Cabinet for its new \$200 million campaign, *Unexpected Ways to Heal*, Jonathan and his family have donated an additional \$2 million to help transform the lives of the hospital’s young patients.

“Philanthropy is the same principle as investing in business,” he says. “If you can make a difference and improve patient outcomes in one area, it creates an opportunity to innovate in new ones.” ●



A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

For the DGDM Family Foundation the health of our community’s children is a priority. Thanks to the Children’s, countless patients are given their best chance at a healthy life and to reach their full potential. We salute former Montreal Children’s Hospital Foundation Chairman of the Board Jonathan Amiel for his commitment as a philanthropist and dedicated volunteer. For the past decade, Mr. Amiel has assumed a strong leadership role, guiding the Foundation to new levels of fundraising success and working tirelessly as an advocate for the hospital and its young patients. The Children’s has always been there for our family when we needed it. We are proud to support it in turn by awarding Jonathan Amiel the DGDM Family Foundation Community and Volunteer Award of Excellence.

Sharon Taylor-Ducharme

Recipient of the Gustav Levinschi Nursing Award of Excellence



Sharon Taylor-Ducharme started as a bedside nurse caring for babies in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). She is now Nurse Manager of the NICU, and when she ultimately finishes her career, it will be in a larger, more modern and better organized NICU, the evolution of which is in large part due to her.

In 2009 Sharon, who holds a Master of Human System Intervention from Concordia University, was asked to join the transition group working on the massive project to move the Children's from Tupper St. to the Glen site. She helped merge the Children's and Royal Victoria Hospital's neonatal intensive care units, resulting in the pediatric hospital's largest inpatient unit with a total of 52 beds.

"The two cultures were very different, and we had to learn to collaborate with very few tools," she remembers.

That's why she stressed the importance of processes and developed tools to implement them. It meant the NICU's 190 staff members could stop spending their time 'putting out fires'. "I'm lucky to have incredible colleagues who learn fast and are open to change," she modestly states to explain the merger's success. Her colleagues will tell you that the NICU's excellent reputation is due in large part to her organizational skills, talent as a mentor, and open-door policy.

COVID-19 forced Sharon to rework certain processes. That was the easy part! The hardest? "Losing that visual connection to parents because of masks and protective screens," says Sharon.

Sharon likes being close to the families. Six years ago she created what she describes as a “silly tool”, giving parents a detailed timeline of what to expect for their newborn’s weekly progress, to help them get through it. “The longer a baby stays at the NICU, the easier it is for parents to get discouraged, because there are often setbacks before we see progress.” Her document has since become an important reference tool.

Sharon Taylor-Ducharme looks back on her career fondly. She dedicates her Nursing Award of Excellence to her team. “My colleagues, the parents and our little patients are what make me come to work each day,” she says. “The ‘I’ in NICU stands for ‘intensive,’ and with good reason. Every day, I see instances of courage and resilience. They are a lesson in humility.” ●

The Gustav Levinschi Foundation

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

The Gustav Levinschi Foundation is dedicated to improving the physical and mental wellness of children and adolescents. We are therefore proud to support the work of Sharon Taylor-Ducharme, Nurse Manager of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), the Children’s largest inpatient unit. Sharon greatly contributed to the hospital’s move to the Glen site and to the restructuring of the new NICU. With a Master’s degree in Human System Intervention, Sharon goes the extra mile to tackle process issues and help colleagues and families have a better hospital experience. Compassionate, accommodating, action-oriented and a mentor to her fellow nurses, Sharon Taylor-Ducharme truly embodies the spirit of nursing at the Children’s and is a deserving recipient of the Gustav Levinschi Nursing Award of Excellence.

Frédéric De Civita

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



If you email Frédéric De Civita to propose a new way to schedule appointments, he'll respond with an Outlook invitation. He is efficient and organized! But it's his ability to bring people together and make things happen that sets him apart.

Frédéric plays a critical role that affects the lives of many families at the Children's.

He holds a Master of Public Administration from *l'École nationale d'administration publique*, with a focus on organizational development, and was behind every recent major reform at the Children's. As Assistant to the General Director, a position he held until last year, he established the *Bureau de la qualité et de l'amélioration continue*, launched a continuous improvement training program, and helped make data available to facilitate decision-making.

His first mandate? Find a way to minimize long wait times when booking medical appointments. Frédéric, an expert in process performance analysis, and his team successfully identified and addressed shortcomings to help optimize the process. The result? Telephone wait times for parents are down 70 per cent. Working with his colleagues, Frédéric also helped to virtually eliminate operating room cancellations due to a lack of beds, which decreased from 70 to 4 cancellations annually.

He doesn't however take all the credit for these successes. "The administrators and clinicians are the real experts, and they're constantly demonstrating their creativity and flexibility. I bring everyone together, maximizing their strengths," he explains. "But I couldn't do it without them."

Now Associate Director of Multidisciplinary Services and Support Programs, Frédéric manages all staff in Respiratory Medicine, Outpatient Clinics, Medical Imaging, Psychology, Audiology, as well as allied health professionals.

His next challenge is to rethink the coordination of care to improve the patient experience for families whose children are treated at the Children's for complex conditions requiring multiple professionals. "COVID-19 has accelerated things," he says. "Administrators are working hard and finding creative solutions to optimize the time families spend at the hospital."

When he found out he would receive the Professional Staff Award of Excellence, Frédéric was actually surprised. "I was wondering, 'Why me?' It should be a team award." For the avid soccer player the following analogy applies perfectly: "You could be the best player on your team, but if you don't fully contribute and have that team spirit, you won't win. So I'd like to recognize my colleagues and tell them, 'We won this Award of Excellence together.'" ●

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A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation is happy to celebrate Frédéric De Civita, Associate Director of Multidisciplinary Services and Support Programs at the Children's. Armed with an excellent reputation among his colleagues for his team spirit and professionalism, Frédéric launched several major organizational reforms at the Children's with the incredible support of his team and our committed donors. Demonstrating an impressive sense of creativity and adaptability, he plays an essential role in the lives of the Children's young patients and their families. For these reasons, and for his dedication in responding to the hospital's constantly evolving urgent needs during the pandemic, we present Frédéric De Civita with the Professional Staff Award of Excellence.

Margaret Kula

Recipient of The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation Administrative and Clinical Support Staff Award of Excellence



Margaret Kula started working at the Children's the day after her 18th birthday, following in her mom's footsteps. While getting her degree in teaching and then working in a school for four years, she always kept a foot in the door: "During ped days, weekends and holidays, or the summer break, I worked at the hospital part time," she says. She decided to accept a full-time position at the Children's when she became pregnant. "It felt like I was going back home. Really, the Children's is my second home!" And it has been her second home for the past 22 years.

For the last seven years, Margaret has been an administrative officer in the Day Hospital, organizing the clinic, scheduling appointments, and deciding how the day is planned out. "I'm a conductor, facilitating the doctors and nurses' workload so that their job goes smoother. My work sets the tempo and directly impacts the flow of the clinic."

Having worked in various departments at the Children's, Margaret has a deep understanding of how a parent navigates the system. Her actions are guided by efficiency and empathy. Her colleagues appreciate her curiosity, willingness to provide a helping hand, and her natural ability to embrace change and stay positive no matter the situation. And she is not one to stick to a job description: "I go the extra mile no matter the challenge that comes my way."

Margaret will blow bubbles or give a child a book or an iPad — anything to keep their mind off the needle in the nurse's hand. "Now that I'm a mother myself, I'm even more inclined

to put myself in the parents' shoes and think about what I wish somebody would do for me."

Knowing she can play a positive role in the life of families and her colleagues makes her eager to go to work every day. COVID-19 has motivated her even further. "We already worked as a team. And, because of the possibility of the virus affecting our patients, we rely on each other even more," she says. "Good things are never done by one person; they are done by a team of people. My team is my second family."

Anyone who knows Margaret Kula will tell you that winning the Administrative and Clinical Support Award of Excellence makes her bashful. She admits shyly, "Of course, I'm honoured. It's just that... Well, this is what I do. It's my job. I do what I need to do." ●

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A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

The hospital's staff members, dedicated to offering health care that transforms and saves lives and to finding unexpected ways to heal, serve as an inspiration to The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation. We are thrilled to honour the admirable work of Margaret Kula, Administrative Officer at the Children's Day Hospital for the past seven years. Playing the role of conductor in the clinic's organization and functioning, she helps things go smoothly for her colleagues and moves mountains for her young patients. Empathetic, positive, versatile and motivated, she is also described as someone who is always ready to take on the challenges that arise on a daily basis. We are happy to present the Administrative and Clinical Support Staff Award of Excellence to Margaret, who, even through a period of crisis, worked relentlessly to ensure the wellbeing of the families at the Children's. Congratulations, Margaret!

Dr. Hema Patel

Recipient of the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence



Young patients with very complex conditions rely on the Children's Complex Care team that has been led by Dr. Hema Patel, a woman known for her expertise and compassion, since 2005. Director of the Pediatric Medical Day Hospital, attending physician at the pre-operative clinic and the newborn nursery, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at McGill, and director of a fellowship program, she still finds time to teach and pursue research. She laughs, "I have fingers in every pie!"

Hema Patel's path to medicine started at an early age. "I would go twice a week for allergy treatments," she remembers. "My doctor always took extra time to talk with me. I thought to myself this was the coolest job ever." She came to the Children's at the request of her husband who wanted to work closer to home. "He said, "Let's try it for 5 years." Well, 25 years later, I'm still here."

Aside from great colleagues and the Children's culture of innovation, the contact with patients and their families keeps her going. "We look after very medically complex and fragile children, trying to optimize their daily lives and helping them find daily joy. These parents teach me what true dedication looks like. They push us to innovate to find better ways to do things."

Always striving to innovate, she created a free, bilingual website that provides step-by-step instructions with illustrations, for parents to care for their child with medical complexities at home, including how to prepare their home. She also put together a task force and spearheaded

province-wide advocacy for homecare, bringing together clinical experts, all four university teaching hospitals, and community partners to transform the system so that medically dependent kids could stay home with caregiver support. It worked.



COVID-19 has led her to innovate once again. The irony of the virus's impact is not lost on Dr. Patel: "Our parents were used to this pandemic-type situation before: staying home, inviting very few guests over, not knowing what tomorrow will bring... Really, it's us catching up to them!"

Dr. Patel was overwhelmed upon learning her peers had nominated her for the Medical Award of Excellence. "When I look at people who have won it in the past, I'm honoured to be put in that same group. I want the Foundation to know how grateful I am: they completely charged my batteries for another 25 years!" ●

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At the National Bank, it is by putting people first that we consistently contribute to collective prosperity and the preservation of our shared values. We seek to maximize the potential of individuals and the community, following the example of Dr. Hema Patel, Director of Complex Care at the Children's. Dr. Patel has dedicated her career to children with serious illnesses and doesn't hesitate to disrupt the status quo when it serves their best interest. She rallied Quebec's four pediatric hospitals around an innovative project for pediatric care at home, giving patients and their families greater autonomy and allowing children to evolve in a more natural environment to help them reach their full potential. We would like to highlight Dr. Patel's commitment to helping find solutions to issues that affect our communities, and it is with great pride that we present her with the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence.

Dr. Christine McCusker

Recipient of the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence



Young Christine fell for the immune system after watching the movie *Fantastic Voyage* in which a submarine with a group of physicians on board is shrunk to microscopic size and injected into a man's bloodstream to save his life. Decades later, Dr. Christine McCusker is the clinician scientist whose work was recognized by *Québec Science* magazine as one of the top 10 scientific discoveries of the year in 2016.

"Our research showed that by using a molecule called STAT6-IP, we were able to get rid of allergies we had induced in animals," explains Dr. McCusker. "We also showed that STAT6 is a key protein that leads the immune system to follow the allergic path. If you can block it for a short period of time, the system will choose the non-inflammatory road."

Dr. McCusker is passionate about her work, which surely explains her success. Over the past few years, she and her team have cured children of allergies to tree nuts, milk and eggs thanks to a desensitization program she helped put in place. She has led her team to positive clinical research outcomes, advancing treatments and helping empower children with allergies. "I love my job! I also get to play with kids and help reduce parents' anxiety," she says.

Her passion also fuels her advocacy. It's what brought her to lead a research program in immunology specifically related to biological therapies, targeted treatments affecting the immune system. "One of the first things you learn in pediatrics is that children aren't little adults," she explains. "So we can't rely on research being done only on the adult side; for example, we need to make sure the drugs won't have off-target effects on kids as they grow."

Together with other researchers, Dr. McCusker helped establish a transdisciplinary centre for biotherapeutics (CTTB) to gather all the data on children treated with biotherapies and develop a comprehensive understanding of the effects of the drugs. Which are good or bad? Can we predict the immune response of this particular child with that particular drug?

COVID-19 hit the Immunology division hard. As staff were inundated with calls from parents worried that their child's medication for inflammation would make them more vulnerable to the virus, Dr. McCusker learned she'd received the Research Award of Excellence. "The pandemic has heightened the importance of the CTTB. Viruses like SARS and COVID-19 will occur again so we need to plan now for 2025-2030, to be prepared to provide the best response." •



A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

As a company, Pfizer Canada is committed to working together for a healthier world, and redoubles its efforts through these trying times. We strive to deliver breakthroughs in research that change patients' lives, and in that spirit, share the same goals as Dr. Christine McCusker, a clinician researcher whose impactful work was selected as one of the Top 10 discoveries of 2016 by Québec Science magazine. Dr. McCusker's research on allergies has moved the needle, giving hope to all children and their families for a future free of worry. Her study of immunodeficiency enhances our understanding of inflammation in the immune system, with a persevering focus on improving care for children who suffer from these challenging chronic disorders. For her leadership in her field and her unrelenting commitment to advocate for the pediatric component of research, we proudly present Dr. Christine McCusker with the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence.

Pediatric Ambulatory Services Clinics

Recipients of the TD Bank Group Teamwork Award of Excellence



Going to the hospital for your child is a stressful experience, full of uncertainty. Will the test results be okay? What will the diagnosis be? Will my child have to undergo medical exams? Will they respond well to the treatment? But before any of those questions, families and patients coming to the hospital for the first time may ask themselves: am I going to the right place?

Fortunately, the Pediatric Ambulatory Services Clinics administrative staff makes that first visit as seamless as possible. They're a team of 10 full-time employees and three replacement staff members to cover absences. They play a subtle yet critical role for the more than 25 specialized clinics at the Children's.



This team is on the front lines to ensure families have the best possible experience and the clinics function optimally. "They set the mood at the clinic," says Louise Martin, their now-retired supervisor, who nominated her former colleagues for the Teamwork Award of Excellence. "Although



Administrative Staff

they're front-line workers, they're often overlooked. They fully deserve this recognition."

Ambulatory Services receive more than 75,000 visitors per year, with some clinics seeing up to 60 patients a day. Everyone who comes to the clinics receives a warm welcome. Whether there are 15 families in line or only two, the administrative assistant gives each parent the attention they need, taking time to outline procedures, direct them to where they need to go next, and schedule follow-up appointments.

COVID-19 has significantly increased the team's workload. They must now contact patients by telephone 24 hours before an appointment, as well as go over questions when the family arrives at the clinic, a challenge they have met with gusto. "They all showed their commitment by showing up each day, just as they did before the pandemic," says their new supervisor, Rosanna Barrafato.



In addition to being flexible, open-minded, skilled at problem solving, trustworthy, supportive and persevering, the team is also devoted. These administrative assistants have been known to bring crayons or chocolates from home to brighten a patient or family's day.

"They work in a challenging, often noisy and constantly changing environment, and must collaborate with dozens of doctors and nurses each day, all while ensuring parents have all the help and support they need for their child's well-being. They really deserve a round of applause," says Rosanna. ●

Photos: (top row) Maria Di Lemme, (2nd row, l. to r.) Barbara Mayo, Celia Giurleo, (3rd row, l. to r.) Claudia Plescia, Donna Lynn Murray, Giovanna Contarini, Lorraine Mancuso, (bottom row, l. to r.) Assuncao Almeida, Martha Matys, Tanya Olah, Victoria Coles-Gamache. Not pictured: Kristine Hamilton, Monique Maille.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At TD Bank Group, we are committed now more than ever to making a positive impact on our community. The key to making this happen is collaboration. At the Children's, lives are saved every day because of the efforts of many people working together and putting the needs of their patients first. The Pediatric Ambulatory Services Clinics administrative staff are a shining example of this spirit of collaboration. Each day these 13 administrative assistants face new challenges, as stressed parents come to the clinics fearing the worst, unsure of where to go, or feeling overwhelmed. Thanks to their keen communication and management skills, they welcome families with a friendly face and advice. They possess a deep knowledge of how the hospital operates and are adept at working with the clinics' many doctors, nurses, health professionals and residents. For their open-mindedness, problem-solving abilities, dependability and dedication, TD Bank Group is proud to present the Teamwork Award of Excellence to the Ambulatory Services administrative staff.