

Chez nous

MCH STAFF NEWSLETTER | SPECIAL EDITION 2025



Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse — Medical Multimedia, MUHC, Joana Bezeau, and Kate Fellerath — The Montreal Photographer

Honouring the winners of the Awards of Excellence 2025

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Inspiring journeys driven by passion



Photo: Ryan Blau, PBL Photography

Norman E. Hébert and Renée Vézina

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Renée Vézina".

Renée Vézina

President

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation

The 2025 edition of the Awards of Excellence stands out for the richness and diversity of the laureates' journeys. Never have we welcomed so many laureates from such a wide range of backgrounds. Each brings a unique and meaningful perspective. Despite their differences, they all share a profound dedication that has led them, each in their own way, to reach the heights of excellence in their chosen profession.

From a clinician-researcher redefining care for children with rare neurological conditions to a group of young people whose engagement is nothing short of remarkable and a former head chef who combines efficiency and empathy like ingredients in a benevolent recipe, they all share a generous passion and determination that transform the present and shape the future.

Each and every one of them contributes in their own way and makes a real impact, whether at the Hospital, in the community or on a national or global scale. Their improvements and innovations reinforce The Children's standing as a leader in pediatric innovation.

We invite you to learn about their inspiring journeys and congratulate them. Their success is shared by the wider Children's family, united by a desire to continue upholding excellence in pediatric and maternal-fetal clinical care, research and teaching.

Thanks to our incredible sponsors — American Iron & Metal, Bombardier, the National Bank, Pfizer, Rio Tinto, Sun Life and TD — whose generosity allows The Children's to continue to find *Unexpected ways to heal* and change lives.

Long live the passion that guides our laureates!
Long live little brats!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Norman Hébert".

Norman E. Hébert, C.M.

Chairman, Board of Directors

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation



Dr. Mylène Dandavino

Recipient of the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence



Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse — Medical Multimedia, MUHC

Dr. Mylène Dandavino's journey is a testament to her perseverance. As a francophone, she chose McGill University despite the language barrier. After completing her bachelor's degree, she decided to do a master's in epidemiology before finally starting medical school. She was determined to become a pediatrician, a dream realized in 2004 when she started her residency at The Children's, the hospital where she'd officially begin to practice seven years later.

A passion for medical education and a true leader

Her interest in medical education dates back to her time as a student. McGill University created a tailor-made internship for her, allowing her to complete a master's degree in health professions education in Maastricht, in the Netherlands. Following her last maternity leave in 2013, she became head of Medical Inpatient Services at The Children's and her career as mentor and leader took off!

Associate professor of pediatrics at McGill University, Dr. Dandavino supervises learners of all levels as they discover not only pediatrics,



but also the field of medical education. She includes her interns in innovative projects seeking to improve quality of care and she endeavours to help her mentees develop their leadership skills.

"Teaching reminds me why I chose to become a doctor. When I see my students full of enthusiasm, it keeps me motivated, young and full of wonder."

Providing better care

Convinced that each child deserves excellent care, provided by the right team at the right time and place, Dr. Dandavino is devoted to her work. With the support of a multidisciplinary team made up of about a hundred healthcare staff, she ensures efficiency and proper functioning of the inpatient units. She strives to contribute directly to the well-being and safety of her young patients by fostering collegiality in the teams that care for them.

In addition to her responsibilities on the executive committee of the Association des pédiatres du Québec, Dr. Dandavino is involved in multiple projects, including Camp Carowanis, which helps diabetic children live better with their disease, and Operation Santa Claus, which gives gifts to underprivileged children in Quebec.

Despite her stimulating and fulfilling career, Dr. Dandavino always finds time for her three boys, aged 12, 15 and 17.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At the National Bank, people are at the heart of everything we do — and the same is true for Dr. Mylène Dandavino. Driven by an unwavering passion for medical education, she is constantly seeking to learn, grow and innovate. Clinician, associate professor, mentor and program lead, Dr. Dandavino plays a key role in training future generations of pediatricians and doctors. Under her leadership, several local medical innovations aimed at improving care have been developed. It's a tremendous honour to present her with the National Bank Medical Award of Excellence. Our warmest congratulations!

Julie Brouillard

Recipient of the Rio Tinto Nursing Award of Excellence



Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse — Medical Multimedia, MUHC

Nothing in her younger years pointed to Julie Brouillard having a career in nursing, a career celebrated today with an Award of Excellence. “The career chose me,” says the award recipient, who has been an advanced practice nurse at The Children’s since 1998.

Her career choice was influenced by a friend, who was enrolled in a nursing program and hated it. The more Julie listened to her, the more interested she became. She eventually switched programs, a decision she has never regretted.

In 2014, Julie began working in neurosurgery and neuro-oncology. On these dream teams, she specializes in and has been entrusted with the most complex cases. She understands how important it is to listen to parents with empathy and without judgment while valuing their intuition.

Rio Tinto

“Upon receiving such a difficult diagnosis, the lives and needs of patients and their families are completely transformed,” says Julie.

It’s her job to guide them through their care journey and help them establish a new routine. For patients, who sometimes come from places as far away as Nunavik, it’s a long medical journey.

In addition to her clinical work, Julie develops protocols and trains other nurses. Her master’s degree in bioethics also helps her assist families in making better decisions.

“The bond of trust we build with families is extraordinary. We can’t take away their suffering, but we can support them and provide them with tools.”

Working closely with both teams, Julie has improved care and communication by establishing interdisciplinary meetings and providing more detailed patient records for those transitioning to adult care, a contribution she is especially proud of.

Julie knows her work is appreciated, but she was very moved that her colleagues took the time to nominate her for an Award of Excellence. The recognition has deeply touched her heart.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At Rio Tinto, we put people first in everything we do. We cultivate a spirit of collaboration and attentive listening to foster an inclusive environment. With these values, Julie Brouillard, advanced practice nurse, has truly found where she belongs at the Montreal Children’s Hospital. Her commitment has helped improve the quality of care and communication within the neurosurgery and neuro-oncology teams. Her expertise and compassion make her a pillar of support for patients and their families. It’s a privilege for us to present Julie Brouillard with the Rio Tinto Nursing Award of Excellence. With our deepest admiration, congratulations!



Marie-Eve Besner

Recipient of the TD Professional Staff Award of Excellence



Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse — Medical Multimedia, MUHC

Guided by her passion for pediatrics, Marie-Eve joined The Children's in 2002 and became the Professional Coordinator of the Clinical Nutrition Service in 2013. She supervises a team of 42 healthcare professionals and works in collaboration with food services, the pharmacy and procurement. She is also responsible for The Children's Home Enteral Nutrition Program.

At The Children's, most hospitalized patients followed by the Clinical Nutrition Service require specialized formulas via tube or intravenous (IV). It is essential that each patient receives the correct formula. For that reason, Marie-Eve has implemented a rigorous protocol to trace and monitor food products.

In 2021, at the height of the pandemic, Marie-Eve had to quickly find alternatives for certain specialized products that were out of stock. At the request of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, she co-piloted a project bringing together a few hospitals in Quebec to create a treatment algorithm identifying the best replacement formulas. This work resulted in an official memo from the ministry.



Promoting the profession

Marie-Eve is proud to have helped strengthen the recognition of nutritionists as essential partners for doctors and pharmacists. Thanks to her initiatives, the team has grown from one to three full-time nutritionists working in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and in Genetics. She also helped facilitate the hiring of additional dietary technicians to serve the hospitalized patient population.

"Our unique expertise fits perfectly within a multidisciplinary team. We can detect malnutrition and quickly correct it to optimize treatment and healing for our patients."

Commended for her innovative ideas, Marie-Eve implemented electronic prescriptions in the NICU, facilitating communication between nutritionists and dietary technicians. She also brought in collective prescriptions, allowing nutritionists to prescribe tube feeding or IV formulas without a doctor's countersignature, a valuable boost in efficiency.

Known for her commitment, positive impact on her team and its sense of unity, as well as her kindness toward her colleagues, Marie-Eve was deeply moved to receive an Award of Excellence. Congratulations to an inspiring coordinator!

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At TD Bank Group, we're constantly seeking to make positive change, which guides everything we do. Marie-Eve Besner, Professional Coordinator in the Clinical Nutrition Service, embodies that same spirit through her unwavering commitment in the face of adversity. On top of advocating for children's nutritional needs, Marie-Eve plays a key role in fostering her team's cohesion, goodwill and smooth functioning. Thanks to her leadership, the role of nutritionists is better understood and new practices, such as electronic and collective prescriptions, have been implemented. We're so proud to highlight Marie-Eve Besner's exceptional contribution and present her with the TD Professional Staff Award of Excellence.

Dr. Maryam Oskoui

Recipient of the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence



Photo: Kate Fellerath - The Montreal Photographer

Dr. Maryam Oskoui, clinician-scientist at The Children's, is redefining care for children with rare neurological disorders. Her mission extends beyond the bedside — to the lab, policy table and even video game design — driving innovations to reshape care in Quebec and around the world.

The pediatric neurologist is at the forefront of genetic therapy for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), helping slow or halt the progression of the disease. Her research into cerebral palsy identified key genetic differences, reshaping diagnosis and paving the way for targeted therapies.

For Dr. Oskoui, innovation begins with listening. In the clinic, she works closely with families to navigate complex diagnoses; in the lab, their stories and partnership guide her research. One such innovation is *Tales from the Magic Keep™*, a therapeutic video game her team co-developed to make physical therapy fun for kids with SMA. The game, played at home, is accessible and adaptable to



all abilities. It is powered by a motion sensor tracking movement and measures progress towards personal goals. She is leading a national clinical trial to evaluate its effectiveness.

"I get joy partnering with youth and families asking questions, learning what matters to them and using research to improve care. That full-circle connection — being of service in the clinic, in research, beyond and back again — is where I thrive."

A tireless advocate for early intervention, Dr. Oskoui was instrumental in integrating SMA into the Québec Neonatal Blood Screening Program. She now leads provincial efforts to monitor outcomes and optimize care. Globally, she serves on international guideline committees, co-chairs the World Muscle Society and is a methodologist for the American Academy of Neurology, shaping care standards worldwide.

Whether decoding genes, developing digital therapies or forming guidelines, Dr. Oskoui exemplifies the power of combining science with compassionate, patient-centered care.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

Pfizer Canada is the Canadian subsidiary of Pfizer Inc., one of the world's leading biopharmaceutical companies. We highlight the outstanding contribution of Dr. Maryam Oskoui, clinical researcher, who exemplifies a perfect balance between scientific rigour and compassion. Dr. Oskoui's leadership is transforming care in Quebec and beyond. She was the first to propose a revolutionary gene therapy for spinal muscular atrophy, while also playing a key role in adding this disease to the Neonatal Blood Screening Program. It's a true privilege for us to present Dr. Maryam Oskoui with the Pfizer Research Award of Excellence. Our most sincere congratulations, Dr. Oskoui!



Anastasia Thiveos

Recipient of the Administrative, Clinical and Technical Support Staff Award of Excellence



Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse — Medical Multimedia, MUHC

Anastasia Thiveos is a Class 2 administrative officer in The Children's Dentistry and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Division, where, since 2016, she has coordinated the waitlist for procedures requiring general anesthesia. Acting as a bridge between families and the clinic's team — made up of approximately 20 dentists, specialized dentists and eight residents — she ensures that each day in the operating room runs smoothly, efficiently and with humanity. A piece of cake for this former head chef!

The ingredients of her success

Organization: always in solution mode, Anastasia developed a detailed form outlining degrees of priority and urgency of care. With a clear picture of dentists and surgeons' availability, she can quickly fill appointment slots left open due to cancellations or a patient change in the operating room. Her efficient management of the operating room is what earned her a nomination for this Award of Excellence.

Knowledge: Anastasia has a thorough understanding of not only the Dentistry Division's operations, but also of the operating rooms, preoperative services, bed management and the administrative systems that support them all.

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Curiosity: Anastasia asks insightful questions, consults dentists and conducts research to better understand patient health. Her interest in technological advancements enhances the quality of her work and facilitates communication with the dentists and oral and maxillofacial surgeons.

Empathy and attentiveness: having experienced dental anxiety as a child, she understands the fears of her young patients. She takes the time to fully explain procedures and provides support at each step. To her, every smile on a child's face is a victory.

"I know exactly how it feels to have a toothache and fear going to the dentist. I do everything I can to reassure kids, build their confidence and provide support."

Anastasia puts her heart into work which is highly complex and requires a great degree of responsibility. It came as no surprise that in recognition of her skills and autonomy, several dentists within the division nominated her for this Award of Excellence. Congratulations, Anastasia, on your inspiring journey!

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

Recognized for her professionalism and organizational skills, Anastasia Thiveos manages the waitlist for treatments and surgeries requiring general anesthesia at The Children's Dentistry and Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Division. Her deep knowledge of hospital care and her solutions-oriented attitude make her the cornerstone of the division's operations, and her impact on patients and The Children's itself is beyond measure. Anastasia is an inspiring leader, whose approach is grounded in respect and efficiency. The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation is proud to present her with the Administrative, Clinical and Technical Support Staff Award of Excellence. Congratulations, Anastasia, for this richly deserved award.

The Pediatric Oncology Pharmacists Team

American Iron & Metal Teamwork Award of Excellence



From l. to r.: Annie Guillemette, Jessika Truong, Émilie Veilleux, Cathy Quirion and Hélène Langlois.

Photo: Pamela Lajeunesse – Medical Multimedia, MUHC

The five pediatric oncology pharmacists at The Children's are united by their enthusiasm, dedication and professionalism. They work in close collaboration with the multidisciplinary teams from the Hematology-Oncology Inpatient Unit and the Hematology-Oncology Day Treatment Centre to offer children the best care possible, all while providing valuable support to families.

Their commitment, availability and expert knowledge in pediatric oncology make them indispensable allies in providing the highest quality care for this vulnerable population.

"Without the incredible work and support of our pediatric oncology pharmacy team, we wouldn't be able to give so much hope to our patients with cancer," says Dr. Catherine Vézina, Director of The Children's Hematology-Oncology Division.

"Each of us has a different role and can be a leader at key moments. We share knowledge and this synergy is what makes our team strong," add Jessika Truong and Cathy Quirion.

As clinical pharmacists, they work directly with patients having treatment and guide families through complex medical journeys — including clinical trials — with the goal of increasing survival rates and quality of life for children with cancer.

Thanks to their collaboration in research protocols, these pharmacists go to great lengths to ensure that patients get access to new



treatments. With over 54 therapeutic studies currently open in oncology, the pharmacists play a crucial role in allowing The Children's to enroll patients in these studies.

Their expertise also includes innovative fields like gene therapy. By overseeing cutting-edge treatments for diseases like spinal muscular atrophy, they are helping to pioneer new ways to treat genetic diseases, offering promising avenues for the future.

These pharmacists stand out thanks to their human-centered approach. The lovely drawings on brown medicine bags, although schools and daycares have now taken over this project, are one of the small gestures that bear witness to this exemplary team's spirit of kindness. In 2024, they also took part in the 24h Tremblant, a major fundraiser for children's health, proving that solidarity and empathy are at the heart of their mission.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

At AIM, excellence is at the heart of everything we do. This deep commitment is perfectly illustrated by the pediatric oncology pharmacy team at The Children's. Their scientific rigour and remarkable expertise ensure that every child receives the safest and most effective treatment possible. They offer guidance to families, always finding ways to make medication easier to administer. Their essential contribution to research and innovation also leads to new treatments, bringing invaluable hope to young patients and their loved ones. We are proud to present the Pediatric Oncology Pharmacists Team with the American Iron & Metal Teamwork Award of Excellence.



Kim Thomassin

Recipient of the Sun Life Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence



Photo: Joana Bezeau

Few people are as passionately committed to The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation as Kim Thomassin. As Executive Vice President and Head of Québec at the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec, she plays a strategic role within the business community while fostering a strong sense of engagement around the philanthropic causes close to her heart.

She credits her parents for instilling in her a deep sense of commitment. "My parents were role models for me, which profoundly impacted my personal and professional journey."

Her passion shone brightly in May 2023 when she co-chaired the Ball for The Children's, a charity gala that raised a record-breaking \$1.5 million for the Healthy Kids Fund. This initiative helps fund essential equipment, address urgent needs and ensure every child receives the best care possible.



Since 2019, the dedicated philanthropist also co-chairs the foundation's *Unexpected ways to heal* campaign cabinet. This major fundraising initiative aims to transform the landscape of pediatrics in Quebec and worldwide by promoting the innovations pioneered by The Children's and its countless ways of healing.

"What a joy it has been to be welcomed into the extended family of the Montreal Children's Hospital. I've had the privilege of meeting deeply engaged people — from the medical staff to the Foundation team."

Businesses and individuals alike can draw inspiration from her example, just as she finds motivation in the experiences of The Children's healthcare staff and their young patients.

"Your stories have touched me, your energy has motivated me and your innovations have inspired me — making the purpose of this campaign come vividly to life. Thank you for your daily dedication to caring for and supporting all little brats no matter their age!"

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation proudly recognizes Kim Thomassin for her outstanding contributions to supporting The Children's vital mission of offering hope, healing and world-class care to every young patient.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

Sun Life is proud to support the Community Leadership and Volunteer Award of Excellence, which recognizes people dedicated to their community's health and well-being. At Sun Life, we help Canadians achieve lifetime financial security and live healthier lives. It's an honour to present this award to Kim Thomassin, whose philanthropic commitment and unwavering support make innovative pediatric projects possible to improve the lives of sick children and their families. Thank you, Ms. Thomassin. Our heartfelt congratulations!

Leaders on Wheels

Recipients of the Bombardier Nicolas W. Matossian Junior Community Award of Excellence



From l. to r.: Jordan, Alexis, Bernard and Fadi.

BBQ sauce is having a moment thanks to the YouTube show *Hot Ones*, where celebrities chat about their career while eating increasingly spicy wings. BBQ sauce also has a starring role at the Lethbridge-Layton-MacKay Rehabilitation Centre school's satellite campus at Westmount High School, where students in the Leaders on Wheels class cook up special blends of BBQ sauces for a great cause: The Children's.

For more than 10 years, these remarkable students — who live with complex health issues and disabilities — have been making, marketing and selling BBQ sauces, spice rubs and brownies, donating every dollar from nearly \$32,000 in sales to The Children's Foundation in support of the Healthy Kids Fund. What began as a classroom project quickly transformed into a social enterprise, teaching business skills, resilience, teamwork and compassion.



Why The Children's? Every student in Leaders on Wheels has, at one time, been cared for at The Children's. They know how overwhelming hospital stays can be and chose to give back to the place that helped them. For these young leaders, fundraising isn't just classwork — it's personal.

"The students get a sense of satisfaction and pride," says teacher Rosemarie Sondola, who has guided the project since 2014. "They're challenging assumptions about abilities while gaining skills critical for independence, dexterity and confidence."

From measuring ingredients to designing labels, filming videos and perfecting sales pitches, every student plays a vital role. Their efforts have helped purchase smart intravenous pumps for newborns and fund services for vulnerable families — making a real difference.

"As someone who had surgery two years ago at The Children's, it feels amazing to give back," says Jordan Paquette, who has a functional movement disorder. "We're proving we can take on big projects and help seriously ill children, and that feels good."

The Leaders on Wheels truly embrace the spirit of paying it forward — one bottle of Wheels on Fire BBQ sauce at a time.

A WORD FROM THE SPONSOR

A leader in innovation within the transportation sector, Bombardier is proud to present the Bombardier Nicolas W. Matossian Junior Community Award of Excellence to Leaders on Wheels. Driven by a deep commitment to ingenuity, excellence and inclusivity, these young leaders redefine the boundaries of what's possible. Through their entrepreneurial initiative and with the support of their teachers, they make a tangible contribution to the Montreal Children's Hospital, all while raising community awareness about the potential of students living with significant disabilities. Their incredible journey embodies the values we hold dear and inspires change that brings hope for a better future. Our most heartfelt congratulations!

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