

InTouch

THE VICTORIA HOSPITALS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2021

“People are at their best when things are at their worst”

A conversation with Tom Siemens, incoming VHF Board Chair

VHF: How are you connected to Victoria?

Tom Siemens: I was born in Calgary, but I grew up partly in Nairobi. When I returned to Canada, I moved to Winnipeg. That's where I met and married my high school sweetheart, Terri. It's also where I began my career with the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC).

Our family saw a lot of Canada in my work with RBC. We lived in Calgary, Toronto, and Saskatoon before settling in Victoria in 2001. Moving here was ideal as our three kids could call the same community home through junior high and high school. In 2018, I retired after 36 years with RBC.

How long have you been a VHF supporter?

I was asked to be a member of the strategic advisory committee for VHF's *Together We Care* campaign from 2001 to 2004. Between 2011 and 2014, I also served as a cabinet member for the *Building Care Together* capital campaign for the Patient Care Centre at Royal Jubilee Hospital.

What compelled you to give your time to VHF?

As a volunteer and community leader during my career with RBC, I typically split my focus three ways—the arts, education, and healthcare. They're the three critical elements in a healthy community. Now that I'm retired, I still follow that same formula. **I give my time to advance causes that matter to me and my family.**



Tom and Terri Siemens at Visions 2019

What is your favourite VHF memory?

Many of my favorite VHF memories are from *Visions* fundraising galas. It is always such an inspiring opportunity to reconnect with our caregivers, patients, and our giving community. I am always reminded of *Visions* when the raffle bears that we've collected over the years come out each Christmas at our house.

What would you say to our giving community right now?

I would say that **despite the dark periods of the past year, there is light at the end of the tunnel.** I've always believed the adage “people are at their best when things are at their worst.” I think we can really see that.

In our lifetimes, there has never been a more powerful illustration of the importance of how we prepare our hospitals and caregivers for the long term. The return on that investment is our community's safety in times like these.

What does the future look like at VHF?

In a moment like this, healthcare and its delivery are evolving rapidly. **It's incredible to look back on this year and see how we much we've had to adapt. It's critical that we evolve the ways we support our hospitals and caregivers as well.**

The last two years have seen a great amount of growth and development at VHF. With new staff leadership and new members recently welcomed to the Board, we are in a strong position to build on the momentum of our recent successes.

Anything else you would like to add?

I would like to share my sincere gratitude with those who have supported the Foundation this year, and for the last 32 years. It is our honour to be entrusted to make the change you want to see in the world.

What matters more than anything is our impact. The difference we make for the person who needs answers, or relief, or a life-changing treatment with a piece of equipment that we can—all together—put in the hands of a caregiver. I won't ever forget that, and I know the team won't either. It will continue to guide every decision we make as a foundation.





It's Critical Finds a True Community Leader

Seaspan Victoria Shipyards and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation inspire us with a \$2.65 million gift to critical care

Our friends, families, and loved ones from across Vancouver Island are now one step closer to having access to expanded critical care—a permanent, purpose-built High Acuity Unit (HAU) is becoming a reality at Royal Jubilee Hospital (RJH). Seaspan Victoria Shipyards and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation's transformational \$2.65 million gift marks an historical collaboration to transform healthcare in our community.

To the over 2,300 donors who have joined Seaspan and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation in supporting *It's Critical*—thank you. You are helping give the Island what every other BC health authority already has. As of December 26, a total of over \$5.2 million had been raised toward the campaign's \$7 million goal.



A **High Acuity Unit** provides

an intermediate level of care for many different critically ill patients. It creates new opportunities for attracting and hiring specialized caregivers.



Giving back to the community is in our DNA—as companies, and as a family. Seaspan and our Foundation believe that critically ill members of our community should have access to the critical care they need. We are honoured to give back to this Island community that we are so proud to be a part of.

Kyle Washington
Executive Chairman,
Seaspan ULC



When we heard that Vancouver Island was the only health region in the province without this kind of unit, we knew we had to act, especially considering the unprecedented impact COVID-19 is having in our communities.

Joe O' Rourke
Vice President & General Manager,
Seaspan Victoria Shipyards



This incredibly important fundraising effort has found a true community leader—we couldn't be more grateful. At an historically critical time, this gift makes a difference that will be felt for generations of Vancouver Islanders. We are humbled and inspired by this act of generosity.

Avery Brohman
Executive Director,
Victoria Hospitals Foundation



Thank you to Seaspan and the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation. As frontline caregivers, an HAU is the very best support we can ask for right now. It will absolutely save lives. The benefits will go beyond the patients and staff—it will enhance all care provided on Vancouver Island.

Dr. Omar Ahmad
Department Head, Emergency and
Critical Care Medicine, Island Health

Making Critical Progress

It's Critical was launched in collaboration with our colleagues at Island Health in response to COVID-19. With your support, we were able to fund the first phase of the *It's Critical* campaign in record time—donors like you gave \$1 million by September 2020. You helped fund urgently needed critical care equipment that is already helping patients.



In October, we had the pleasure of joining our Island Health colleagues to celebrate a particularly poignant moment for *It's Critical*—the

opening of Royal Jubilee Hospital's interim High Acuity Unit. A milestone that was made possible by donors like you. During a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the interim unit, the nurses and physicians were never louder in their applause than when our donors' support was recognized—your generosity is so valued. Thank you.

100+

As of December, 2020 the new interim HAU has admitted **over 100 patients**

It's Critical, Phase Two

We are so grateful to donors who have supported *It's Critical*. **We need to keep the momentum going.**

Any of us, or our loved ones, could need critical care at any time. Our Island community is growing and aging, and simply put, there are not always enough critical care beds.

Our hospitals need a permanent expansion of critical care. That's why we're focused on funding the construction of Vancouver Island's first permanent HAU. With our giving community's continued support, we know we can make the permanent HAU a reality and help generations of future Islanders.

Please give today: victoriahf.ca/critical

\$5.2 million raised—can you help us reach \$7 million?



"I never imagined that I would be diagnosed with COVID-19 and pneumonia. Or that I would be fighting for my life in the hospital. My doctors tell me I'm lucky to be alive. I know I'm lucky for them."

— Gordon, Grateful Patient



"Today, with equipment for the interim HAU that donors to the Victoria Hospitals Foundation have funded, we've greatly increased patient safety. Not only do we have more capacity, we have a new safe place where patients can be monitored and receive more intensive nursing."

— Dr. Grant McIntyre, Medical Lead and Division Head for ICUs in the South Island region, Island Health

NEW!

Victoria Hospitals Foundation Online 50/50 Supporting *It's Critical*

Help our hospitals and have a chance at the cash prize!
Winner takes half of the total jackpot. Draw closes Sunday, February 28, 2021.

Learn more and play at vhf5050.ca

Tickets Available Online
 1 ticket - \$10
 3 tickets - \$25
 10 tickets - \$50
 50 tickets - \$200

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VHF Donors Fund Important COVID-19 Research

Right here at home, Island Health medical research projects help advance healthcare in our community and beyond



With the support of our donors and generous contributions from the national Frontline Fund initiative, the

Foundation is proud to provide funding for research projects in response to COVID-19. These projects support COVID-19 response locally while helping advance global research. Thank you to our giving community for supporting this important work.

Local Researchers Uncovering Hidden COVID-19 Cases

Dr. Laura Cowen, a statistician at the University of Victoria, is working with a team of Island Health experts to uncover “hidden” COVID-19 cases. The team will estimate the number of undiagnosed cases using random sampling techniques drawn from wildlife ecology. They’re also developing innovative mathematical and statistical tools to detect early warning signs of



Dr. Laura Cowen

future waves, and to predict and target which public health strategies can best prevent spread.

This work is possible thanks to a \$149,300 award jointly funded by VHF donors along with the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research COVID-19 Research Response Fund.

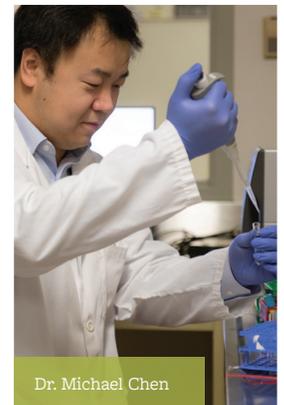
Foundation Donors Help Establish Vancouver Island COVID-19 Biobank

To empower translational research from the lab bench to the bedside,

Island Health is establishing a Vancouver Island COVID-19 Biobank in collaboration with the BC Cancer Agency and other health authorities. The biobank will gather data and biological specimens like blood and plasma samples from COVID-19 patients across the region.

These samples will enable new insights into the virus. Early research will focus on tests to better detect the coronavirus, and identifying

features relevant to diagnosis and personalized treatment. The samples will also help researchers understand the complications of the disease over the long term.



Dr. Michael Chen

Your gifts enable research that improves care in our hospitals

Supporting Families with Kids in Intensive Care

The pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) at Victoria General Hospital (VGH) provides the highest level of care for our youngest and most vulnerable patients. Dr. Amanda Barclay, Director of the PICU, sees the stress on parents and loved ones caused by having a child in intensive care. Recently, visitors to the PICU were restricted during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, adding to the effect felt by families and patients.

That motivated Dr. Barclay to participate in a **national research study** that explores the unintended consequences and impact of family visiting restrictions in the PICU. VGH is one of thirteen participating hospitals across Canada.



Dr. Amanda Barclay

Local families will have an opportunity to join the study thanks to the VHF donors who have provided funding for this research.

Bringing the Hospital to Patients at Home

The **Hospital at Home** project is an innovative new program that provides acute care to patients in the comfort of their own home. While similar programs have been implemented successfully in other countries, it’s a new approach to delivering care in Canada; a prototype is currently underway.

Led by pharmacist and researcher Dr. Sean Spina, a team will study whether the program prototype is safe and convenient for patients and clinicians, and whether outcomes are as good as or better than patients who receive care in hospital. Evaluating the Hospital at Home model is especially important in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. If effective, Hospital at Home can help keep hospital beds free in case of admission surges and help to maintain other care and services like surgery.

Learn more about donor-funded research and how you can help: victoriahf.ca/research

Uniting to Make a Difference in Our Hospitals

New ways to engage your network and inspire others



Fundraising with your friends, peers, and network can make a tremendous impact for patients and care teams in our hospitals. When you work together, not only is the result greater, but you'll also inspire others to give back.

Recently, VHF launched **peer-to-peer fundraising** on the JustGiving platform. Now you can create your own fundraising webpage and ask your network to join you, or give to an area of care most meaningful to you. **You can raise money in celebration of an occasion, in honour of someone, in support of a challenge, or any other creative idea.**

We hope that like us, you're inspired by leaders in our community who have engaged their friends, families, and colleagues to make a difference in our hospitals. To learn more or start your own fundraiser, visit victoriahf.ca/peer-to-peer.



Community Unites to Support Runner for 12 Marathons in 12 Days

This past summer, we met the extraordinary **Yana Hempler**. A friend of Yana's had received critical care at RJH and that motivated Yana

to raise funds for our hospitals. She committed to an astounding challenge—running 12 marathons in 12 days if her network helped raise funds to support *It's Critical*.

Yana's community of peers was clearly inspired by her commitment to healthcare. Not only did she run all 12 marathons, **she far surpassed her original goal**, raising over \$36,000 for our hospitals from 120+ community donors! Yana is still going strong, training for her next marathon challenge in support of her new goal to raise \$500,000 for our hospitals.

Visit Yana's fundraising page by searching for **Yana Hempler** at justgiving.com.

Thank you, Yana. You inspire us!

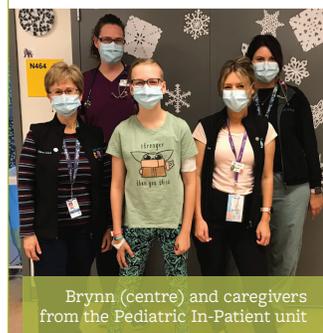
Fundraise with a Challenge

Like Yana, you can engage your network to raise funds in support of a challenge you're working towards. Maybe it's a daily step count goal, a reading marathon, or a dance contest—whatever motivates you. Your peers can support you with a donation, or perhaps they'll be inspired to start their own unique fundraising initiative.

Young Patient Thanks Care Team by Inspiring Donations

While receiving care in the Pediatric In-Patient Unit at Victoria General Hospital, **young patient Brynn** wanted to thank her amazing doctors and nurses. Not only did Brynn recognize them with a VHF *Caring Spirit Award*, she also started her own fundraising page on justgiving.com to encourage her family and friends to support pediatric care. Over 30 supporters helped Brynn raise more than her \$2,000 goal!

“Not all the kids are as lucky as I am. All of the nurses and doctors here are working so hard to try to figure out what is wrong with each of us, to treat each of us, and to care for us. It's hard work. So anything we can do to make sure they have the tools and support, I'd like to help with,” said Brynn.



Brynn (centre) and caregivers from the Pediatric In-Patient unit

Brynn shows us all that we can make a difference at any age by asking our friends and family to unite around an important cause. Thank you, Brynn!

SUPPORTING OUR HOSPITALS

When COVID-19 changed everything in 2020, what didn't change was the commitment and support of these *Visions* gala sponsors. We invite you to meet some of our dedicated **Hospital Visionaries**.

Community-Minded From the Start

A Victoria original grows without forgetting where it came from

Why is giving back important to Thrifty Foods?

TF Our co-founders, Alex Campbell and Ernie Skinner, laid a foundation of community-mindedness from the very first day. They believed that successful businesses are obliged to invest in their communities. In 2005, Campbell told Canadian Grocer, "Sure, maybe a million a year or whatever would look good on the bottom line... But right from the first couple of weeks we were open on Fairfield Road, where we sponsored a Little League baseball team, to the present, we have always tried to help out."

What would you say to others thinking of donating to support our hospitals?

TF Thrifty Foods has long been a supporter of the Victoria Hospitals Foundation. We couldn't ask for a better partner in supporting the health of our customers, teammates, and communities. We have always appreciated our local hospitals and the staff who provide such excellent care, but this challenging year has reminded all of us just how critical our healthcare heroes are to the wellbeing of our communities. We know that, unfortunately, we and those we love may someday need to rely on frontline hospital care teams. Our hospitals support our children, our most vulnerable, our neighbours, our teammates, and their families. We are honoured to play our small part in supporting the work our Victoria hospitals do day in and day out.

What message would you like to share

with our frontline care teams?

TF If we could share one message with Victoria's frontline care teams, it would be "thank you." Throughout our thirty-year relationship, we have been honoured to support frontline care workers and the critical work you do. In this particularly challenging year, you have gone above and beyond to ensure the wellbeing of families in Victoria, and we and our teammates could not be more grateful.



THRIFTY FOODS

Giving as a Group Effort

The Millers talk about philanthropy shaped by childhood experiences and shared values

Why is giving back important?

Miller Family As a business in the housing industry, we are always thinking about how our city is evolving and what makes a great community. We've been fortunate to be a part of shaping the region that we live in and we know that what makes a great place to live is being community-oriented and supporting needs that will keep improving the wellbeing of the people living here.

What inspires your philanthropy?

MF We feel blessed that we can give back to the community we grew up in and want to set an example for our children—who inspire us every day.



Photo taken pre-Covid

Why is it important to support our hospitals?

MF Our company is made up of family-oriented people, many of whom have young families themselves. We value the health and wellbeing of our community and the pandemic has been a good reminder that there is no better time to recognize the important role our hospitals play in Greater Victoria. Everyone we employ has had a connection to the hospitals from happy birth stories to excellence in care for family members. We recognize that local companies like ours play an important role in supporting our healthcare providers through the philanthropic efforts of the Victoria Hospitals Foundation.

Is your giving driven by a personal experience or by the group?

REBECCA MILLER I grew up spending a lot of time in different hospitals with a sister and mother who both had severe health challenges and saw firsthand how important quality healthcare is. I have memories of moments that gave us hope and helped us get through extremely difficult times. I always dreamed of being on the other side of it one day when I was able to.



BCLC Is Playing It Forward

Leaning in to help make a positive difference in our communities

Why is giving back important?

BCLC Thanks to our players, the Province of BC uses gambling revenue to help benefit British Columbians through investments in education, healthcare, community and cultural programs, and services. All BCLC employees, our lottery retail partners, casino operators, and suppliers are proud to offer outstanding gambling experiences that help support initiatives all across the province.

Why is it so important to support our local hospitals?

BCLC When a patient walks in to Royal Jubilee Hospital or Victoria General Hospital, they are in good hands. These hospitals are an essential resource for Vancouver Island



residents and visitors, they are vital to contribute to the overall health of our community so people of all ages receive proper care. New equipment means an increased level of care and attention for patients at Victoria hospitals—and healthier communities.

When our community is healthy, our citizens are happy, physically active, and financially stable. BCLC is proud to play our part to help create a vibrant community and a healthy neighbourhood.

What has inspired you to support Visions in the past and again this year?

BCLC We are proud to help support the many communities we are a part of—and we're a part of nearly every community across the province. Hundreds of thousands of Vancouver Island residents play at our six casinos and at our hundreds of lottery retailers across the Island—so participating in the *Visions* gala is just one way we can support healthy communities.

The funds raised at *Visions* by the guests, sponsors, and donors are truly exceptional and benefit everyone. BCLC is proud to support the team at the Victoria Hospitals Foundation and be a part of such an important event in our community.



From the Heart

April Dorey Hartwig channels gratitude into a giving philosophy

What connects you with our hospitals and caregivers?

April Dorey Hartwig My commitment to helping our local hospitals is deeply personal. My family has benefited from exceptional care at both Victoria General Hospital and Royal Jubilee Hospital over the years.

The incredible care teams at our hospitals helped my son Jake multiple times when he had pseudo-tumors causing orbital swelling. It is a terrifying experience for a mom to get a call from the school saying that your child is in pain, his eye is bleeding and swelling—suddenly, for no reason at all.

Luckily, we had amazing neuro-ophthalmologists like Dr. Edward Atkins who were equipped with state-of-the-art technology so they could quickly see inside his brain and eye to give us a diagnosis within hours. It makes a world of difference when you are under so much stress. Our unparalleled cardiac teams saved my stepson Keith's life when he had a massive heart attack while running the Victoria Marathon in 2015.

And if that wasn't enough, they saved my husband Gerald's life. He has had nine surgeries in the last decade—six heart ablations and 11 cardioversions, including one without medications! I can't thank the

doctors, nurses, and rehabilitation team enough as I am just not ready to be a widow. It's way more fun to be out doing adventures with him than grieving!

As you might imagine, my belief in the importance of access to the information provided by medical imaging cannot be overstated—and it comes from my personal experiences. My family and many of my clients' families have benefitted from the excellent care they have received when visiting the hospital. Our first responders and medical personnel provide much-needed and wonderful service to our community. Our medical system is one of the truly amazing things I appreciate about being Canadian.



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Thank you to all of our 2020 Hospital Visionaries

Abstract Developments | BCLC | Brown Bros. Agencies | Cerner Canada
Charlotte Salomon, Q.C. and Chris Robinson | Heart Wealth Management
Island Savings | Media One Agency | Parker Johnston | Times Colonist
Thrifty Foods | Trillium Communities



Salomon Robinson Family Match Complete!

Community leaders Charlotte Salomon, Q.C. and Chris Robinson's \$200,000 community donation matching challenge has been met. Thank you for helping maintain *Visions*' critical impact in 2020.

The Big Picture Campaign Reaches Its Goal—Thanks to Donors Like You

the big
PICTURE



Anesthesiologist Dr. Jacques Smit

High-priority imaging equipment you funded is already helping patients in our hospitals

When we asked for your help to fund leading-edge imaging equipment, you answered in a big way. **Over 3,500 donors contributed to our \$4 million campaign goal.** Together, you helped us successfully complete *The Big Picture*, launched in November 2019.

Thirty-seven of the forty-two pieces of priority imaging equipment purchased through *The Big Picture* are **already in use in our hospitals**, with the remaining pieces to be operationalized shortly. Because of you, our care teams are going beneath the surface to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of their patients with the help of clear, detailed, real-time images.

One local couple in particular helped make this possible. After more than **20 years of loyal giving** to our hospitals, their **planned gift** in support of medical imaging propelled us toward our goal. Their act of generosity creates a legacy of excellent care that will last for years to come.

To them, to you, and to every one of our donors, **we say thank you.** Together with our caregivers and the many patients who will benefit from your support, we are incredibly grateful.

Big Picture campaign highlights and milestones



A record-breaking \$1 million was raised for *The Big Picture* at *Visions 2019*



A \$600,000 lead gift from Townline Homes completed VHF's funding of the 3T MRI



Over 900 of the more than 3,500 donors to *The Big Picture* gave multiple times



A \$100,000 matching campaign from the Wilson Lai (2016) Trust partially benefited *The Big Picture*



A \$100,000 match from an anonymous donor benefited *The Big Picture* and *Hospital Heroes*

We are committed to protecting your privacy. In accordance with the *BC Personal Information Protection Act*, we only retain information regarding your gift history and relationship with us. For complete information on our privacy policy, visit victoriahf.ca/privacy-policy or call 250-519-1750. The Foundation does not sell, trade, or rent its donor information. Thank you once again for your contribution to our hospitals.

Help us reduce our newsletter costs! **Sign up for our digital newsletter at victoriahf.ca/newsletter**



VICTORIA HOSPITALS
FOUNDATION

Thank You!

Have feedback? Know anyone who would like to read this newsletter?
We'd love to hear it.
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