

ADVERTISING FEATURE

WOMEN WHO DARE



Avery Brohman,
chief executive officer at
Victoria Hospitals Foundation.

Q&A with Avery Brohman

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT VICTORIA HOSPITALS FOUNDATION

WRITTEN BY Sam Duerksen, Black Press Media | **PHOTO BY** Dani Cyr

As chief executive officer of Victoria Hospitals Foundation, Avery Brohman inspires community giving to advance local hospital care and support the caregivers who care for us.

What brought about the change from the role of executive director into the role of chief executive officer for the Victoria Hospitals Foundation?

I joined the foundation in 2018 as the director of development and communications and very quickly stepped into the acting executive director role and ultimately became the executive director for two years. Being a newer executive, our board wanted to ensure I could deliver on their vision which was to grow the organization's capacity to meet the hospitals growing needs. When I did receive the CEO title last year, I knew it was earned. Ultimately I needed to prove myself, so I did.

What does it take to be successful in your role?

Profound commitment, connectivity and courage. There is not a day that goes by where I don't believe in the work I am leading. I feel a great sense of connection to our community of donors and the caregivers who need our support. And in order to do this work, you can't be afraid to ask for help.

What's the most daring thing you've ever done in your career and how did it pay off?

I moved my family to Victoria without knowing a single soul, for the foundation. I had only visited once, on my first wedding anniversary. I saw an opportunity with great career potential on the impact I could make. And now, I've found a place to call home that's incomparable to many other cities in the world. I won the lottery, there's really no place like it.

The Victoria Foundation's Emerge Stronger campaign is in its final phase. Can you summarize so far on how the impact this fundraising has made for hospitals and what's special about the last phase?

Together with our donors, we have already been able to fund over 180 pieces of equipment requested by our care teams. And now, we're looking replace what is currently the most-used piece of equipment in all of

Island Health, an automated chemistry line. We are going from being able to perform 1000 lab tests a day to 1000 tests in an hour. That's innovation! We are also investing \$500,000 in local research projects that aim to improve patients' quality of life, and even prevent them from needing access care in our hospitals at all. Supporting prevention is a Victoria Hospitals Foundation first.

Emerging from the aftermath of the lockdowns, how has the work or focus at Victoria Hospitals Foundation changed?

We've learned to be agile and adaptable. That planning too far ahead might mean missing an opportunity that needs immediate intervention. Caregiver recognition has become a strong pillar of our work, and ensuring that our community's attention remains focused on them.

I'm sure that the pandemic was an incredibly trying and unexpected time for the foundation. How did you manage to get through it?

We are still navigating the pandemic. The health-care sector hasn't been able to resume back to normal life, nor has our team. Day in and out we are reminded of the challenges our hospitals face and we do our best to tackle the enormous amount of need. We manage by celebrating all

of the advancements we make for our hospitals but also through an enhanced corporate culture of compassion and care for one another.

How did fundraising play a role in helping the Victoria Hospitals Foundation during the pandemic?

When the pandemic arrived in our hospitals, the need for expanded critical care resources and capacity was immediately apparent. Through the It's Critical campaign, the community raised over \$7 million to support Vancouver Island's first high acuity unit (HAU), which was the largest critical care investment in 20 years. Well over 1,000 patient's to-date have received specialized care in the unit, and many of them during the pandemic. To this day, our hospital caregivers are so grateful for this response.

What is the biggest challenge you are currently tackling?

We are challenged with enormous need. We have been asked to expand space, advance new units and support large equipment needs in nearly every area of the hospitals, but in order to do this, our community must be available to respond, but they're challenged, too. Local businesses have been impacted by the pandemic, everyone is feeling heavy inflation, the global markets are not stable, and I won't deviate away from the negative media coverage that

impacts a donor's motivation to give. There is challenge all around us, but we still need donors supporting our hospitals - even when the greater public needing to support healthcare and equipment needs has in some ways lost its appeal.

How do you inspire people to give?

I inspire them by showing them the opportunity they can create through their generosity. By telling them that they aren't alone, and that 40% of the equipment we have is donor funded. That a person can change and even save their neighbours life.

What makes you feel proudest?

When our brave and resilient caregivers know they have a community of donors supporting them, and being personally responsible to prudently steward the giving we receive.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I try to be very intentional with my personal time because often it's limited. I love being in the company of women and connecting women together with similar interests through local events, community fundraisers and even a virtual book club I started during the pandemic. But when I need time to truly disconnect, I like to be in nature with my beloved border collie Grace, or go to the cinema with my husband Eric.