

Chez nous

MCH EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER

October 14, 2010

News

Close up and personal: A look inside the MUHC Redevelopment Office

By Christine Zeindler

With 500 hospital beds, over 25 departments, and six pavilions, the new McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) Glen Campus will be a unique complex that delivers state-of-the-art care. Managing its construction, as well as the renovations of the Mountain and Lachine campuses, is no small task and requires a dedicated team of planners, architects and engineers. These major construction and renovation projects are meeting targets and achieving daily milestones thanks to the dedication and expertise of the staff in the MUHC Redevelopment Office.

"We have a phenomenal team," says Yanai Elbaz, Associate Director General, Redevelopment, Planning and Real Estate Management. "We are meeting our goals due to the solid daily efforts of our personnel, the support of the MUHC staff and senior administration and the leadership from the CEO's office."

A large team

The MUHC Redevelopment Office has more than 25 employees who work on all aspects of the project. Currently, their energies are focused on the Glen Campus, but in no way does this mean that work on the other sites is halted. It is the juggling of projects that keeps the redevelopment team motivated and spirited.

"It is an opportunity of a lifetime to work on such a momentous endeavour," adds Mr. Elbaz. "We are building a modern academic health centre which will change the way healthcare is delivered for generations to come."

Partitioning the work

Some division of labour helps keep the projects organized and manageable. The Redevelopment Office is divided into two main groups: one involving infrastructure and the other, programming and clinic activities. The infrastructure group led by engineer Pierre Major focuses its energies on the buildings, making sure that energy use is efficient and that all construction is up to code. Imma Franco directs the programming and clinical arm of the planning. She works with the clinical users to make sure each room is functional and efficient.

"In simpler terms, Pierre is working on the box and Imma is concentrating on what goes in the box," explains Julie Paquet, Communications Lead for the MUHC Redevelopment Project.

Mr. Major and Ms. Franco are no rookies when it comes to managing this project - they have both been involved for more than 10 years. Over those years, they worked with the government, the City and our partners to plan the best strategy for moving forward. For example, they examined how large the project should be, where the building funds would come from, what would be the best division of services between the campuses, etc.

Thanks to their efforts and that of the other employees who work in the planning office, the Redevelopment Project is truly underway. At the Glen Campus, construction started in June; at the Mountain Campus, several projects have already been completed (CICU, gastroenterology, mental health, etc.) and the modernization continues; at the Lachine Campus, after a few upgrades, plans for the full modernization are being finalized.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1, Close up and personal...)

Looking forward

This fall, a detailed design process is being launched. Here, the needs and priorities of each floor and department will be considered and incorporated into the plans for the Glen Campus. Focus groups will be held giving staff and doctors from different specialties an opportunity to have input, deciding on specifics such as where the medications will be stored, to how high the built-in cabinets will be.

“At this stage, we have a high level design of the Glen Campus – a snapshot of what the healthcare units could look like,” says Mr. Elbaz “Now we need to work out the details, for example, what form the nursing stations will be, the appearance of the bathrooms, etc.”

To simplify communication and to see the fruits of their labour, the whole Redevelopment Office will be moving to the 5 100 de Maisonneuve building, just across the street from the Glen Campus.

“We are all looking forward to the move,” says Ms. Paquet. “It will make the project more tangible.”

“In the end, the New MUHC isn’t about bricks and mortar,” says Mr. Elbaz. “It’s about improving the care we offer our patients. It is also about improving working conditions for our staff. For example, there will be dedicated teaching areas to enhance learning and improve professional collaboration. In addition, the New MUHC will be an economic engine stimulating growth by bringing new jobs, new investments and new opportunities. The investment in our healthcare infrastructure will help us retain and recruit talented healthcare professionals and researchers – a key driver in the knowledge economy.”

To find out more, visit muhc.ca/construction.

Scanning medical records: the wheels are in motion!

The MUHC is actively working to implement a system for scanning medical records that will be integrated into OACIS, the clinical information system. This project constitutes a priority for the organization. To allow for the automatic classification of scanned documents and to facilitate accessing this information on screen, the forms to be included in medical files will have three bar codes: the first will have information on the type of form being used, the second will have information on the patient and the third will have information on the visit.

One of the first steps in this project is to assign a bar code to each type of form that will be included in the

medical file. This part of the project, which is being handled by the Forms Committee, is making steady progress. If the Committee has not yet visited your department, contact Annie (ext. 45017) or Johanne (ext. 23478) or advise them by email at forms.committee@muhc.mcgill.ca.

The next step of the project affects primarily administrative agents, who are being asked to modify certain processes in their work. Instead of using the hospital card, they will print the patient information (name, date of birth, sex, etc.) and the two bar codes (“patient” and “visit”) directly on to the forms (or on to stickers); the appointment system (MediVisit) has a new functionality that will help

with this process. At the Montreal Children’s Hospital, the roll-out is already under way in the external clinics; it will continue throughout the fall for all ambulatory services.

Even though scanning will not start before winter 2011, clinicians and administrative agents should start now to become familiar with the new processes required: using the right type of form, as required, and a separate consultation sheet for each visit. Once the roll-out has been completed, MUHC clinicians will be able to consult their patients’ medical files on screen, anywhere and at any time.

***Chez nous* is published by the MCH Public Relations and Communications office.**

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To submit story ideas or texts to *Chez nous*, contact the Public Relations and Communications office at ext. 24307 or send your email to info@thechildren.com.

**Logo
FSC**

Climbing for The Children's

You may know her as a pediatric hematologist-oncologist at the MCH, wife and mother of two, but come January, Dr. Sharon Abish (right) will also be known as a mountain climber. In just a few months, she and her husband will join a team of 10 individuals who will trek Mount Kilimanjaro, known to many as the highest freestanding mountain in the world. The adventure is part of the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation's *One million kilometres, one million dollars* campaign, a year-long initiative which encourages members of the community to be more active, while raising funds to support The Children's young patients.

Departing on January 17, the team will arrive in Tanzania on January 18 and begin their adventure just two days later. Their 10-day trek will be guided by Tusker Trail, an outfitting operation that will provide medical surveillance, as well as food and eating arrangements. According to many experts, and Dr. Abish's research, the trek will get more taxing as they climb and have to contend with high altitude, lower temperatures and occasional high winds.

Despite these challenges, Dr. Abish insists she has always wanted to do something like this. "I have repeatedly been inspired by the strength and courage of the children and families I have worked with," she says, "and I am motivated by the importance of the work of the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation."

Her husband's participation in the climb is equally exciting. After undergoing open heart surgery two years ago, he has returned to top form and is now looking



forward to sharing the experience with her – an added motivation to embark on this journey.

In preparation for the event, the team of 12 climbers has gone on a number of hikes around the Montreal area, and can be seen climbing stairs at Mount Royal every week. "If I am spotted walking up and down the stairs around the hospital, I hope people won't laugh but rather give words of encouragement!" she quips, admitting that she is most looking forward to the moment she reaches the top.

To help Dr. Abish reach her fundraising goal of \$10,000 you can support her by visiting her web page, which can be found at www.1millionkm.com, and clicking on "Sponsor a Team or Participant".

One million kilometres, one million dollars: Ready? Set? Go!

A crowd of over 200 people, including Olympic medalists Alexandre Bilodeau, Jennifer Heil (at right with Toni Grant and Émilie Hébert) and Danièle Sauvageau, ran, walked, biked and otherwise exercised their way to Parc Mont-Royal on Saturday, September 25, to help launch *One million kilometres, one million dollars*. The project is a year-long initiative by the MCH Foundation which encourages members of our community to be more active, while raising funds to support our young patients. To celebrate the launch, a short video was filmed which will soon premiere on YouTube, and which will also star Olympian Joannie Rochette. Watch for it at www.1millionkm.com. To see photos from the launch event, visit www.flickr.com/photos/fondationduchildren/sets/72157624922987037.



Photo: Eva Blue

At the MUHC, food is a science too!

In a healthcare centre, food is not something to be taken lightly. Delivered directly to a patient's room or eaten at one of the MUHC cafeterias, all meals have been approved by the Menu Committee, which is made up of 12 persons including nutritionists and dieticians for whom every detail counts. Not only are nutritional analyses performed on all meals to determine if they are appropriate for patients, they also have to pass taste tests!

On the topic of taste: results are quite good if one trusts Montreal's chef Chuck Hughes, who hosts his own cooking show on The FOOD Network. During a recent stay at the MGH due to a broken foot, he was

pleasantly surprised with the food he was served. In fact, he enjoyed it so much he decided to make it the main topic of one of his shows next year and to concoct a special dish that will be integrated into the patient menu and maybe eventually into the cafeteria menu.

According to Martin Lapointe, coordinator of Food Services, "the secret of the quality of our food is above all, the freshness, as many of our meals are made in our kitchens by MUHC Food Service staff."

In addition, people like Caroline Blais, marketing manager for Food Services, ensures that the meals are pleasant and appealing. "Each month, for a

whole week, we organize a 'seasonal flavour' during which we promote seasonal foods produced in Quebec," she says. "Also, during holidays such as Halloween or Christmas, thematic meals are organized so everyone can celebrate." The cafeteria also offers a catering service, which will be available very soon via the Intranet.

As of October 13 this year, cafeteria prices will increase by 2.9% due to price inflation of commodities. "This is in an effort to maintain the high quality of food and food services offered throughout the MUHC," says Mr. Lapointe. "Our ultimate goal is to provide the best care for life, and to us this includes the meals we serve."



Do you have an ugly mug?

Do you own the ugliest, dirtiest, most disgusting and vile coffee mug at the Montreal Children's Hospital? You do? Well, prove it.

We're looking for the best – and that means worst! – coffee mug at the MCH. Send us a photo of your icky mug and you could be the winner of our UGLY MUG Contest. The winner will receive \$25.00 in free coffee from the MCH Cafeteria and a nice, new, **clean** mug.

Send your entry (high-resolution JPG) by email to info@thechildren.com or send the actual photo by internal mail to Rm. F-372. Don't forget to **include your name and phone number**. Contest deadline is Tuesday, October 26. The winner – and their mug – will be featured in the next issue of *Chez nous*.



MCH Town Hall Video now available on the Intranet

The MCH held a Town Hall meeting on September 22 to discuss CAPS updates, the Qmentum accreditation, ID cards, and the new Glen site. All employees were invited to attend. For those who were not able to make

it, a video of the entire hour-long event is available on the Intranet at http://www.intranet.muhc.mcgill.ca/PRC/video_presentations.html

Don't let the flu crash your party!

Influenza (the flu) is a serious disease, potentially fatal, and health care workers are more exposed than the general population.

The influenza vaccine is the best way to protect yourself, and it's offered to you for free. It is 70 to 90% effective for people under the age of 60 and will protect you all year round. Our objective for 2010 is to vaccinate 70% of our employees, and to achieve 80% by 2012.

Last year, we achieved a 69 % vaccination rate against H1N1, a real success story for the MUHC. Let's continue that success!

Taking into consideration your workplace, you can contract the virus and give it to your family and patients in the hospital:

- ▶ the influenza virus can survive in the environment up to 48 hours (on telephones, doorknobs, clothes, etc.)
- ▶ persons who are contagious don't always have symptoms

There are certain people who are more at risk of developing complications, or are less protected from the vaccine. It is therefore important to get vaccinated to avoid contaminating those who are vulnerable in your surroundings, both at home and at work.

Since the seasonal influenza vaccine is composed of inactive strains of the virus selected by the World Health Organization (WHO), it is very safe and effective. It cannot transmit the flu, because it does not contain any live virus. In addition, it is safe for pregnant women and women who breastfeed. It has been proven effective against the major strains of seasonal influenza that we expect this winter.

The schedule for vaccination sessions, starting November 1, will be available on the Intranet. For more information, contact your manager.

Get your flu shot - to protect yourself and others.

Occupational Health and Safety Days are coming to your site this November. Come and meet your representatives of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee. Pick up some pamphlets and complete a participation coupon for entry into a draw for a prize.

After visiting us, get your flu shot from **11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.!**

Date: Monday, November 8

Time: 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Cafeteria, 3rd floor

MUHC Accreditation

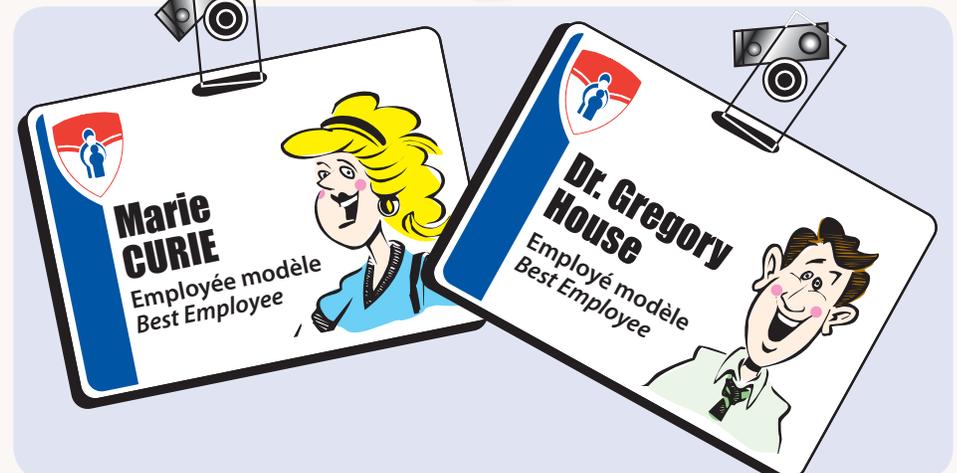
To all MCH staff,

Thank you and congratulations to all of you who worked so hard in preparation for this new form of hospital accreditation visit - QMENTUM. The exit report was very laudatory of our staff and our organization. You all should take great pride in this achievement.

Harvey J. Guyda
Associate Executive Director

If you missed the Accreditation debriefing held on October 1, 2010, visit the Intranet site (intranet.muhc.mcgill.ca/headline_news/news_video.html#example) to see a videotape of the event.

It's mandatory Where's yours?



MCH Staff @ work



Chetanand Gopaul

Biomedical Engineering
2 years at the MCH (...and proud to be part of the MCH!)

It takes continuous effort to maintain high customer satisfaction levels. This is one of my mottos.



São Almeida

Pediatric Consultation Centre (PCC)
10 years at the MCH

Working here at the Children's has kept me young, but when I need an appointment, nobody will see me...!



Beverly Howe

Pediatric Consultation Centre (PCC)
1 year at the MCH

When I'm not at work, I like to travel, read and spend time with my children.



Italia Gagliani

Biomedical Engineering
22 years at the MCH

In my spare time, I edit/make videos, sing karaoke at home and I love gardening. My teenage kids think my hobby is cleaning... they're probably right.

Eating healthily on the go – from a vending machine?

By Leila Nathaniel

Most of us realize that vending machine offerings are unhealthy. With clear guidelines issued by the Quebec Ministry of Health, the Montreal Children's Hospital is committed to changing this. According to Demetra Kafantaris, Senior Advisor of Corporate Affairs at the Children's, by 2011, 100% of all vending machine contents will be healthier – and you can identify them!

Sodexo, the company that supplies vending machines throughout the MUHC, is labelling all its snacks with colour-coded stickers so everyone can identify the nutritional value of what they eat:



- ▶ **Green:** Excellent. Very nutritional.
- ▶ **Yellow:** Good. Not too bad.
- ▶ **Blue:** Occasional. Should be eaten very rarely.

The vending machines have banners, which explain the codes, so everyone can make better choices. If an item is not labelled, it has little nutrition, so you shouldn't eat it. By 2011, few unlabelled items should exist within

the vending machines, making each choice relatively healthy. Each item is evaluated on content: amount of saturated fats, trans fats, fibre, sugar and sodium, and labelled accordingly.

This change addresses rising rates of obesity and diabetes in children. Although it's a government program, Demetra states that it's up to individual hospitals to implement it. "At the Children's, we want to provide everyone with healthier food options and this will be possible with support from Sodexo, guidance from our Clinical Nutrition service, and encouragement from members of our Family Advisory Forum and the MCH Auxiliary. We have a responsibility to educate children on how to eat right anywhere."

Events

Weekly Meditation Sessions

The Meditation sessions (see feature article in the September 2 issue of *Chez nous*) have recently started. The group meets on a weekly basis.

Tuesdays

11:00 to 11:30 a.m.

C-B 34 (Chapel)

Everyone is welcome!

For more information, contact Jocelyne Albert: ext. 22908, or jocelyne.albert@muhc.mcgill.ca.

Get those costumes ready!

Halloween 2010

Make it a date for the MCH Halloween Party!

Date: Friday, October 29

Time: 12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

Location: MCH Cafeteria

Costume Contest: You may participate as an individual or as a group

For information: Ginette Manseau, ext. 24459

There's still time to decorate your office!

Deadline for registration: October 21, 2010

For information: Angela Formica, ext. 24466

Renewing the Heart of Healthcare: a special on-site presentation for managers

Thought-provoking and best-selling author Dr. John Izzo has worked with over 300 health care organizations across North America and Western Europe. On Wednesday, October 20, managers are invited to attend a unique talk entitled *Renewing the Heart of Healthcare*. Dr. Izzo's approach is both practical and inspirational, and will challenge you to take personal responsibility for putting heart back in health care delivery. A light snack will be

served. (Note: presentation will be conducted in English.) For information on registration, please send an email to mch.fdo1@muhc.mcgill.ca.

Date: Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Location & Time: MCH Amphitheatre D-182, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m.

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6 novembre 2010

November 6, 2010

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Vous présenter aux endroits suivants :

- Lachine (OJ4), poste 7700
- HME (T.104), poste 22349
- HGM (C6.117), poste 43195
- HRV (C4.16), poste 34261
- 2155, rue Guy (14^e étage), poste 71224
- ITM (J5), poste 32570
- HNM (EEG, bureau 011, 88-00450)

OU

Appeler : le poste 34340

OU

Envoyer un courriel à :
renee.gillman@muhc.mcgill.ca

\$40/ticket available by:

Dropping by:

- Lachine (OJ4), ext. 7700
- MCH (T.104), ext. 22349
- MGH (C6.117), ext. 43195
- RVH (C4.16), ext. 34261
- 2155 Guy (14th floor), ext. 71224
- MCI (J5), ext. 32570
- MNH (EEG, room 011, 88-00450)

OR

Calling: local 34340

OR

Emailing:
renee.gillman@muhc.mcgill.ca

MCH Auxiliary: upcoming events

- ▶ Wednesday, October 20: Miscellaneous
 - ▶ Wednesday, October 27: Knits
 - ▶ Wednesday, November 3: Used Books
 - ▶ Thursday, November 4: Jewelry by Marie Christine Poiré
 - ▶ Monday, November 8: Pre-Viewed Videos
- All sales take place on 2B**

MCH Christmas cards are now available through the Auxiliary office.

Contact Lucette Bennett for information or to purchase cards: ext. 22384 or lucette.bennett@muhc.mcgill.ca.

October 28: Burn and Fire Prevention Day at the MCH

Each year, the MCH Trauma Centre sees approximately 200 children and teens with burn injuries. Close to half of all burn injuries treated in the emergency department are scald injuries. Most of these are preventable. It is important to be aware of the risks and to follow the safety recommendations.

On October 28, between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., members of MCH Trauma will answer questions in the 2B clinic area about various aspects of burn trauma.

Safety products for the house will be given out, thanks to Dorel Industries Inc.'s generous donations. The Montreal Fire Department will be on hand to answer questions about fire prevention: smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, fire escape plan and more. Come join us for an informative and exciting day and a chance to enter a draw for great prizes.

For more information contact Lisa Grilli – Trauma coordinator; Injury Prevention Program, ext. 23458.

Awards and Nominations

Dr. Ayesha Khan recently joined the Pediatric Ophthalmology team at the MCH. Dr. Khan was trained at Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto, and has extensive surgical and clinical expertise in retinoblastoma, ROP, cataract, ectopia lentis, complex strabismus, genetic

eye disorders and many other diseases in children. She will be very involved in all aspects of teaching, clinics, surgeries and research at the MCH and coordinate the retinoblastoma and ROP programs at the MCH.

PRUDENT: A clinical research unit improving care, one patient at a time

By Christine Zeindler

“Today’s research is tomorrow’s care.” This is the motto of the PRUDENT Unit at The Montreal Children’s Hospital (MCH) of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC). With more than 20 active research studies, five to 10 studies in the pipeline and close to 40 already completed, they are making this ambition a reality.

Initially supported by two internationally known MCH researchers, Dr. Paul Goodyer and Dr. Constantin Polychronakos, PRUDENT was developed by Diane Laforte some 15 years ago. With the help of Dr. Legault, the PRUDENT Unit’s mission of providing clinical researchers with excellent resources, information and expertise to facilitate clinical studies that bring bench side research to the bedside, was introduced.

Clinical research is patient-oriented research that evaluates the safety and effectiveness of promising treatments. This type of research includes studies about new clinical therapies, devices, and procedures while evaluating the distribution of certain disease.

“The PRUDENT Unit is the link between researchers, patients and the funding institutions,” says Ms. Laforte, a certified clinical research coordinator accredited by the Academy of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP). “The key players, the ones who determine the project’s success, are the participants themselves. Our role is to ensure that these patients and their families understand how their contribution will ultimately lead to better knowledge as well as new treatments and better care. Their role is crucial. In addition, we make sure our patients get five-star service in terms of care but also in terms of disclosure and communication.”

“We like to think that it is an advantage to be a clinical research participant,” says Ms. Laforte. “For example, families and patients can learn a lot about their disease and benefit from the most recent treatments and procedures while helping other children and their families.”

“However, extreme care must be taken when starting new protocols and enrolling the first patients. We want to make sure the right people are getting the appropriate treatment and everyone is getting the best possible care. Our first goal must always be the patient’s safety and well-being.”

The PRUDENT Unit achieves this by following good clinical research practices. This means that proper procedures are followed for approving studies, federal, provincial and institutional laws, regulations, guidance, and standard operating procedures are adhered to, and that regulations regarding informed consent and safety disclosure are respected.

The current PRUDENT Unit is about to become the new MCH/MUHC PRUDENT Clinical Research Centre and will be able to help more researchers while facilitating research on everything from blood sampling for genetic analyses to new surgical procedures. One such study involves analyzing the genetics of type-1 diabetes. Here the patient’s only contribution is a few teaspoons of blood and their family history. Ultimately this research will provide a better understanding of who is at risk and the role of environmental factors.

Another more invasive research protocol for the future is a new surgical procedure to repair the intestines of premature newborns. This method takes a bit longer than the current surgical option, but may remove the necessity for a second surgery.

“People tend to forget that the new medications and procedures they would like to have available have all been tested on individuals just like them,” says Ms. Laforte. “Clinical research is the key to improving health care that benefits everyone.”

Paul Diver – MCH’s own “Transformer”

By Leila Nathaniel

When The Montreal Children’s Hospital needs to transform a space in order to install state-of-the-art equipment or accommodate new hospital activities, Paul Diver is the man you see to get it done. He has worked in Architectural Services at the MCH for nearly four years, but his path to the Children’s was indirect. “I did a Bachelor’s in Geology, but then I didn’t find the jobs very interesting, so I went back to school.” After graduating in Mechanical Engineering, he started working in the Project Management Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1989, where he completed many projects that transformed the hospital.

As project manager, Paul is responsible for the realization of a project from concept to delivery. Paul explains, “Managing a project in an existing building is challenging at best, and a complex juggling act most of the time.” The project manager must juggle a limited budget within a limited time frame to produce the best quality project, whilst ensuring that the impact on our patients and staff is minimized. Paul notes, “Not everybody gets what they want. Many departments neighbouring the construction are inconvenienced by the work. Nevertheless, they are very cooperative as they know the project benefits



Photo: Daniel Héon

the hospital. It’s a question of effectively communicating with everyone that is affected by the work. Often, compromises must be made as we are not building from scratch and budgets are limited.”

There are many people and services involved in the realization of a project. It requires ongoing coordination between Infection Control, Housekeeping, Building Services, Security, Nursing, Telecommunications, IS, and Biomedical Engineering among others. Paul’s job requires excellent communication, organizational and negotiation skills, since he is always meeting with people who request changes to their facilities, or giving crucial instructions to contractors.

“It can be a stressful job, especially during construction,

when it interferes with others or when unforeseen issues arise on the construction site and quick decisions have to be made,” Paul says. When asked how he deals with all of the different aspects of his job he explains, “I am Cartesian in nature, so I like to have my stuff well in order.” This applies to Paul’s hobbies. He enjoys putting around the house, fixing things, cooking, and spending time with his kids. He also loves the outdoors, especially biking and camping.

Paul has accomplished many projects in the past four years, which have been very successful and have given him much satisfaction. One project that he is especially proud of is the construction of the Intra-Operative MRI suite, which is the first pediatric installation of its kind in Canada. He was also responsible for the ER Renovations, the reorganization of the Owen Day Surgery Centre, the Hematology/Oncology Day Treatment Waiting Room and Reception as well as the reconstruction of its satellite pharmacy and the installation of a new CT scan among others. All these areas have benefited from Paul’s dedication and hard work and have been transformed to provide the best care possible for our patients.

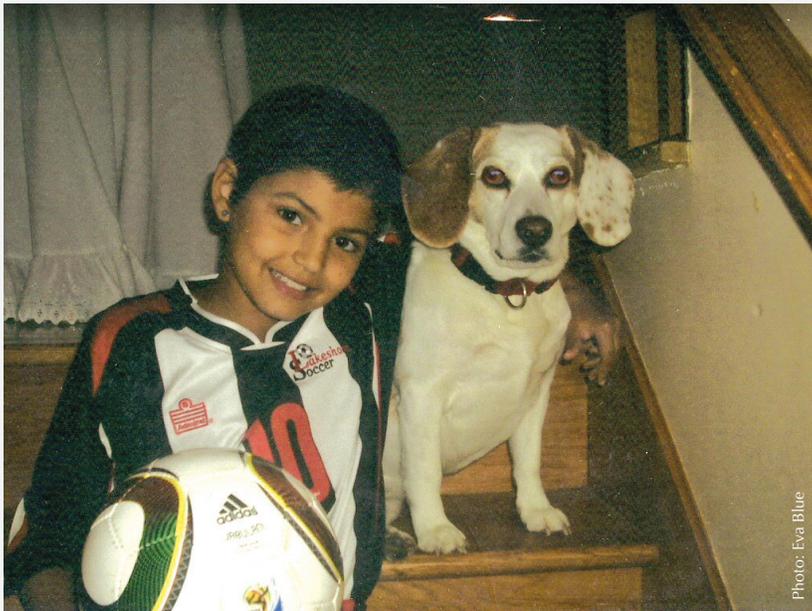


Photo: Eva Blue

Our Heroes

The power of positive thinking

By Pamela Toman

Alexa was once nicknamed 'The Diesel' by her soccer team because she was known as a player that gave her all to the game. During her year-long battle to overcome cancer, she showed her friends and family that she is a fighter both on and off the field.

Alexa Fitzwilliam has never been one to complain about a minor scrape or bruise. So when the 10-year-old tripped and fell onto her left wrist during a soccer match in April 2009 she barely flinched.

The resulting bruise on her wrist never quite seemed to disappear, but since it didn't really hurt, Alexa assumed it would eventually fade. It was only during a routine medical check-up a few months later that she thought to mention it.

Her doctor advised her family to go to the Montreal Children's Hospital to have the wrist x-rayed. Just as they were about to leave on vacation, Alexa's mother, Claudia Fitzwilliam recalls being told by a radiology technician to go back to the pediatrician's office for another examination. On July 23, 2009, after completing various tests and a subsequent biopsy, the Fitzwilliams were devastated to learn their daughter had an osteosarcoma, a malignant bone tumour of the left wrist.

What followed was 11 weeks of intensive chemotherapy. Alexa's parents, Claudia and Mark were at the hospital around the clock to make sure their daughter was comfortable and to ask the medical team any and all questions about her condition.

In October, just months after receiving her diagnosis, Alexa underwent a 23-hour surgery under the supervision of Dr. Robert Turcotte, chief of the Department of Ortho-

pedics and Medical Director of the McGill University Health Centre Sarcoma Program, and Dr. Mario Luc, member of the Plastic Surgery team. The surgery involved removing the affected bone in her wrist and replacing it with a small segment of her fibula, a bone in her leg. The operation was the first of its kind to be performed in Canada.

After the grueling surgery, Alexa was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit. Within 20 minutes, her mom Claudia says her daughter opened her eyes and asked that the tubes be taken out of her mouth and throat so she could talk. "We were amazed," says her dad Mark. "After being under heavy anesthesia in an OR for over 20 hours, here she was alert, trying to breathe on her own and wanting to drink far sooner than we could have imagined."

Alexa was sent home a week after her surgery with a cast on her leg and her left arm. After a five-week rest period, she completed a final round of chemo from November 2009 to April 2010, spending long days in the hospital. In February, she underwent a second corrective surgery on her wrist.

Today, Alexa is elated to announce she can do "anything a normal kid can do." That includes swimming and playing sports.

In an effort to raise more awareness about osteosarcomas and to give back to the hospital, Alexa has launched a foundation in her name. "When you have things to look forward to and you believe you can get through a hard time, that makes a big difference," she says.

This young survivor's positive attitude and passion for life is an inspiration to us all.