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Fall/Winter 2019

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A publication of St. Boniface Hospital Foundation

Fall/Winter **2019** ISSUE 8.2

# The Mental Health Issue



Remembering Paul Albrechtsen

Greg Mackling's drive to get better





stbhf.ca

### Believe

A St. Boniface Hospital Foundation publication.

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### Celebrating a visionary donor

The St. Boniface Hospital community remembers friend and supporter Paul Albrechtsen, who passed away on July 7, 2019.
Story on page 12.



"I can dream again."

You helped Michael beat his
obsessive-compulsive disorder



Faith that does justice St. Paul's High School supports at-home dialysis



Back from the edge

You helped save Greg Mackling's life



You gave Jennifer her life back

"A lot of treatment is learning to trust."

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### Sustainable healing is about rejuvenating the whole person – body, mind and spirit.

To do so requires therapeutic environments conducive to upholding this philosophy of care in all that we do. Transformed spaces enable transformative care.

St. Boniface Hospital's McEwen Building, where some of the most sensitive healing happens, is transforming. Mental health care takes place here. We know that transformative care results by surrounding patients with low-stress, respectful, and homelike atmospheres that ensure the safety of patients, families and caregivers alike. Your generosity serves to renew the physical environment which ultimately helps St. Boniface Hospital enhance the care we offer each and every day.

This vision of care is one which St. Boniface Hospital has embraced throughout its history. I cannot help but be inspired by the work of a pioneering woman, Sister Jean Ell, a Grey Nun, who in the 1970s saw an unmet need within our Psychiatric Department. She worked to find creative ways to meet the needs of patients leaving the Hospital with their condition stabilized but who were repeatedly readmitted because they were unable to maintain wellness in the community. This 'revolving door syndrome' required a partnership with community to create a new entity, Sara Riel Inc., a fellow community of service of the Hospital, under the umbrella of the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba.

St. Boniface Hospital care teams continue to provide leadingedge psychological and psychiatric services and count on Sara Riel to support former and current patients in achieving their goals and living independently. One such person is Tammy Lambert, whose story you can read in this issue of *Believe*.

Thank you for walking this transformative path with us, assisting patients and our Hospital community in meeting unmet needs. With your support, we are well surrounded to respond compassionately and with an innovative spirit.

We continue to follow the example set by Sister Jean Ell at the Hospital. So can you, by donating to our mental health campaign at stbhf.ca, today.

Martine Bouchard President & CEO St. Boniface Hospital



### The McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital needs your help.

Every year, tens of thousands of Manitobans rely on the dedicated inpatient and outpatient mental health services offered in the McEwen Building here at St. Boniface Hospital.

The McEwen Building is a vital place of healing, recovery and support, and I am pleased to share powerful stories in this special mental health issue of *Believe*.

Our Hospital's Mental Health Program provides multidisciplinary psychological and psychiatric services to adults of all ages. The program has 17 psychiatrists, 35 nurses, and 15 support staff. The team works to treat patients with anxiety, depression, dementia, and psychosis.

In 1981, the Hospital's Mental Health Program was moved into the McEwen Building, originally built and designed as a residence for medical students. The mental health services are safe and reliable, but the building is outdated and becoming an obstacle to providing optimal care in a healing environment.

McEwen needs renovations and improvements, immediately, and I'm asking for your help.

St. Boniface Hospital Foundation has launched a \$1.6 million fundraising campaign for improvements. They will include bedroom upgrades, redesigned family rooms and recreation areas, new health care team stations, washroom renovations, updated kitchen and dining rooms, and enhancements to the spaces used for teaching independent living skills.

I know that you are as inspired and excited as we are to see this happen. On behalf of the Foundation, I ask you to open your heart, to help create the best healing environment possible for mental health patients at St. Boniface Hospital.  $\checkmark$ 

Vince Barletta

President & CEO

St. Boniface Hospital Foundation

# Back from the edge You helped save

**Greg Mackling's life** 

As the co-host of *The Start*, weekday mornings on 680 CJOB, it's Greg Mackling's job to embody the friendly Manitoban persona. And he does it well.

Meet him once, and the veteran Winnipeg broadcaster will quickly make you feel like you've been friends for years. He has a warm smile, sparkling blue-grey eyes, and has battled bipolar disorder and depression for much of his adult life.

Now, he's speaking out.

Indeed, Mackling had to face his demons in his early 30s, after he fell into a spiral of severe depression and even suicidal thoughts. His path to recovery eventually brought him to the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital, where mental health services are offered.

Almost 20 years ago, Mackling was in a serious car accident and had suffered a frontal-lobe brain injury that went undiagnosed for more than a year.

"I was living in Calgary at the time and making a six-figure salary. My dreams were coming true; or so I thought," he says. "I lost everything after the accident in June 2000. I lost my home, I lost my job, and all my belongings went into storage. I couldn't effectively plan my day or organize my thoughts." Mackling slipped into a serious case of depression.

### Dark thoughts on the highway

"I battled for a solid year and a half to two years with maybe taking my own life," he admits. Mackling had started to doubt his own importance to his family and friends.

"One weekend, I drove my car from Calgary to Vancouver, just sort of wondering what the best curve might be *not* to make in the Rocky Mountains."

Mackling closes his eyes, putting himself back behind the wheel. "All these years later, I'm still pretty in touch with the thoughts and feelings I was having that day. I was kind of done," he says softly. "The voices in my head were winning, the ones who always told me I wasn't good enough, or smart enough, or attractive enough."

"What I was dealing with felt bigger than I was. It felt as though I wasn't strong enough to overcome it at the time. But for some reason...I don't know what stopped me; either I wasn't strong enough to go through with it, or there was something stronger pulling me back from the edge."

Mackling moved back to his hometown of Winnipeg and ended up living on his late grandfather's couch for close to three years. "A lot of times, it was the people who understood the least of what I was going through who were solidly behind me," he says. "My grandfather, who was in his 80s, opened his home to me. Even though he had friends who suggested that I was lazy, and just trying to take advantage of him. He would have none of it."

Sensing he needed help, Mackling had many questions about his mental health. He found a psychiatrist in Winnipeg, the late Dr. Fred Shane, who he says went out of his way to find the answers he was desperately looking for. It was Shane who diagnosed Mackling's brain injury.

Next came cognitive rehabilitation, which included object assembly exercises and puzzles. "The late Dr. Marvin Brodsky and I worked every Thursday for a year and a half, to try and get my brain and synapses firing, and rework the wiring in my brain," says Mackling. He also benefited from talk therapy with Dr. Janine Cutler, Psychologist.

#### Continuing to heal

As a broadcaster, he had interviewed Dr. Mandana Modirrousta, Director of Neurostimulation and Neuropsychiatry at St. Boniface Hospital, several times. More recently, he got up the courage to ask her to see him as a patient. "I knew I could trust her. I knew I could be real with her," he says.

"Dr. Modirrousta was willing to help me to find out what my continued issues were...I'd sort of given up on figuring them all out. I figured the way I was, was the way I was always going to be. With mental health issues, I think half the battle is knowing what you're dealing with. With your demons."

Mackling flashes the smile that was featured in several ads when he was co-spokesperson of St. Boniface Hospital Foundation's Mega Million Choices Lottery. "I've been pretty lucky over the last decade, to end up where I have. I'm doing my dream job – something I'd always hoped and imagined I'd be doing."

"It's funny how life will sometimes reset things for you and give you a nudge. Or, as in my case, completely turn you around 180 degrees. It brought me back home to Winnipeg. I wouldn't have met my wife. I wouldn't have my beautiful twin sons."

"When I'm having a tough time and telling myself, I can't deal with this any longer. This is going to beat me, I remember what I've overcome in the past. And that makes it easier to carry on, and to make my boys proud," he says. \$\Psi\$

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### Tammy's dance with life

For Tammy Lambert, it all started with sleepless nights.

She was 15 years old, and before long, her tossing and turning had become the onset of mental illness – she could no longer tell the difference between what was real and what was not.

She was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder (a mental health condition with psychosis and mood-related symptoms) and spent three years in and out of treatment while going to high school.

Lambert went through 16 hospitalizations as an adult after that, including several as an inpatient at the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital, where mental health services are offered. Through it all, her supports there never gave up on her.

"The doctors and nurses in the McEwen Building have truly been like angels to me. Calling them anything else wouldn't capture the impact they've had on my recovery," says Lambert. "My dance with life has been blessed with the right people supporting me at all the right times – including my mother, Diane."

Today, Lambert lives in her own apartment, in a building that provides supported living services run by Sara Riel Inc.

She graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology and landed a job the following year with the Province of Manitoba, working in mental health proctoring services. "I see two to three clients regularly and help them learn independent living skills – like how to use the transit system, how to buy groceries, how to clean, and how to go to appointments





There are people in Manitoba with mental illnesses who want to get treatment – only they don't know where to turn, says Darren Zacharias. He knows this because he used to be one of them.

In 2002, after graduating from high school, Zacharias was gradually overwhelmed by feelings of loss and isolation.

"My mental illness affected my confidence quite a bit," he explains. "I was never quite prepared to go out and interact socially. As a teenager, I'd get anxious before going out, whether it was to school, or work, or out with my friends. I ended up being isolated – I just stayed in and read."

It was as an outpatient in the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital, where mental health services are offered, that Zacharias was able to start turning his life around. There, he was diagnosed with depression and later, with manic-depression and schizoaffective disorder.

With treatment, Zacharias' symptoms are in remission and he has returned to his job with the Province of Manitoba. Physical exercise has helped him also. "Working out is a form of treatment anyone can start, today," he says.

"People have this stigma. It was an old mindset that having a setback like mine makes you weak, but there are local heroes who deal with this every day...it's not only you," he says.

"Being able to share my story with others, and maybe helping just one person, makes that effort valid. I'd like to tell people to seek the treatment they need and to build a support system to help them. The Hospital can provide those resources, through clinics and groups," he says.

"My team in the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital has been absolutely phenomenal."



Diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) at age eight, Michael Daman's mental illness and subsequent complications came close to ruining his life, if not ending it.

When friends his age were out riding their bikes, as a child Daman, who is now 30, was trapped indoors, washing his hands so frequently they would crack and bleed. "I was afraid of germs," he says. "I was afraid to do anything outside of my own home. My school work and friendships, everything took a back seat to my OCD."

Daman's illness progressed as he aged. "When I was a little older, my OCD transformed more into unwanted and intrusive thoughts that I would try to push away by performing a compulsion," he explains. "Mine was typically to brush my teeth, up to 50 or more times per day, just trying to chase these thoughts away. It got to the point where my doctor was concerned that I was doing damage to my teeth."

Then, things went from bad to worse. "In my early 20s, I started using alcohol and drugs as a way of coping with my OCD. They were connected to my mental illness, very much so. I started to drink alone. I used it from morning 'til night. And then I'd wake up and have to deal with a worsened OCD because I'd been drinking," says Daman.

At age 23 he suffered liver failure and was put on dialysis at St. Boniface Hospital. His condition worsened, and they were

about to administer last rites, but he pulled through and his liver has since healed almost completely. "That's thanks to the excellent care I received at the Hospital. I'm here today to tell the story," he says.

### Studying to become a psychiatric nurse

Today, Daman is in treatment for his addictions. "I don't think I would have reached this point without help from the Hospital. I don't even know if I'd be alive today if it wasn't for the Mental Health Program, to be quite honest with you."

Inspired by his caregivers at the Hospital, Michael is enrolled at Brandon University, studying to become a psychiatric nurse himself. "Everyone deserves a chance to overcome their struggles, and to achieve a level of happiness and success in life that might seem unattainable right now. I would like to be an example of that," he says.

"Honestly, my future has never looked brighter. I can dream of things again, which was lost to me for a long time. To a donor I would say, 'Thank you for helping to save my life.' Because without your support, I could very easily have been dead by now."

Become a lifeline for Manitobans with mental illnesses. Donate today, at stbhf.ca.



Dawn Beirnes has watched the public's understanding of mental illnesses change over the years, along with her own.

Beirnes was diagnosed more than 30 years ago with bipolar affective disorder and later, borderline personality disorder.

Before then, as a young person Beirnes says she didn't know anything about mental illness. Rather, she and her boyfriend at the time had tried to hide her symptoms. She told herself that being depressed and even suicidal were all just part of growing up. "We didn't think we were hiding anything. We thought those feelings were normal."

"Now, I don't hide it," she says. "I'm proud to say that I have had a lot of help from St. Boniface Hospital's Mental Health Program, and it's still helping me to this day."

Beirnes sees an ongoing need to educate others. "I love talking to people about my mental illness. Because I don't want other people to think that it's normal to act out, to try to kill yourself, to be psychotic, and to go through all the heck that I went through."

Being a member at Westminster United Church, where she volunteers and has sung in the choir for 28 years, has been instrumental in Beirnes' recovery. "The church is supportive of my illness, and they're supportive of me. They treat me like anyone else in the choir," she says. "I feel it's therapeutic, singing at the front of the church. I'm lucky to sing a solo in the summer...it's rewarding."

## Inside the McEwen Building

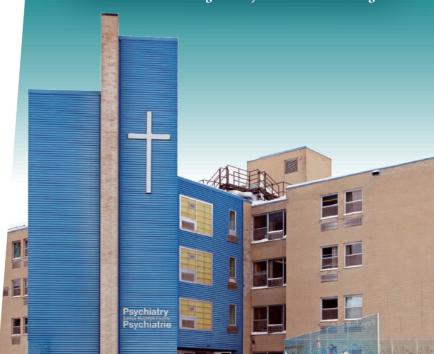
The average stay for a patient in the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital is 25 days. Some are admitted for less than three days, and others are treated as inpatients for more than a year.

**Greg Mackling, patient:** We need to bring the building into the modern age. If you haven't been there, imagine an apartment building that's more than 30 years old. It's like that: painted cinderblock walls, linoleum floors, narrow hallways, poor lighting, older windows.

I've visited so many other parts of St. Boniface Hospital that are cutting-edge, that are world-class. The aesthetics make you feel comfortable and allow you to even forget that you're in a hospital. But in McEwen, it was difficult to concentrate on healing because the facility is just not what it ought to be. Those among us who need help deserve better.

A 2008 study out of the University of the West of England reported in The Journal of The Royal Society for the Promotion of Health that "aspects of art, design and environment...were relevant to mental health care."

The study "found evidence that environmental enhancements can have a positive impact on health and well-being of staff and patients in mental health care. Arts, when considered within this framework of evidence-based design, can also contribute to well-being, offering reassurance and creating identity in health care settings."





#### Call it Mission Accomplished.

As a Jesuit Catholic school, Winnipeg's St. Paul's High School aims not only to help students achieve academic excellence but also to grow as community leaders as they become "Men for Others."

Throughout the academic year, St. Paul's holds 3 Mission Weeks, during which students raise funds for a cause. For their final Mission Week, they chose St. Boniface Hospital's Peritoneal Dialysis Unit. The mission they set for themselves: raise \$15,000 for the purchase of 50 \$300 kits enabling patients to undergo dialysis at home.

Leading the way was the Maroon and White Society – an assembly of Grade 12 students who serve as ambassadors for major events both inside and outside the school.

Before setting out to ask others for donations, the Maroon and White toured the Hospital's Dialysis Unit. The purpose was to understand what patients go through. It proved an eye-opening visit for the St. Paul's Seniors, including John Moncrieff and Allan Foran.

"I saw the changes in guys' faces," says Moncrieff. "We were excited to help."

Adds Foran: "Until you see it, you don't realize the time it takes to get treatment. Being able to do it at home is huge."

St. Boniface Hospital has one of Canada's largest peritoneal dialysis programs. It's one of just two Winnipeg hospitals where patients are easily trained to perform this type of dialysis, in

which a body's natural peritoneal membrane acts as a filter to remove excess waste and fluid.

Home treatment has many benefits, says Berlene Villanueva, Renal Health Nurse Clinician at the Hospital.

"The ability to do dialysis at home means greater independence, the ability to work and travel, fewer dietary and fluid restrictions, and less exposure to hospital-acquired infections."

"One of the nice things about the kits is that patients don't have to worry about how to finance some of those necessary supplies. Starting dialysis already is a very difficult time for most patients and families. Having these tools ready for patients, gives them a head start."

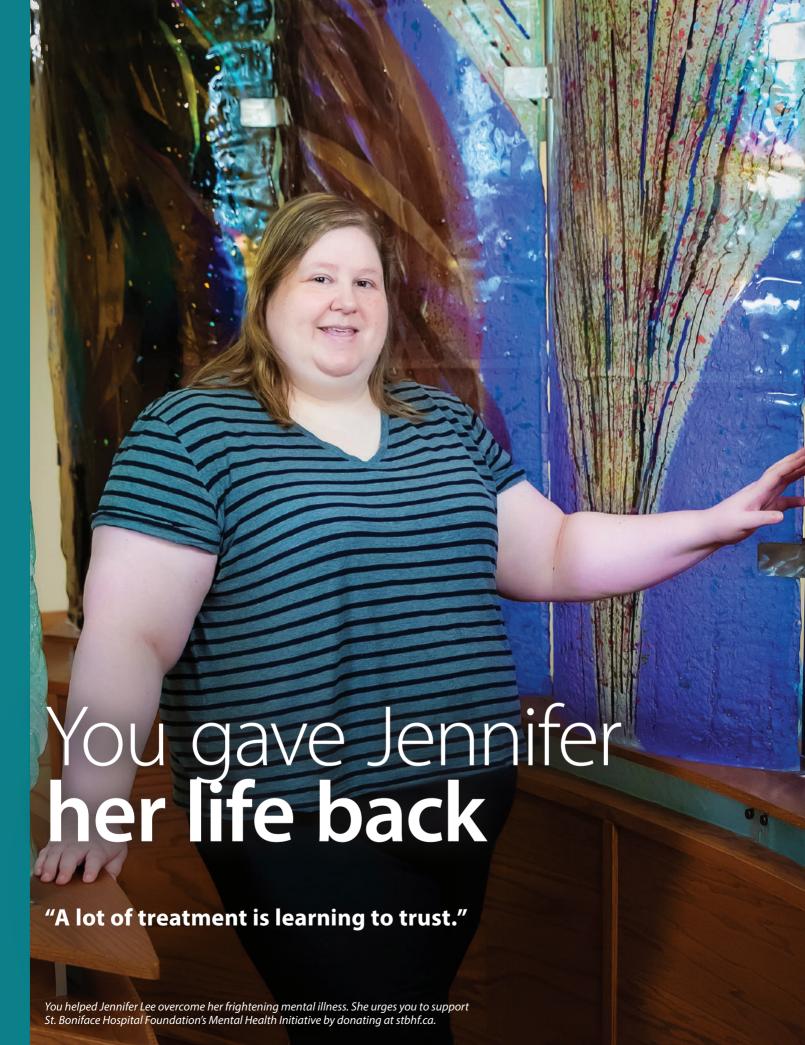
### Surpassing the goal

The St. Paul's community rallied around the cause during Mission Week, April 29 to May 3. Responding to a variety of appeals, including dress-down days and pizza, the student body achieved a 100% participation rate. As a result, Mission Week raised a remarkable \$18,000 – a record amount for a Maroon and White fundraiser.

Reflecting on the school's support for St. Boniface Hospital, Bob Lewin, St. Paul's Principal, says, "We're here (at the Hospital) to be educated at the heart-level first. Then we can get out and do the work."

"We have a saying that sums it up: 'Faith that does justice'." 🔑

Every donation matters. Find your way to give today, at stbhf.ca.



Imagine waking up one morning in your own bed, but unable to remember where – or even who – you are. That was the confusing reality Jennifer Lee had to face, a decade ago.

"The person I was before I woke up that day in 2009 doesn't exist anymore," says Lee. "My brain doesn't work the way it used to. There's no going back to who I was before."

Living in Brandon at the time, she awoke hearing unfamiliar voices in her bedroom. "It was really scary for me. I know now what was happening was psychosis," she says. "I could only remember where I worked, for some reason. So, against better judgement I got out of bed and reported to work. With all this confusion in my head!"

It didn't go well.

Acting erratically, Lee was asked to leave shortly after arriving. "It's almost as if I was on drugs. I wasn't, but that's what it must have seemed like to them." Lee remembers feeling like her body was being controlled by someone else.

Not knowing what else to do, Lee found her way back home and crawled into her bed. "I spent the next week or so alone, trying to pretend what was happening wasn't happening. I didn't know what was going on."

Lee's family and roommate came to understand something wasn't right and helped her seek help in a Brandon hospital. She was diagnosed with bipolar disorder (subsequently changed years later to schizoaffective bipolar disorder, her current diagnosis).

It was a lot to process all at once. In the Brandon psychiatric ward, Lee's mental illness caused her to become paranoid. She didn't trust anyone and was deeply suspicious of the antipsychotic medication she'd been prescribed, believing it to be poisonous. She feared for her life.

Then there were the voices. "They were unpredictable, unfamiliar, and kept telling me to do things," she says. "Having the voices was a big concern for me; they never went away." By the spring of 2012, Lee had been discharged and she wanted her independence back. She stopped taking her medication and moved to Winnipeg.

Again, it didn't go well.

After a few months, her family once again became worried about her behaviour. "Things weren't going well for me that October," says Lee. "I hadn't slept in two days." Police were called, and she was admitted to the McEwen Building at St. Boniface Hospital, where mental health services are offered.

It would be the first of two times Lee was admitted that year, to recover for three to four weeks at a time.

#### Learning to move forward

"When I got into the McEwen Building, right away things felt better for me," she says. "Being admitted can be lonely and isolating, but in there I felt like everyone was an advocate for me. I wasn't going to have to worry about my condition. I felt cared-for."

Nonetheless, Lee was still fearful of being poisoned by her medication. "But the way things were explained to me made sense. For the first time, I was hopeful things would start to turn around for me. It was explained to me why the medication was prescribed, and how it compared with other medications. Everyone at St. Boniface Hospital was straightforward with me – if I had a question, they gave me an answer," she says.

Inside the McEwen Building, Lee found a support system and sense of community that helped her focus on the positive aspects of her recovery, rather than the negativity associated with mental illnesses. "I got to know some of the other patients in the McEwen Building. For my 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, the nurses brought in cupcakes for everyone to celebrate. If a patient has a birthday, they acknowledge it. It's kind of a positive thing for everybody there; it's something else nice for us to focus on."

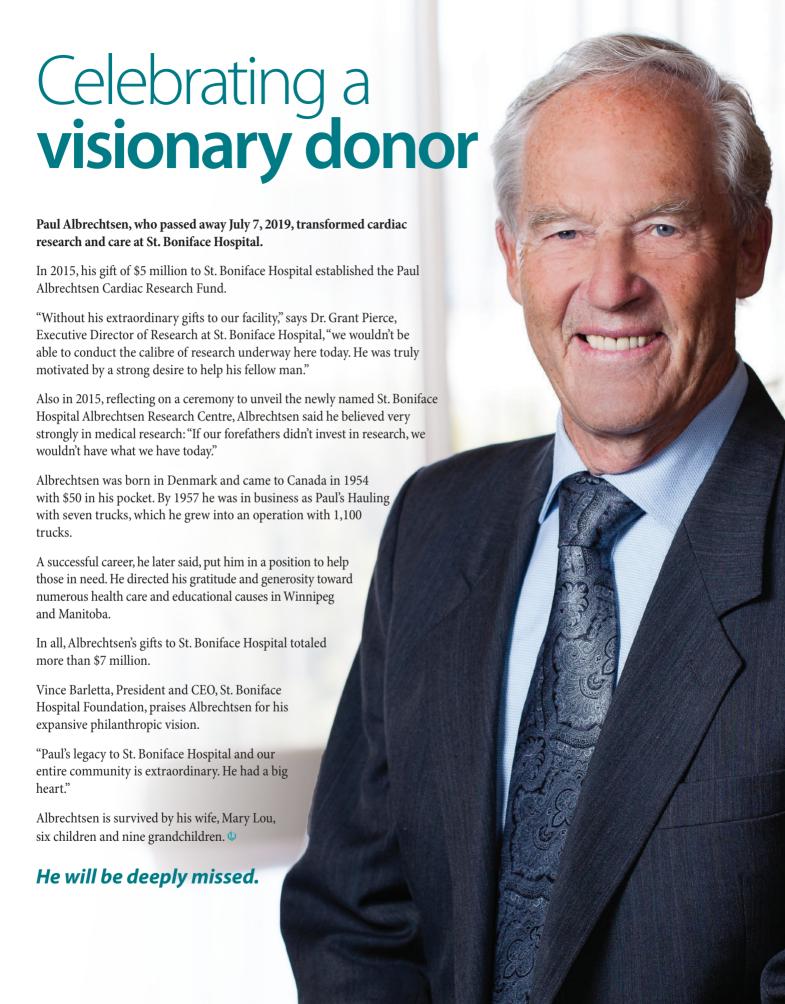
"A lot of treatment is learning to trust," she explains. "Everyone I've been introduced to and who has been a part of my ongoing care has been caring, friendly, open and honest with me. It helps, because it makes me want to continue with my treatment."

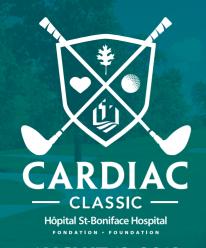
Things are finally going well.

Ten years have passed since Lee became mentally ill. Today, she continues to live on her own in Winnipeg. "I've tried to hold different jobs over the years. It's hard to do your job properly when you're hearing voices," she says. "I've had to leave some jobs because I was hearing them. When people are talking to me, so are they – it can be hard to concentrate and listen when you have different voices speaking to you."

"I can only go forward," she says. "My life keeps getting better. I'm always hopeful – I'd rather look ahead than behind." "

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