

# Believe

*You are creating a healthier society*

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## Helping Babies Take Their First Breaths

**Hospital seeks to add specialized ventilators used only in NICU**



*Members of St. Boniface Hospital's Respiratory Therapy team pictured with a high-frequency jet ventilator, used only in the NICU.*

### **Helping premature babies breathe is a critical role of St. Boniface Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).**

To do that, respiratory therapists rely on specialized machines called high-frequency jet ventilators, used only in the NICU to support St. B's tiniest and most vulnerable patients.

St. Boniface Hospital currently has two such jet ventilators on site. They have not always been enough, said Kwabena Osei-Bonsu, the Manager of Health Services for Respiratory Therapy and Perfusion at the Hospital.

"At times we have had to borrow more jet ventilators as needed from Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg Children's Hospital," said Osei-Bonsu. He explained St. B is working to double its count by adding two more jet ventilators this winter, with help from Foundation donors.

"Children's Hospital has lent them to us; we ship them back, across the river back and forth. Our teams on each side have always found a way to make it work; we look out for each other,"

he added. "But with two more jet ventilators here at St. B, we will not have to wait for a machine to cross the river. This would mean faster, safer care for babies in our NICU."

Donors offering help to add two more jet ventilators at St. Boniface Hospital will have an impact that goes even beyond just patients, said Osei-Bonsu.

"The obvious impact is to be able to support patient care. But often when we talk about impact we forget about staff. What it means for them when we are not able to deliver the care we want to, because we don't have the resources on hand," he said.

"Our department is full of dedicated respiratory therapists who got into health care to help people. For them to be able to help, you need to provide them with adequate resources to do their work. Often the barrier to that is funding."

***Thank you for protecting the fragile lungs of premature babies.***





# Karen's Corner

**Strange as it sounds, it's late November and I still have gardening on the brain.**

The reason is that the Mental Health Program here at St. B is creating a therapeutic garden! It will be a secure, welcoming space on the doorstep of the McEwen Building, where mental health services are offered. You can read more about it on page 7 of this issue of Believe.

Are you a gardener? As I mentioned in this space last spring, you can plant the seeds of healing by making it possible for the Hospital to finish construction of the therapeutic garden and open it in 2025. Give today and you will see your kindness grow and bloom in a safe, inviting environment made for our patients.

I invite you to pull on your favourite pair of gardening gloves and give today! Call us at 204-237-2067 or email [info@stbhf.org](mailto:info@stbhf.org) to make your gift.

*Karen Fowler*

**Karen Fowler**, CFRE  
President & CEO  
St. Boniface Hospital Foundation

**PS:** Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) members may be on strike this season. In the event of a labour disruption, the Foundation remains ready, willing, and grateful to accept your gift online at [bealifeline.ca](http://bealifeline.ca) or by phone at 204-237-2067. If you prefer to use mail, rest assured that your gift will still reach the Foundation.

# In Brief: Foundation News

## Frozen in time

St. Boniface Hospital's COVID-19 Time Capsule, a combination of letters, postcards, photos, and memorabilia provided by staff and patients of the Hospital, relating to the pandemic, was sealed on August 20, to be opened in March of 2050.



The time capsule commemorates the massive outpouring of community support for St. B staff and physicians who provided care during the public health crisis. The Galerie Buhler Gallery, which partnered with the Hospital and Foundation donors on the project, has agreed to store the time capsule until it is opened.

## Thank you to a pair of leaders

The Foundation is grateful for the service of two gentlemen who recently retired from our Board of Directors. Board Chair Jonathan Letkemann recognized Carmine Militano and Walter Saranchuk at a ceremony at the Hospital in September.



Militano joined the Board in 2011 and served for 12 years, including three years as Board Chair. Saranchuk joined the Board in 2018 and served for five years. He was Vice Chair of the Executive Committee at the time of his retirement.



We wish Carmine and Walter both well, with our appreciation.

Don't miss out on stories of *hope and healing!*

Join the Foundation's email list at [bealifeline.ca](http://bealifeline.ca)



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# Catching Up with the Burtnyk family

**Annie Burtnyk, 2, spent the first three months of her life in St. Boniface Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).**

*"It was not a place we wanted to be, but let me tell you, we were so thankful it was there when our family needed it. The nurses who work there, and the specialized medical equipment Foundation donors helped fund, saved Annie's life," said her parents, Kelly, and Corey Burtnyk.*

*We caught up with the Burtnyks this fall to find out how they are doing.*

**We heard Annie loves to dance and wear her tutu. Are there any more dance recitals in her future?**

Annie still loves dancing and goes to classes twice a week! She's in "big girl" dance classes now and goes in all by herself. We are so proud of her, but also miss dancing with her. We will be cheering her on at the spring recital!

**The Foundation has featured your family's story in a Free Press ad, on our website, in a letter to our donors, and will in a new video this season. What has all the attention been like?**

We have been saving all the clippings and copies of the letter so that we can show Annie when she's older. We are thankful that our story had a happy ending. Hopefully, we can now help others experiencing a stay in St. Boniface Hospital's NICU.

**What would you say to Foundation donors who support the NICU?**

A simple thank-you doesn't seem sufficient, but it comes from the bottom of our hearts. We are grateful everyday for Annie and the care she received when she needed it.

**Kelly, Corey, and Annie Burtnyk would like to thank you for speaking up for the NICU.**



*Annie Burtnyk was very premature when she was born by C-section in December of 2021. She weighed one pound, ten ounces at birth.*

# A Beautiful Night of Giving

**\$150,000 raised for women's heart health research!**

You joined us in taking one step closer to a world without heart disease on September 5. The Foundation's annual Rosé Soirée brought together more than 300 guests united in their hope of closing the knowledge gap in cardiac research.

The Foundation transformed the Canadian Museum for Human Rights into an enchanting Italian night market evoking

Lake Como. The evening was a perfect blend of glamour and philanthropy, with proceeds supporting two basic research positions in Manitoba's first and only dedicated women's heart health research initiative.

**Thank you to our guests, sponsors, vendors, and supporters for making Rosé Soirée a special evening. See you next year!**



# You are Bringing Heart Tissue into Focus

## Essential tool will push cardiac research forward

**Dr. Inna Rabinovich-Nikitin, Principal Investigator at the Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences (ICS) at St. Boniface Hospital, is working to close the knowledge gap in traditional cardiac research.**

She is pioneering Manitoba's first dedicated women's heart health research program, building on the work of many colleagues. One area of Rabinovich-Nikitin's research is focused on studying how heart failure presents differently in men and women, providing insight for future sex-specific treatments.

For these studies, it's essential to have the best and latest lab equipment. To do histological staining, which highlights important features in tissue samples, researchers need to cut the heart tissue into very thin samples before examining them under a microscope. Only a few pieces of equipment can do this.

Thanks to you, Rabinovich-Nikitin was able to purchase one of these pieces — a Leica Cryostat — allowing her and her team to identify disease markers and areas of concern.

"This cryostat is an essential research tool that will significantly help advance research in women's heart health," said Rabinovich-Nikitin. "I am so grateful to Foundation donors for making this possible, and for playing such an important role in our efforts to better understand, treat, and prevent heart disease in women."

This cutting-edge equipment isn't limited to just her lab, however. Recognizing that research is a collective effort, the cryostat will be available for all researchers to use.

"It will play a pivotal role in generating new knowledge and groundbreaking discoveries in all areas of cardiac research here at St. B."

Dr. Inna Rabinovich-Nikitin's research work is made possible by the Wyrzykowski Family, Michael F.B. Nesbitt, and donors like you.

***Thank you for playing a critical role in advancing women's heart health research and care.***



***Don't stop here! Read more about Rabinovich-Nikitin's research.***



***Dr. Inna Rabinovich-Nikitin's latest purchase for her lab, the Leica Cryostat, which will slice heart tissue into "wafer-thin" samples.***

# When the News is Heartbreaking

## Parent advocate Sherokee Ilse spoke at conference

**A first-of-its-kind conference in Manitoba saw health-care providers from across the province gather to talk and learn about a difficult topic, with support from St. Boniface Hospital Foundation donors.**

The Manitoba Pregnancy and Infant Loss Conference was held October 24 and 25 at Winnipeg's Inn at the Forks. The Hospital's Obstetrics, Gynecology & Neonatology (OGN) Program hosted the conference, in co-operation with Women's Health Clinic and Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg.

The conference welcomed roughly 80 attendees representing almost all of Manitoba's regional health authorities. They included nurses, physicians, doulas, community support workers, social workers, counsellors, midwives, spiritual health workers, psychologists, and health-care managers.

"We all want to have more openness around this topic," said Chloe Shindruk, speaking before the conference. Shindruk is a Clinical Nurse Specialist in the OGN Program and Chair of the conference planning committee at St. Boniface Hospital. "Our aim was to support health-care providers, equip them with best practices and tools they need to provide the most compassionate care possible, and to share knowledge."

As many as one in five pregnancies end in loss, according to Statistics Canada. That number is significant, said Shindruk. "Anticipating or experiencing pregnancy loss or the death of an infant is more common than is understood, colloquially," she said.



Sherokee Ilse, a renowned international speaker, trainer, and author based in Tucson, Arizona, facilitated discussions and panels at the conference, and delivered the keynote address. Ilse is also a consultant, parent advocate, and bereaved parent herself.

"When a baby dies, there's nothing small about it," said Ilse, on the phone from Tucson before the conference. "It's huge for families," she continued. "It's not just the size of the baby or how long they've been pregnant; it's the future the parents have created in their hearts and minds. This is traumatic and extremely emotional for most families."

**"Death...does not define these babies. Love does."**

"This isn't only about the death of a baby; this is about the birth, life, and love of a baby. Death, or problems the baby has, do not define these babies. Love does. When parents hear this, it frees them up to love on their baby and not be afraid, as well as make better decisions based on love. Health-care providers can learn so much from the lips and the hearts of those who have lived it," she said.

***You are supporting parents, families, and health-care providers through some of the most difficult times of their lives. Thank you.***



***Don't stop here! Read more about the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Conference.***



***Organizers of the Manitoba Pregnancy and Infant Loss Conference. Chloe Shindruk, front row, seated second from left; Sherokee Ilse seated next to her, third from left.***

# A Century of Building a Better St. Boniface

**It's not every day a company reaches a milestone like its 100<sup>th</sup> year in business.**

When Nelson River Construction made it, President and CEO Gord Lee and his staff decided it was time to give back to the community that had nurtured their heavy construction company and contributed to its success in Manitoba.

Nelson River Construction's head office and repair facility were located on Dawson Road in St. Boniface for its first 80 years in business. The repair facility remains on the site to this day, while its head office is now located on Taylor Avenue.

In 2023, Nelson River approached the Foundation to make its largest gift in company history, with a \$50,000 pledge over five years to St. Boniface Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) redevelopment and expansion project.

In recognition of Nelson River's gift, the Hospital will name one of eight new negative pressure isolation rooms in the ED in honour the company. Nelson River Construction's kindness will ensure the best possible infection prevention and control among patients, visitors, and staff at St. B.

Designed to limit the risk of spreading airborne viruses such as flu and COVID-19, the rooms will all be equipped to protect the most contagious and at-risk patients, such as those receiving cancer treatment.

***You are standing with Nelson River Construction in support of emergency care for all Manitobans. Thank you.***



***Pictured: A tunnelling project on Taylor Avenue in Winnipeg. The heavy construction company was established in 1911 as Fowler & Young Contracting Engineers, later changed in 1923 to Nelson River Construction.***

## Craft Kits Full of Happiness

**Patients of all ages will enjoy happier, more stimulating stays at St. Boniface Hospital thanks to a crafting charity and the community volunteers across Canada who power it.**

Crafting for a Cure, a registered charity established in Toronto over two decades ago, provides craft kits and other distractions to patients in about 40 Canadian hospitals, including St. B and HSC Winnipeg Children's Hospital. The kits include ready-to-do artistic activities like colouring, drawing, collage-making, making dream catchers, and beading.

Volunteers, Foundation staff among them, gathered at the Best Western Premier Winnipeg East on June 27, and again on November 12, to put together about 600 kits for Manitoba hospitals.

St. Boniface Hospital regularly receives shipments of such kits from Crafting for a Cure, which it then distributes to patients and children in the Hospital's Indigenous Health Program, ACF Pediatrics at 400 Taché, and in the Mental Health Program at the McEwen Building.

"I think being in a hospital environment is scary for anybody, regardless of what's wrong with their health," said Pamela Bielak, Founder and President of Crafting for a Cure, on the phone from Toronto.

"If I'm bringing a smile or a distraction, I like to say, 'Each craft kit contains numerous smiles,' which could mean the patient or child smiles, the parent smiles, and the health-care providers smile."

***You have joined Crafting for a Cure to make a difference in patient care at St. Boniface Hospital. Thank you.***



***In June of 2024, Foundation volunteers put together craft kits for use by patients in St. Boniface Hospital.***

# You are Building a Path to Wellness

## Therapeutic garden construction underway at McEwen

**Thanks to your generosity, St. Boniface Hospital is transforming the McEwen Building, where mental health services are offered, by extending compassion outdoors with a new therapeutic garden.**

The garden will provide patients with a peaceful, secure space where they can reconnect with nature. Research shows that being outside — hearing birds sing, feeling a breeze on your face, and enjoying natural light — can relieve symptoms of anxiety, stress, and depression. As human beings, we instinctively understand that being in nature is good for us and promotes wellness.

“In a world currently facing a mental health crisis, this therapeutic garden offers our healthcare system a cost-effective solution in improving the health and quality of life for our patients and community,” said Sandra Torchia, Director of Health Services, Mental Health, Renal Health, Palliative and Spiritual Care Programs.

“Making sure that our patients have access to a green space and outdoor programming is an essential step in their mental health journey.”

The garden will include a winding walkway for peaceful strolls, seating and gathering areas, and raised flower beds for those who find gardening therapeutic. Patients will have

the opportunity to participate in light exercise using outdoor fitness equipment, or even “shoot some hoops” on the half basketball court. All in a serene, natural environment designed to engage the senses and foster hope and healing.

Work on this initiative began in August, laying the groundwork for the paved walkways, lighting, and the eventual fencing, planting, and installation of fitness equipment. Although construction is underway, there are still opportunities for you to be a part of this incredibly vital project. With your continued support, we will be able to create a space where every patient in the Mental Health Program can blossom.

“Thank you to all of you who have already committed to this project, and in doing so, acknowledge that mental health is an integral part of overall health,” said Torchia. “I want our community to understand the tremendous impacts of this project for years to come.”

***You are providing a safe, inviting environment for inpatients and outpatients in the Mental Health Program. Thank you.***



*Construction progress as of August, preparing for walkway installation, outdoor lighting, and fencing.*



*A rendering of the future completed McEwen therapeutic garden, looking south.*

# Giving. Remembering. Celebrating.

**Thank you to our many compassionate donors who have chosen to make gifts to St. Boniface Hospital Foundation in honour of those listed below.**

Gifts recognized were made from April 1, 2024 to July 31, 2024.

## In memory

Robert E. Allan  
Donald W. Andrey  
William Bannister  
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# Believe

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St. Boniface Hospital Foundation is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the national homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge that our water is sourced from Shoal Lake 40 First Nation. We respect the treaties that were made on these territories, and we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past. Recognizing that we are all treaty people, we dedicate our efforts towards a more loving and compassionate world as we all move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.



C1026 – 409 Taché Avenue  
Winnipeg, MB R2H 2A6

Open weekdays: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tel: 204-237-2067 or 1-866-472-4682

Web: [bealifeline.ca](http://bealifeline.ca)

Email: [info@stbhf.org](mailto:info@stbhf.org)



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St. Boniface Hospital Foundation  
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