



BE A HERO
FOR KIDS - **NOV. 4**
HAMILTONHEALTH.CA/EXTRA-LIFE



A C L O S E R L O O K @

Self-harming became a regular part of Samantha's life. She was cutting her arms and legs with a razor blade. Her weight was fluctuating because she was anorexic. Life was in serious jeopardy for this Hamilton teenager.

"I was suffering with mental health issues at the end of Grade 8 as I was going into high school," recalls Samantha. "The self-harming and eating disorder were coping mechanisms for depression. Sometimes my depression would involve severe mood swings and I'd bounce between being mad, sad and happy. Other times I would feel completely numb and it was difficult to get out of bed and do anything."

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Never Alone - A Mental Health Journey



Never Alone - A Mental Health Journey

(Continued from page 1) Samantha's parents took her to McMaster Children's Hospital, where the Child and Youth Mental Health Program became a guiding force in her life. She began regular therapy sessions with Dr. Sarah Watkins.

"Dr. Watkins is an amazing person," she says. "We made a strong connection right away and I've been seeing her for four years. She has taught me many coping strategies. I've also learned useful life skills in group therapy sessions."

Samantha has received both inpatient and outpatient care through the program at McMaster Children's Hospital and Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre.

"I've experienced suicidal thoughts, which is why I was admitted to the inpatient unit several times. Being an inpatient means you're living in the hospital with 24-hour support from the staff. Even in the middle of the night, someone was always there to help you."

Grateful for the care she received and the skills she learned, Samantha encourages people who are struggling with mental illness to seek professional help.

"I want to help break down the stigma associated with mental illness," she says. "It makes people feel ashamed. As a result, they're not willing to get help and they won't get better. People with mental illness should know that they're never alone."

Samantha is currently studying child and youth care at college and she is planning for a career that involves helping others who struggle with mental illness.

"The Child and Youth Mental Health program has changed my life," she says. "I still experience ups and downs, but I'm feeling much better now that I have the skills to get through those hard moments. I want to help other young people who are going through difficult times. I want to make a difference. I'm excited about my life and I want to accomplish so many things."



Dr. Watkins with Samantha in the Mental Health Courtyard at Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre.



To watch a video about Samantha's story, or to make a donation, visit hamiltonhealth.ca/samanthap

A Breath of Fresh Air for Mental Health

The Foundation is raising funds to transform an unused outdoor space at McMaster Children's Hospital into a therapeutic courtyard for use by inpatients in the Child and Youth Mental Health Program. The new Child and Youth Mental Health Wellness Courtyard will provide a secure, peaceful and healing environment where they can enjoy fresh air and sunshine during their inpatient stay.

Artist rendering subject to change and final construction.



Twenty-Five Years of Smiles



McMaster Children's Hospital Foundation and Scotiabank are celebrating a milestone anniversary this year. For 25 years, the *Scotiabank Smiles for MacKids* campaign has made a real difference for patients and families.

The *Smiles* campaign is supported by Scotiabank and Scotiabankers from across the region. Over the years, Scotiabankers have volunteered their time to host fundraisers and participate in the sale of plush toys. Additional fundraising activities have included barbeques, spaghetti dinners, craft shows, book sales, and the sale of lapel pins and bracelets. *The Steve Varey Memorial Golf Classic* is another much-anticipated fundraiser that brings the community together.

Thanks to the generosity of Scotiabank customers over the years, the campaign has helped support many areas of the hospital including the expansion and redevelopment of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the Angiography Suite. These funds have supported the purchase of equipment such as a laser scalpel, a neonatal transport incubator and ventilators.

Scotiabank has also supported the McMaster Children's Research Collaborative by funding the Scotiabank Chair in Child Health Research. Both Dr. Peter Rosenbaum and Dr. Jan Willem Gorter have had the honour of holding the Scotiabank Chair.

"On behalf of our patients, we send an enormous thank you to Scotiabank and Scotiabankers for 25 wonderful years of *Smiles*," says Pearl Veenema, President and CEO, Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation. "And we look forward to further honouring their long-standing support later in the year."



Scotiabank representatives celebrate the Angiography Suite opening with MacKid Jessica Wilson.

A New Home for Kidney Patients

On July 29, patients and hospital staff joined The Foundation in celebrating the opening of the redeveloped Hemodialysis Clinic at McMaster Children's Hospital. The clinic is the only place in south-central Ontario where pediatric patients with kidney disorders, such as chronic kidney disease and acute kidney injury, and those who require dialysis, are treated.

Upgrades to the clinic have been made to enhance the patient experience, which is especially important as patients visit the clinic several times a week and spend hundreds of hours receiving dialysis during the course of their treatment.

The redevelopment project was made possible thanks to the tireless efforts of Charlotte and Tim Blevins. McMaster Children's Hospital saved their daughter Kayla's life when she developed a severe E. coli infection, which led to life-threatening kidney failure. Grateful for the care their daughter received, the Blevins championed the *Caring for Little Kidneys* campaign and pledged to raise \$650,000 to redevelop the clinic. As the owners of Reid's Heritage Homes, the Blevins rallied their network, as well as the community, to support their many fundraising events.

"Through the *Caring for Little Kidneys* campaign, we were committed to



supporting the creation of a new Hemodialysis Clinic to help more children like Kayla in times of urgent need," says Tim Blevins. "It's wonderful that the Clinic is now a reality."

Making the Transition Easier

Transitioning from a pediatric to an adult hospital can be an overwhelming experience for patients and their families. A new app is currently in development to help make the transition easier.

“We’re seeing more patients with chronic conditions survive into adulthood,” explains Dr. Jan Willem Gorter of McMaster Children’s Hospital. “The MyTransition app is designed to prepare patients between the ages of 12 and 18 to take charge of their health care as they approach adulthood, which is important because adolescents who are not prepared are more likely to be admitted to emergency rooms.”

The MyTransition app features several tools to aid patients in managing their health care needs, such as tips to help patients

summarize their conditions, communicate with doctors and book appointments without the assistance of their parents. The app also contains information about a patient’s medical history and outlines any current treatment plans.

The pilot version of the app has been well received by patients and a new version is expected to be available in app stores this fall.

“We had a multidisciplinary team working on this project, including my co-principal investigator and adolescent medicine specialist, Dr. Christina Grant,” says Dr. Gorter. “Without the initial funding that was provided to our team by the Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation gala, we wouldn’t have been able to develop the app and be successful in receiving



Photo courtesy of Jessica Blackwood, CanChild

additional research funding for a new study. We are very hopeful that this app will empower youth at McMaster Children’s Hospital and beyond.”

Quality Health Care is Everyone’s Business



Operating a successful business can be about more than making a profit or beating the competition. Businesses can also make a genuine, positive impact on the lives of people in their community.

The Care4 program is an innovative fundraising partnership that empowers businesses to

demonstrate social responsibility by making a financial commitment on behalf of their customers to Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation. When consumers make a purchase from a Care4 partner, a portion of the purchase (unique to each partner) directly supports patient care, education, research and equipment purchases across the supported sites of Hamilton Health Sciences.

You can support Care4 in different and exciting ways:

- 1) As a consumer – by choosing products and services from Care4 program members.
- 2) As a business owner – by joining the program as a Care4 partner.

Visit hamiltonhealth.ca/care4 to see a list of member businesses. Join our caring community. Whether your business is large or small, the Care4 program is right for you. Please connect with Beth at 905-521-2100 ext. 44847 or whitebe@hhsc.ca.



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