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Finding answers for Andrew

Devastation and relief. As Shawn and his wife Veronika received the diagnosis for their three-year-old son, Andrew, these conflicting emotions raced through their minds. Andrew would never have a completely “normal” life, but years of unanswered questions were finally resolved. *(Continued on page 2)*



Andrew with HHS Staff

Women and Children's Health

Finding answers for Andrew

(Continued from page 1) Doctors at McMaster Children's Hospital (MCH) had found the missing piece of the puzzle: their son cannot fight infections like other kids.

When Shawn and Veronika welcomed Andrew into the world in March 2021, nothing seemed out of the ordinary. "We were new parents learning how to be parents," says Shawn. "Lots of worry, but also lots of amazing new moments. It was very normal in the beginning."

But within Andrew's first year, that normal began to change. He started getting sick, often and severely. Over-the-counter medications did little to help. Shawn and Veronika began to wonder if something more was going on. Their concern deepened in December 2023, when Andrew was admitted to MCH for seven days over Christmas.

"I remember how lonely it was for both of us," says Shawn, reflecting on that holiday season. "But because of donors, there were things to distract him."

In June 2024, a major clue emerged. A test with a pediatric allergist revealed that none of Andrew's vaccines had provided him with any protection. Without immunity, even common infections could become life-threatening.

Andrew was referred to pediatric immunology at MCH, where Dr. Rae Brager, a pediatric immunologist, took on his care. Dr. Brager's expertise in rare immune disorders and her compassionate approach made an overwhelming situation more manageable.

"I believe donations contribute to the care of complicated cases. I'm especially thankful that Hamilton Health Sciences has the resources to manage complex cases, like Andrew's, when reaching a diagnosis is tougher." – Shawn

"Dr. Brager ensured that we understood every step along the way and described it in simple terms so we could process," says Shawn.

Through clinical lab tests, genetic testing, and specialized expertise, a diagnosis was confirmed. Andrew was born with X-linked agammaglobulinemia (XLA), a rare genetic condition that prevents his body from producing the antibodies it needs to fight infection. Without treatment, Andrew is extremely vulnerable to repeated and severe bacterial and viral illnesses.

Relief came when Andrew started immunoglobulin 4 replacement therapy (IVIG).

“IVIG is a blood product pooled from multiple donors, each of whom has unique antibodies,” Dr. Brager explains. “By combining them into a single infusion, the antibodies can mimic the infection response of a healthy immune system. For Andrew, it means he can recover from common infections even though his body can’t produce antibodies on its own.”



Andrew with Pistachio the Platypus

Today, Andrew is five years old and finishing up junior kindergarten. He plays soccer, loves time with his grandparents, and enjoys being a big brother.

As he grows, he’ll eventually be able to manage his treatment at home with fewer hospital visits. But for now, Andrew receives IVIG every three to four weeks at MCH. Despite everything he’s been through, Andrew looks forward to his appointments.

“He calls it getting his superpowers,” Shawn says. “He knows there’s going to be a little hard part when they put the IV in. That’s where nursing and child life specialists are critical. They keep him distracted, it goes quick, and then he’s back to himself.”

In addition to his beloved care team, one of Andrew’s favourite new companions during visits is Pistachio the platypus, MacKids’ signature plush.

“That was just another thing that turned a hard day into a nice day,” says Shawn.

The specialized care, innovative treatments, and the small moments that make hard days brighter are only possible because of donor support. As Dr. Brager shares, “donations support us going further to ensure that our complex patients get all of their health care and human needs met.”

Be part of Andrew’s ongoing care

When you become a monthly donor, you join a special community of supporters who provide steady, compassionate care that families can count on. Dependable generosity allows teams to plan for the future and respond quickly to urgent needs.

Right now, your monthly gift will be matched for an entire year, doubling your impact. And as a thank you, your generosity will also place Pistachio the platypus into the arms of a child in hospital, offering comfort, companionship and a small moment of joy.

When you give monthly, you give hope. You give healing. You give kids like Andrew the chance to keep getting their superpowers.

Become a monthly donor today.

Give kids like Andrew the strength to keep getting their “superpowers.”

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A marker for better outcomes



MOLLI Table & OncoPen

Every day in Canada, 87 women are diagnosed with breast cancer. For many, surgery is a critical part of treatment. At Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre (JHCC), a leading regional centre serving a population of more than three million across south-central Ontario, breast cancer surgeries have increased by 24% since 2019. Meeting this rising demand with the highest standard of care requires constant innovation. For patients like Tami Jeanneret, that commitment to advancement shapes both experience and outcome.

In June 2025, Tami, a retired radio broadcaster, discovered a lump in her breast. She spent the summer moving through ultrasounds, mammograms and biopsies before starting chemotherapy in preparation for a double mastectomy.

“I wanted the best surgeon that I could find,” says Tami. That quest for the best led her to Dr. Nicole Hodgson, a surgical oncologist at JHCC. Within minutes of their first meeting, Tami felt confident in her decision.

That confidence grew as she experienced a culture of compassion across departments. “Everybody was so kind and so caring,” she said. “It’s those small things that you appreciate and make a huge difference in how you heal both physically and mentally.”

One of those small things was a powerful piece of technology, generously funded by The Ron and Nancy Clark Foundation.

On January 21, specialists used the Magnetic Occult Lesion Localization Instrument (MOLLI) to place a magnetic marker, about the size of a sesame seed, to pinpoint Tami’s tumours. During

her January 26 surgery, the marker guided Dr. Hodgson to the cancer so she could remove diseased tissue accurately while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible. Inside the operating room, Tami felt reassured by the professionalism surrounding her and by the expertise of a team focused on her safety and comfort.

Traditional localization methods rely on wires or radioactive seeds, which can cause discomfort, require same-day placement, and complicate scheduling. MOLLI replaces those approaches with a wire-free, radiation-free system that allows markers to be placed days in advance. This improves patient comfort, streamlines operating room workflow, and supports shorter, more precise procedures for clinical teams.

Today, Tami continues with radiation and additional therapies. She moves forward with determination and trust in her care team, and with deep appreciation for community support. Donors, she says, help “make life a little bit easier for somebody going through a really difficult experience.”

Thanks to donor investment, MOLLI will support up to 300 patients like Tami each year, making the future of breast cancer surgery more precise, compassionate and hopeful.



Tami Jeanneret

A seamless circle of care

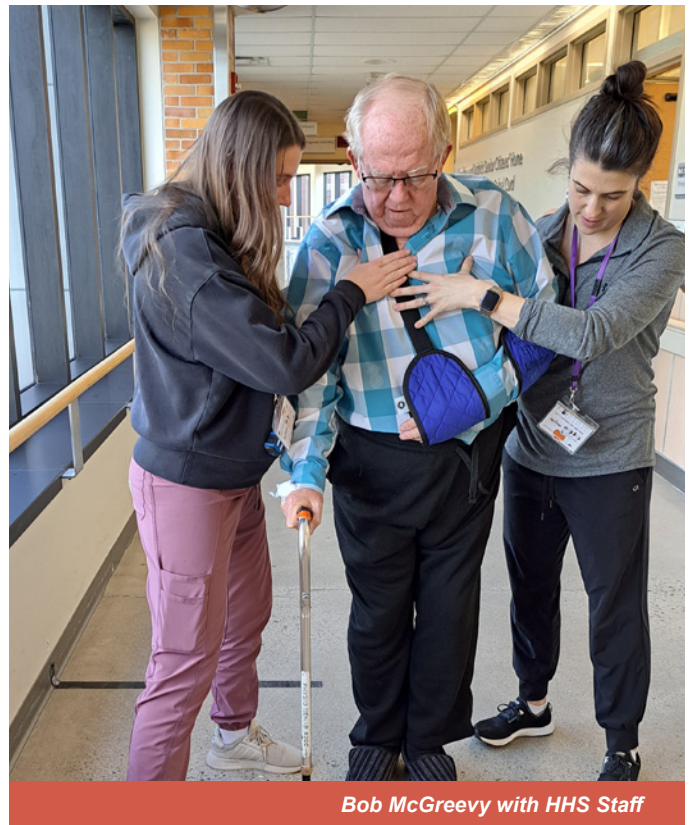
Just after midnight on December 27, 2024, Mary McGreevy woke to unfamiliar sounds beside her. Her husband, Bob Collins, could not turn over. She recognized the signs of stroke and called 911. Paramedics arrived within 10 minutes and transported him to Hamilton General Hospital (HGH), home to Ontario's largest integrated stroke program and a regional hub for specialized care and research.

Upon arrival, Bob came under the care of the Stroke Response Team. Clinicians assessed him quickly and began treatment that shaped his recovery. Reflecting on those first hours, Bob said, "I got really good care. People were taking care of me. Doing good things and talking to me so I knew what was happening." Mary saw the same standard across departments. "I find it just exemplary," she said.

Bob spent 33 days at HGH, first in acute care and then on the stroke recovery ward, where daily physiotherapy supported his progress with walking, balance, and functional movement. When he was ready for the next phase, teams coordinated his transfer to St. Peter's Hospital (SPH). "It was a seamless transition, to be sure," he said.

At SPH, rehabilitation specialists focused on practical skills for daily living. Mary described the environment as calm and supportive, sharing there was "a very caring staff, and some outstanding physio people there." Therapists practiced real-world tasks with Bob, including climbing the steps into his home and transferring in and out of his car. Staff also coached Mary in her role as caregiver, from safe wheelchair loading techniques to nutrition planning that supported Bob's diabetes.

After discharge, Bob continued outpatient therapy and aquatic rehabilitation at the Regional Rehabilitation Centre, where clinicians tracked progress and strengthened independence. His journey reflects the strength of a fully unified system, where specialized teams across multiple hospital sites work in sync to deliver seamless, coordinated care. From emergency stroke response to inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient therapy, each transition is intentional and connected, ensuring patients receive the right care at the right time. This level of integration, across disciplines and locations, sets Hamilton Health Sciences apart. Grateful for the care that supported Bob's survival and progress, Mary and Bob made a gift in memory of his daughter, Sherri, to support emergency department upgrades at HGH.



Bob McGreevy with HHS Staff



Hammer Plunge Participants

Neurosciences, ER

Taking the plunge to pay it forward

When Sara arrived at Hamilton General Hospital (HGH) in the spring of 2022, she was just 24 years old and facing a sudden, life-threatening health crisis. What started as a persistent headache and facial numbness led to an emergency department visit in St. Catharines, where doctors discovered a brain bleed caused by a cavernous malformation in her brainstem. Because she needed highly specialized neurological care, Sara was transferred to HGH, home to the region's leading neurosurgery program.

"I felt very lucky during a really scary time," Sara says. "I was so lucky to have the care and the doctors that I did. It made such a difference."

Her condition quickly worsened. Sara lost the ability to swallow, developed hydrocephalus (a dangerous build-up of fluid in the brain), and was admitted to the intensive care unit. "At that point, I had lost all basic function," she recalls. Machines and advanced medical equipment took over essential bodily functions while her care team worked around the clock to stabilize her.

Neurosurgeon Dr. Sunjay Sharma, residents, intensivists, and countless nurses were by her side. "Every single nurse made me feel so safe in an extremely vulnerable time," says Sara. "That feeling of safety and hope is what drives you forward."

Sara spent two months at HGH, slowly relearning how to move, swallow, and care for herself.

"Everyone just made me feel completely normal," she says. "That normalcy in my life helped me go forward."

Today, Sara has made a remarkable recovery. She returned to her MBA studies, graduated, and is back to enjoying volleyball and exercise. "I live a completely normal life now," she says. "It's a blessing I don't take for granted."

Sara's story wouldn't be possible without the life-saving, specialized care available at HGH that is made possible in part through donor support. In November of last year, she proudly served as patient ambassador for the inaugural *Hammer Plunge*, taking a frosty dip in the winter waters of Lake Ontario and helping raise \$146,815 to advance emergency services at the hospital. She hopes to see you at this year's event.



Sara Kovac

An enduring gift for breakthroughs

At Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS), one of the top five research hospitals in Canada, research is the engine that drives better diagnoses, safer treatments and more personalized care for patients from pre-birth to end-of-life. From advancing cancer therapies to improving outcomes for people living with complex chronic disease, HHS researchers are translating discovery into real-world impact every day.

This excellence is made possible by a powerful partnership between clinicians, scientists and donors. Philanthropy fuels innovation. It provides the seed funding that allows promising ideas to move from concept to clinical application. For many supporters, legacy giving has become a meaningful way to ensure that progress continues for generations to come.

A remarkable example is the Ann and John Eaton Estate Research Endowment Fund, established through a generous gift of more than \$1.5 million. Through this endowed fund, the interest generated each year will support an annual cancer research award at Juravinski Hospital and Cancer Centre (JHCC).



Ann & John Eaton

The 2026 call for applications is currently underway, with researchers competing for funding that could help unlock new approaches to cancer prevention, detection and treatment. Because the fund is endowed, its impact is ongoing, thereby creating a sustainable source of support for breakthrough work year after year.

The Eatons' connection to JHCC was personal. Ann received care in the acute medicine unit, and John was treated there for liver cancer. Jim and Kathy Harding, lifelong friends of the Eatons and executors of their estate, felt that supporting research at HSS was the kind of thing that Ann and John would like.

Their legacy now extends beyond their own care experience. Through this gift, they empower clinician scientists to ask bold questions and pursue discoveries that may transform cancer care for future patients and families.

Legacy giving is one of the most powerful ways to shape the future of health care. By including Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation in your estate plans, you can create lasting impact and ensure exceptional care for generations to come.



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Contact Jennifer to learn how to include Hamilton Health Sciences Foundation in your estate plans.

Every Step, Every Pedal, Every Inch Tells a Story.



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