BREAKTHROUGHS

Calgary Health Foundation™

Relentlessly advancing care, wellness & research

FROM FARMING ONE DAY TO LIFE-SUPPORT THE NEXT:

The 48 hours that changed Rick's life

A journey through loss inspires others

Removing barriers to access addictions help

Revitalizing space for mental and physical well-being

LOOK INSIDE

SPECIAL EDITION NEWBORN NEEDS FEATURE

Newborns Need
Calgary Health Foundation

A FIGHTING CHANCE FOR RICK:
A NEUROCRITICAL CARE JOURNEY

A neurological emergency changed everything in an instant for Rick and his family.

On March 27, 2019, Rick expected to wake up and tackle another day's work on their family's farm. Instead, he couldn't lift his head to eat his lunch.

Rick's life changed in an instant when a rare virus began attacking his brain. Rick was given a fighting chance thanks to Dr. Julie Kromm and the neurocritical care team, whom were able to detect and treat the virus accordingly.

What began as a mild concern and a quick trip from their farm in rural Alberta to the hospital in Hanna, quickly escalated into a life-threatening emergency. Within 12 hours Rick and his wife, Kathy, found themselves in the Red Deer hospital undergoing tests for what initially appeared to be a stroke. But, when things weren't adding up, Rick was rushed to Calgary for an MRI and quickly admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Foothills Medical Centre. He was placed under the care of the neurocritical care team who could monitor Rick's brain activity and begin a deep investigation of what was really happening to Rick before it was too late.

> What started as an inability to lift his head, rapidly evolved to being unable to swallow or raise either of his arms. His internal organs appeared to be shutting down.

In the few precious minutes before Rick had to be intubated, he let Kathy know that he would give her and his two sons an "okay" sign with his hand to tell them he loved them. It was the only thing he could say to his sons when they arrived.

What Dr. Kromm and her team began to realize was that Rick was suffering from a virus, Enterovirus D 68 Acute Flaccid Paralysis, an extremely rare condition in adults that usually only presents itself in children. Rick would remain in the ICU at Foothills for eight weeks as Dr. Kromm and her team began treatment to fight the virus that was attacking Rick's nervous system.

Approximately 900 patients every year are admitted to ICUs with life-threatening nervous system disorders in southern Alberta. These disorders represent between 15 to 20 percent of the patients being cared for in ICU environments. This includes patients with acute brain, spinal cord, nerve, and muscle injuries from trauma, strokes, cardiac arrests, seizures, infections, and other conditions. Without the support of the neurocritical care team at Foothills Medical Centre, patients like Rick likely will not have the same positive outcome.

> Neurocritical care is a novel field of medicine that has recently emerged out of worldwide research, including studies from Southern Alberta, showing that neurocritical care saves lives and is an essential link to the chain of survival and recovery after facing neurological injuries.

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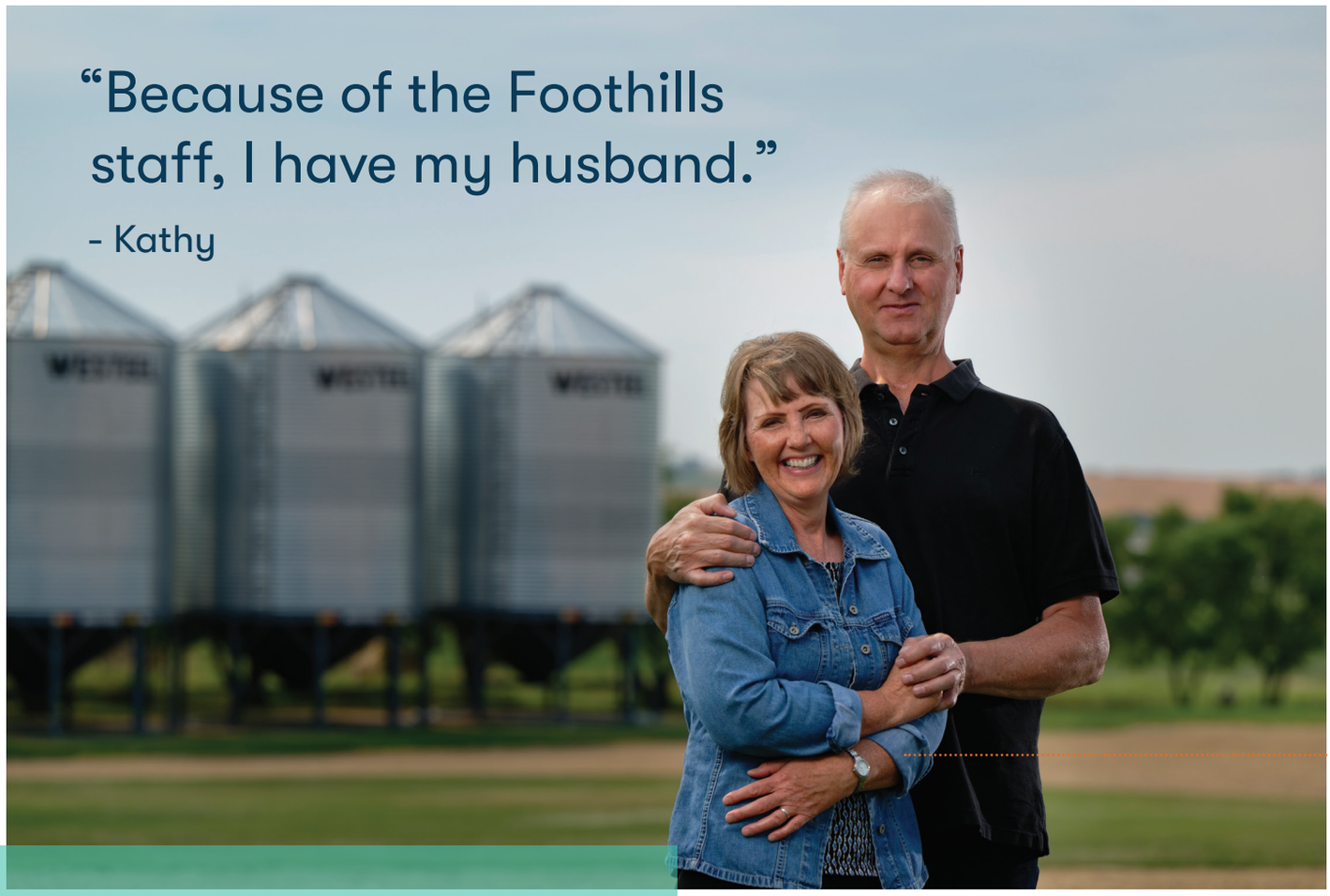

Rick continues to make progress and fully enjoy his life, his family, and even new adventures in their fifth wheel.

QUICK FACTS

4

most common conditions neurocritical care patients suffer:

cardiac arrest, neurological trauma, strokes and brain bleeds, and severe seizures.

75%

of patients with life-threatening nervous system disorders are under 65.

54%

of all neurocritical care patients in Calgary are seen by our neurocritical care teams at Foothills Medical Centre.

The rate of devastating outcomes for patients can vary widely:

BETWEEN 20-70%

depending on the diagnosis.

Often the stories of patients like Rick are as much about their families as they are about their own personal journey back to health. Kathy was by Rick's side every day and night during his time in the hospital except for the one day she left to see their son graduate from high school. She describes feeling a part of the Foothills team and how significant it was to be asked for her thoughts and opinions from Dr. Kromm and her team.

"When doing rounds, Julie (Dr. Kromm) and her team would ask me for my thoughts. I was blown away by how included I was in the process, and how approachable and warm everyone was.

> There were little things that the team did every step of the way to make our experience personal and meaningful.

Rick had a long road of recovery that saw him needing to learn to walk and even eat again. He required a tracheotomy to breathe and a feeding tube to ensure he was receiving the nutrients he needed. His tracheotomy was only able to be removed in early 2022. Today, Rick continues to make progress and fully enjoy his life, his family, and even new adventures in their fifth wheel.

Life instantly changed for Rick and Kathy that March, but their gratitude for each day is evident throughout their journey as they valued the time they had – even though it was uncertain. Their appreciation of the medical team at Foothills Medical Centre from their respiratory technician to their nurses, doctors, and every caregiver who made them feel heard and worked so hard to save Rick's life, is beyond words.

"The staff at Foothills Medical Centre made life worthwhile for us while we were there. Our youngest son was graduating from high school in June and Rick had to miss it. This was a difficult time for us but one of our nurses helped us through by reminding us that they were working towards getting Rick to future weddings and holding his future grandbabies. Rick has already been able to enjoy our oldest son's wedding, thanks to the team at Foothills." ■

A COMMITTEE'S JOURNEY WITH LOSS IS INSPIRING IMPACT FOR OTHERS

The Tiny Footprints Gala has created a community for those facing pregnancy and infant loss.

Butterflies on the wall at the Tiny Footprint's Gala hold the names of the little ones who are loved and never forgotten.

The loss of a baby through miscarriage or stillbirth is still a taboo topic. It is estimated 15 – 25% of pregnancies will end in miscarriage. And because it is not spoken about enough and often misunderstood, it can make families feel alone in their grief.

On October 15, the same say as Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remebrance Day, the 7th annual Tiny Footprints Gala brought families together to honour those who have experienced pregnancy and infant loss.

Tiny Footprints started in 2016 when a committee was formed by a hard-working group of women who have been touched by pregnancy and/or infant loss with the goal of raising funds in support of care for women and their families going through a difficult experience.

Powerful stories were shared at the Gala, vulnerable moments of grief were relived, and a significant amount of money was raised to support other families that have to walk this difficult journey.

We'd like to thank the Tiny Footprints committee of volunteers who come together to recognize and honour those brief lives lost that have left lasting impressions, and who raise awareness every October about Pregnancy & Infant Loss so no one feels alone. ■

REMOVING BARRIERS TO RECEIVE HELP:

AN INVESTMENT IN RENFREW RECOVERY CENTRE ALLOWS FOR BETTER TRIAGE.

As Calgary's only medical detox centre, the Renfrew Recovery Centre provides an invaluable breakthrough moment for up to 40 patients at any given time taking their first steps towards recovery from addiction. The Centre offers medically supported detoxification services to people while they withdraw from the effects of alcohol and other drugs, as well as gambling stabilization.

Prior to COVID, the Centre's triage vestibule could hold up to 15 people waiting for treatment, but with pandemic safety measures in place, the space was reduced to eight at a time. With less space, individuals seeking help were forced to wait in the parking lot or facing cold weather and often reverting to harmful activities.

Individuals seeking help were also faced with a number of adverse conditions as they patiently waited for the doors to open, causing many to decide to not wait to seek treatment and leave.

Through the generosity of donors, Calgary Health Foundation was able to support the Renfrew Recovery Centre with a $150,000 investment for an extension that serves as an addition to their triage room. This will increase access and enhance the safety of people seeking treatment, encouraging those first few steps towards addictions recovery. ■

While it looks as simple as a new trailer, this building is breaking down barriers for individuals seeking addiction detox support.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DONATING A GIFT OF SECURITIES TO CALGARY HEALTH FOUNDATION?

A: People who own stocks, bonds or mutual funds are happy to see their investments increase, and donating them can have some additional benefits. By donating a gift of securities, you will receive a tax receipt for the fair market value of the donation in the amount of the closing trading price on the day we receive them. Second, your donation is exempt from the capital gains tax that typically applies to the sale of a security.

Donating securities to Calgary Health Foundation is fast, easy, and benefits both you and the health of our community!

Scan this QR code to learn more:

REVITALIZATION OF THERAPY GYM SPACE CRUCIAL FOR CAREWEST COLONEL BELCHER

As you can imagine, nothing could prepare veterans living at Carewest Colonel Belcher long-term care centre for what was to come when the pandemic hit. Residents were forced to isolate away from their family and friends. Physical treatment and programming had become next to impossible for those who needed it most.

The sudden disappearance of everyday normal shone a light on the importance of the physical and mental health needs of our Carewest Colonel Belcher residents – with the revitalization of the Therapy Gym becoming top priority.

> Military life is hard on the body and the mind, as residents Gregory Bell and Don Ethell can attest. These two soldiers would also agree that daily therapy and physical fitness have been a "lifesaver" for them, especially since their careers required them to stay in tip-top shape.

Exercise helps navy veteran, Greg, feel more like himself again. After spending almost forty years in the navy, Greg continued to stay active following his retirement. Then, in 2015, he suffered a devastating stroke that left him in a wheelchair and unable to use the left side of his body. Greg participates in physiotherapy and exercise to combat the effects of his anxiety attacks. Unfortunately for Greg, the current equipment has its challenges. He, and many other residents living at Carewest Colonel Belcher, are in need of different types of equipment to better suit their disabilities.

Gregory Bell

Canada's most decorated Peacekeeper, Colonel (Ret'd) Don Ethell, has spent most of his life as a passionate advocate for the well-being of veterans. At 85 years of age, what continues to keep Don motivated despite his personal struggles with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is his desire to excel. To this day, physical fitness remains a big part of his life.

To help the residents, like Greg and Don, who have given us so much for the freedom we enjoy today, visit or scan the QR code below. Donations will allow Colonel Belcher to purchase new and desperately needed therapeutic cardio and strength equipment and renovate their current gym space so more residents can exercise together. ■

Don Ethell

Scan this QR code to learn more:

YOUR SUPPORT BRINGS WORDS OF WELL WISHES TO CRITICAL CARE PATIENTS IN CALGARY

I wish you all the best and I hope my donation helps in any way possible

– xo

My sincerest wish in your recovery and return to your family and friends. Gratitude to the doctors, nurses and staff for their knowledge and ability to aid these patients to their recovery!

Your smile is a ray of sunshine and your kind and gentle manner makes everyone feel special.

Keep your spirits up and be glad the doctors and nurses are there for you even though they are very busy. Rest, relax and recuperate.

Your health and wellbeing is important. Have faith, hope and charity in your heart. Good luck and good health.

One step at a time.

I've been there and back. We do matter and life can be good again. Wishing you all the love and care that helped me.

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