

BREAKTHROUGHS



*Relentlessly advancing
care, wellness & research*

THE POWER OF FAMILY: BATTLING AN ILLNESS TOGETHER

Providing Essential Care
for Vulnerable Newcomers

How a Grateful Patient
is Paying it Forward

Thank-You-Ary
– A Tribute to You,
Our Donors,
All Month Long

AN INTERVIEW WITH A GRATEFUL MOM

Sarah, at just 35 years old, was found in her home unconscious with her young son by her side. She was rushed to the hospital where doctors began to try and unravel the complexities of her neurocritical emergency.

It took one phone call for her mom, Lynn's, life to change too.

In speaking with Lynn, we quickly understood that unexpected events don't just change one life - they impact the whole family. When an individual is in a medical crisis, it truly takes a village to pull together and provide the support needed. In this case, Sarah's friends, family, medical team, and most importantly, Sarah's Mom, Lynn, were her village.

This has not been an easy journey. How did you find the strength to provide the support that Sarah and her son, Kolten, both needed?

I don't particularly view myself as a strong person. I am very emotional and worry far too much. I fly by the seat of my pants doing what I think must be done in the moment. During this time, I have to say, I honestly don't know what I would have done without the support of my son, Jeff, my daughter-in-law, Alissa, and my husband, Bill. They were my strength by allowing me to fully focus on Sarah knowing Kolten

was surrounded by family who had his best interest in mind.

I feel it important to acknowledge and thank family and friends for their support throughout this journey. From raising the alarm about Sarah's absence at school, to caring for Kolten, to providing respite after long days at the hospital, to challenging and inspiring Sarah to push through her recovery and rehabilitation; thank you!

What was the journey like for you while Sarah was in Foothills Medical Centre?

The time Sarah spent in ICU is pretty much a blur and reading the notes I kept from her stay opened the floodgates to a lot of emotion - both fearful and tearful. I thought often of the day Sarah came into this world - how precious she was - so tiny - so perfect. Watching her grow up into a confident, strong young woman. Becoming a teacher, a wife, and then a mother herself. Her zest for life. Her wicked sense of humor. And then the reality hits and you're sitting beside her full of uncertainty, seeing her in a coma, hooked up to a ventilator with all the necessary diagnostic tools around her, holding and stroking her hand, reading to her, babbling on to her incessantly about everything and anything - hoping she would just look over and tell me to "stop talking."

That was tough.

There was one day that stands out to me - I stopped stroking her hand and put my head down on the bed. I was exhausted - both mentally and physically. The next thing I remember was feeling her stroke my hand back. I knew then we were going to start moving forward. In the coming days, she started to emerge from the coma, responding to her medical team, not in words, but with that sideways glance or stern look she is so famous for.

I knew I had to put my faith in Sarah's medical team (doctors, nurses, respiratory technicians, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, recreational therapists, and pharmacists) and that together, with their wealth of knowledge and experience, we would see Sarah move forward.

You have been very open with your story and willing to support the neurocritical care initiative. What motivates you to give back in this way?

The motivation to support this initiative comes from the heart. When met with the uncertainty of her diagnosis (strokes, meningitis, and hearing loss, to name but a few), her medical team's support was relentless and unwavering. I had to put my faith in the collective



Sarah surrounded by her precious family - Kolten, Bill, Lynn and Gus

expertise of all those involved in Sarah’s medical care. We are so grateful for the care Sarah received while at Foothills Medical Centre and cannot thank them enough for walking this journey with us. Because of them, Kolten has his mom, and we have our daughter; for that,

we are truly thankful. This journey is far from over. Recovery is like a winding road full of starts and stops, and lots of detours. Strokes do not come with a "one size fits all" instruction manual, and recovery does not happen

overnight. It can take months; it can take years; and sometimes it takes creativity and thinking “outside the box” to see even the tiniest of results. Stay positive. Be patient with your loved ones as they evolve. Please remember tough times don’t last but tough people do. ■

TD READY COMMITMENT MEANS A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR REFUGEES

Imagine arriving in a new city with your husband and your two small children and not knowing anyone. You arrive in Calgary from Kabul after a 38-hour flight with three stops (Istanbul, San Francisco, and Vancouver). It is -35 degrees Celsius in Calgary and when you left Kabul it was 13 degrees Celsius. Your children are tired, hungry, and so cold. You are a refugee and there is no turning back. But soon you are connected to a team of people that help get you settled in a safe place, support

you with access to basic needs like winter clothing and help to address any health concerns you have. The team connects you to local services so you don't feel alone.

Since the program's inception, Calgary has received over 4,200* newly arrived refugees. In just one year, over 1,800 of these individuals now call Calgary home. Due to a shortage of affordable housing, many were housed in temporary accommodations across five hotels for a

prolonged period, and at one point, over 1,000 were living at resettlement hotels throughout Calgary.

The Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic (MRHC) provides essential medical care services to newcomers who arrive as refugees, along with other health services refugees may need.

TD Bank Group (TD) is making a difference. Thanks to a grant from TD through its' corporate citizenship platform, the TD Ready Commitment,

Volunteers from the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA)

*Data as of November 2022



“The generous funding from TD allowed the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic to meet the health needs of the Afghan newcomers upon their arrival in Calgary. By meeting their needs at the resettlement hotels, we were able to provide timely care in the community and prevent their health from deteriorating and requiring the services of our already overloaded hospitals.”

- Annalee at the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic



The Mosaic Refugee Clinic provides essential medical care services and access to basic needs for newcomers who arrive as refugees.

Over **1,800 REFUGEES** have resettled permanently in Calgary in the past year.

MRHC has been able to expand its staffing to serve refugees while they are living in temporary accommodation. The clinic created a position to specifically address health concerns at the hotel and provide a number of services, including access to vaccinations, obtaining health benefits, dental and pharmacy care, prenatal supports, cognitive assessments, counselling, and help with transportation and resettlement. MRHC

also engaged 29 community volunteers from the Alberta International Medical Graduates Association (AIMGA) as health navigators. Many of these volunteers are newly arrived refugees themselves and are internationally trained physicians.

TD funding has also helped MRHC address unique mental health challenges that many newly arrived refugees face, provide access to IQ assessments for newly

arrived adults with intellectual disabilities, and provide gift cards for families to ensure parents could access basic supplies.

It's through support like that of TD that the MRHC can provide critical resources for vulnerable newcomers- ensuring they have a safe environment to access this care. The scenario featured above is just one example of the difference that can be made when we walk alongside each other. ■

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q: WHO BENEFITS FROM YOUR SUPPORT?

A: You, your friends, and your neighbors! In fact, 80% of Albertans depend on our health care system each year, and thousands every day. With your support, Calgary Health Foundation advances care, wellness, and research where it's needed most, and when it's needed next for all four of Calgary's acute care hospitals, Carewest facilities, and a broad range of community health programs. You are helping us improve health care right here at home. ■

NICU CARE TAKES A VILLAGE



Heather holding Adam close in the NICU

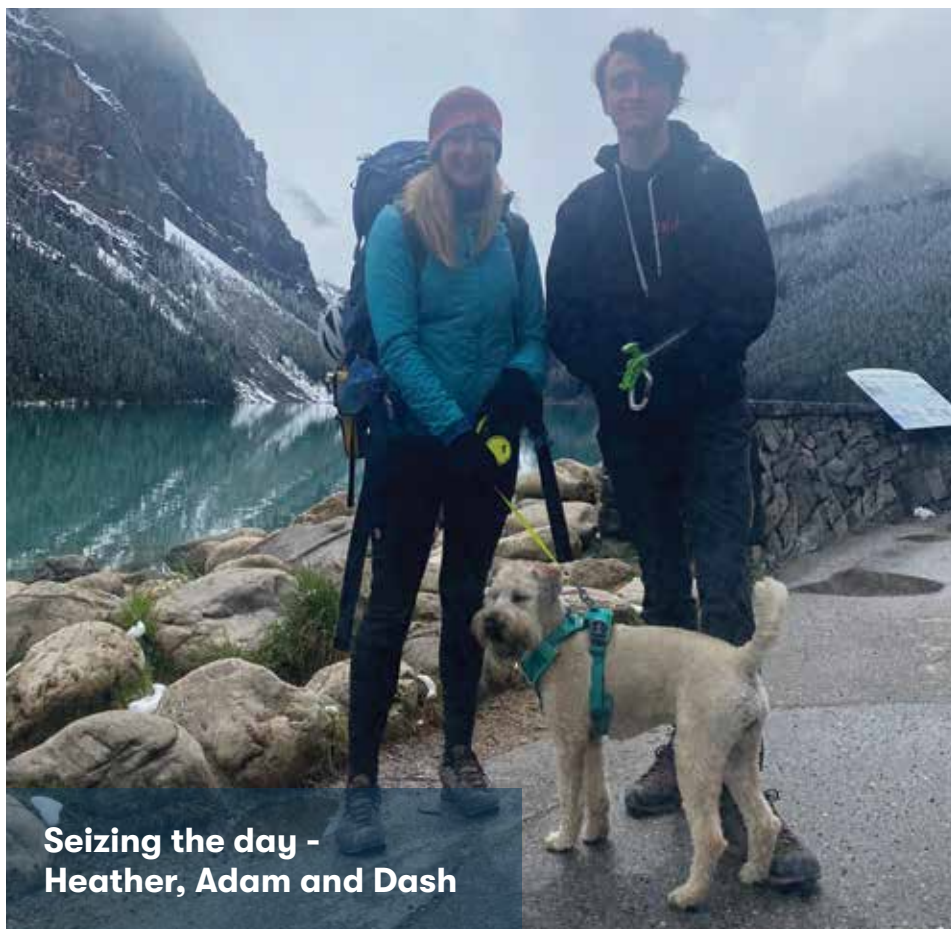
Seventeen years have passed since Heather Bala-Edwards left the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the Foothills Medical Centre with her new baby, Adam, in her arms. For Heather, it feels like a lifetime ago, but reliving the memories makes it feel more like yesterday. At 32 weeks pregnant, Heather thought she was experiencing false contractions, but when she went to be checked at the hospital, they quickly determined she was in full labour. Eight hours later, at just 3 ½ pounds, Adam was born.

The NICU is a place that most families won't need to experience. There is an expectation of a healthy mom and baby, but that is far from the reality for many families. The experiences of each family who walks through the doors of the NICU are unique, but there are many commonalities

and messages that resonate from one family to the next. One of these common experiences is the community that is found within the embrace of the NICU – from the staff to the other families who are the only people who can truly understand what you are going through. For Heather, this sense of community became her village that helped pull her through some of her scariest days as a new parent, navigating the uncertainties that come with having a critically-ill newborn. Adam spent the first six weeks of his life in the NICU (both at Foothills Medical Centre and Rockyview General Hospital).

“They say it takes a village to raise a child, which is true. But it really takes a village to raise a preemie and that village is found within the walls of the Foothills Medical Centre NICU. I genuinely feel such gratitude for the compassion shown to us and for the next level of excellence and care we received. I will forever be grateful and changed by that experience. It is because of the care we received that we have Adam, the biggest gift in my life.”

One of the things that Heather clearly remembers from her time in the NICU were images



Seizing the day - Heather, Adam and Dash



Heather and Adam reaching new heights

of NICU graduates hung on the walls. These images were inspiring for Heather and as she was taking them in one day, one of the nurses commented that Heather didn't need to worry because Adam would be on that wall one day.

“This experience took my appreciation of the medical profession to the next level, to see the compassion and excellence in care being delivered daily. It opened my heart to anyone going through something similar and an appreciation of how connected we all are through our shared experiences. For anyone walking this journey right now, know that you are in the best of hands and that you are not alone.”

Heather's story is one of hope for families that find themselves needing the care of the NICU.

DID YOU KNOW?

NICU FAST FACTS

IN CALGARY

1 in 8

infants are born premature and require the lifesaving support of the city's Neonatal Intensive Care Units.

FOOTHILLS MEDICAL CENTRE IS HOME TO SOUTHERN ALBERTA'S ONLY IN-BORN LEVEL 3 NEONATAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT (NICU),

WHERE THE MOST PREMATURE AND CRITICALLY ILL NEWBORNS BEGIN THEIR LIVES.

Of the more than

17,250 BABIES

born in Calgary

ABOUT 1,550

are born preterm

OVER 1,200

need specialized care.

THIS EQUATES TO ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF PRETERM BIRTHS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

Hope for a future with a healthy child. At 17, Adam is planning for his own future; one that looks bright with plans for university, athletics, and music. While Adam is looking ahead to his high school graduation,

he was first and foremost a graduate of the Foothills Medical Centre NICU.

We are incredibly grateful to Heather for her significant donation to the Newborns Need Campaign. ■



THANK-YOU-ARY IS ALL ABOUT YOU!

A month dedicated to you – our donors, volunteers, and community event partners. Because of you, we’ve been able to achieve incredible health care breakthroughs over the past 26 years.

Throughout the month, you’ve been introduced to people like:

Stephanie Felesky, volunteer Co-Chair of the Newborns Need Campaign. Stephanie’s personal experience as a mother of a child who required the NICU bolstered her resolve to help Calgary Health Foundation reach our goal of raising \$66 million dollars to

develop a state-of-the-art facility.

Shelley Smith, a monthly donor who started giving in 2005 after she had her own experience with the health care system followed by her parents needing care at Foothills Medical Centre.

And **Ernie Ooms and Wendy Guillemaud** who were proactively getting their affairs in order and decided that health care was something they cared deeply about. With no children to pass their estate to, they included CHF as one of seven charities that will

benefit from their generosity in the future through their Will, creating a legacy of care.

We are grateful beyond measure to all of you for helping us create a lasting impact on our community. We have just one more story to hear this Thank-You-Ary...YOURS!

Share your story with us now. We can’t wait to hear it. ■



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 **Calgary Health Foundation™**
Relentlessly advancing care, wellness & research