

It's more than writing a cheque

For the donors to the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre, the money is a small part. The relationships and trust in the team also make them give

By Renee Sylvestre-Williams

Don and Carol Pennycook hold a polo match for charity every August in Hudson, Que., located between Ottawa and Montreal. It's an opportunity to enjoy the weather and watch two exhibition games. It's also an opportunity for the Pennycooks to raise funds for the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre (PMCC). Mr. Pennycook, a patient at the PMCC, was approached by a member of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Campaign of the Toronto General & Western Hospital Foundation. "They were looking for some help to fund the project on afib [atrial fibrillation, where a patient has an irregular rapid heart rhythm causing the atria to quiver or fibrillate] research." He agreed as he had become a patient due to afib. Mr. Pennycook had donated to charities before, but he wanted to do something on an ongoing basis like an event; hence, the polo match every August.

For both the PMCC and the University Health Network (UHN), donors and their financial and educational contributions are a very important part of their ability to provide top health care and carry out cutting-edge research in the field of cardiac care. "It's philanthropic giving that has really set the bar in the institution," says Linda Goldsack, Chair of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Campaign. "My team and I are successful in our campaign by building relationships with existing donors and with new donors, as evidenced by recently achieving the goal of raising \$100-million for the centre." Every nickel counts, and while some donors can give more than others,

Goldsack and her team ensure that their donors know and are supportive of exactly where their donations are directed. The Peter Munk Cardiac Centre was created in 1997 with donations from Peter and Melanie Munk. Since then, the centre has become internationally renowned, with 1,500 open heart surgeries performed a year, 1,800 minimally-invasive heart procedures and 55,000 annual patient visits. In 2008, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care found that the PMCC had the best surgical outcomes for patients with heart-related issues. A lot of this is a result of the PMCC's ongoing fundraising campaign. "One year a group of golfers

applied the funds raised through a golf tournament to purchase an echocardiography machine," says Ms. Goldsack. "We needed a new, state-of-the-art unit. There was no money left in the operating budget to buy one, and it was going to be a huge benefit to the specialists to have this new equipment with the extra capability of a new echo probe. With a price tag of roughly \$300,000, it's not always in the operating budget of the hospital to buy this equipment." These dollars make a difference, whether they're going to research or to the purchase of machines and tools to help people live longer. Some of the money raised has gone toward mechanical hearts,

which, when you're waiting for a heart transplant, could be the difference between life and death. David Prince knows this first-hand. Lean, relaxed and enjoying the good weather over coffee, it's hard to believe that he suffered a catastrophic heart attack eight years ago, when he and his wife, Susan, were in Brazil. They spent a nerve-racking two months in Brazil before Mr. Prince could be flown back to Canada to continue treatment at the PMCC. He was put on the heart transplant list and received a mechanical heart (LVAD) while he was waiting. He received his new heart and immediately got involved with the PMCC via education and talking with patients who were going in for transplants. Henry Bank also began his donor relationship with the PMCC in 1999, thanks to a high blood pressure diagnosis. He tried to lower it with diet and exercise, but "all hell broke loose on a Sunday." He had severe intermittent pain down his leg. When he went to the hospital, he found out that there was no pulse in his leg. He had an echocardiogram and was sent



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to the PMCC. After successful surgery, Mr. Bank wanted to do something to show his gratitude. "I can give some money to show how thankful I am," he says. "It can be used to help someone else." Mr. Bank and his doctor, Robert James (R.J.) Cusimano, are also friends. "After an event like that, you become connected with these people." When he decided to donate to the PMCC, he didn't dictate how it should be spent. Instead, he completely trusted Dr. Cusimano. "A donation should have some impact." Showing impact is part of

soliciting donations. "Most people understand and become excited and want to know more about it. We encourage people to come down and visit with us," she says. "To speak with the doctors, nurses and researchers, and learn first-hand the difference they are making in pushing the boundaries in understanding and treating cardiac disease and in improving patient care. Once they meet the doctors and take a behind-the-scenes tour of the hospital, most people say, 'How can I help? What can I do?'" The funds raised from donations provide another benefit; they lead to more money from the Ministry of Health, which, in turn, goes toward research and care. "Philanthropy can greatly impact ministry funding," says Ms. Goldsack. "For example, the mechanical heart hardware was funded by donations for 10 years, at \$100,000 per heart. An application to the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee (OHTAC), with 10 years of data proving cost savings to the ministry, quality of life for patients awaiting heart transplants and the saving of lives while waiting for heart transplants, resulted in Ministry of Health support."

- 01 Grateful patient Don Pennycook and his cardiologist, Dr. Vijay Chauhan, during an annual polo fundraising event in Quebec, to support research into abnormal heart rhythms, such as atrial fibrillation.
- 02 Dr. Narinder Paul (left), Linda Goldsack, Chair of the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre Campaign (center), and Dr. Patricia Murphy (right), pictured beside an echocardiography machine with echo probe, made possible through philanthropy.



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