

YOUR IMPACT

SUNNYBROOK'S VETERANS CENTRE



Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre is home to nearly 250 Veterans of the Second World War, the Korean War and the Cold War, making it the largest Veterans' care facility in Canada. Thanks to your support, we have recently launched several exciting initiatives that promise to improve how we care for our Veterans and seniors in our community. We also continue to sustain existing programs that enrich the lives of our residents.



4,108

gifts donated to
honour our Veterans

50

residents inducted
into the 100 Club,
a new initiative
to celebrate
centenarians in
our care

Marking new milestones at Sunnybrook

Sunnybrook Veterans who have reached the age of 100 or older are now being celebrated in an exciting way, thanks to donor support. New to the Veterans Centre, the 100 Club launched in October 2022 to honour more than 50 Veterans at Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre who turned 100 by the end of 2022.

The idea of the 100 Club came from Richard Ratcliffe, one of our residents and president of the Sunnybrook Veterans Council. He thought that a club would be a fun and new way to celebrate our centenarians. "Our donors care so much and have made such a difference – thank you from all the Veterans!" says Richard.

Rather than being honoured with a traditional certificate, the Veterans decided that the gift of a vest would be visible, practical and something that our Veterans would be proud to wear. Veterans participated in the design of the vest by selecting a unisex design, and even brought their own samples of

colours and fabrics to choose from. The vests include the Sunnybrook logo, and a resident of the Veterans Centre took part in the design by embroidering the 100 Club next to a poppy.

"It is always so wonderful to see our residents engaged in their daily activities, and excited for new initiatives like this," says Dr. Jocelyn Charles, medical director of the Veterans Centre. "It's equally incredible to see what is possible with the support of our donors."

The centenarians of Sunnybrook received these special vests at an official ceremony to mark their induction into the 100 Club.

"I'm 105 years old and the oldest centenarian at Sunnybrook," said Frances McIlroy, upon being the first to join the club. "It was an honour to receive the vest. I think I'll wear it fairly frequently!"

A LIFE WELL-LIVED AT SUNNYBROOK

Hugh McGeach's desire to "do his part" led to a storied life of service. In his later years, Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre and donor community stepped up for him

Born on a farm in London, Ont., on May 8, 1921, Hugh McGeach dreamed of something bigger.

As it did for so many of his era, the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 changed his plans. Hugh, the son of a Veteran of the Great War, decided to do his part and signed up with the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF).

Hugh would later recount how on one mission his jet was shot down near Lithuania. He was captured by German forces and taken to Stalag Luft 6, a prisoner-of-war camp deep in German territory.

Hugh mostly remembered his time as a prisoner of war for its dreary monotony, but despite that, his war years would very much set the course of his life. It was that path that took him to Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre decades later, where the compassion, expertise and dedication of our staff supported him in his later years.

Finding peace at the Veterans Centre

Hugh's daughter Cindy Cyr credits the care her father received for his longevity and rich quality of life, in spite of a challenging medical prognosis upon arrival at the Veterans Centre. Even throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the team ensured that Veterans could stay connected to family with video messaging.

It is perhaps no surprise that a man who was once disassembling and repairing a Spitfire aircraft engine during his years with the RCAF was soon navigating Skype on an iPad with ease, and Cindy is eternally grateful to Sunnybrook for making it happen.

In a letter of appreciation, Cindy wrote about her father's greatest pleasures at the Veterans Centre: his weekly lunch group, his twice weekly physiotherapy workouts in the gym, regular trips to the library, walks in the garden, special outings



Sunnybrook President and CEO Dr. Andy Smith; Hugh McGeach; Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Executive Dan Cass.

and daily programming that created a community for him. That's in large part because Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre is home to the largest recreation and creative arts therapy program in Canada.

"Thanks to federal and donor funding, we have a team of more than 30 art, music, horticultural and recreation therapists," says Katherine Baldwin, manager of recreation and creative arts therapies. "There's nothing that compares to Sunnybrook."

Joining the 100 Club

Hugh passed away in February 2023, just a few months shy of his 102nd birthday. He was one of the 50 inductees into the new 100 Club.

Cindy shared how much he appreciated the photo he took to commemorate the occasion. "Dad treasured the Sunnybrook photo and the certificate of recognition – far more than the acknowledgments from the prime minister and the Queen!"

Cindy decided to give back with a gift to Sunnybrook, directed to the garden and recreational programs in honour of her father. "Everyone should be aware of what a gem Sunnybrook has with its Veterans Centre, says Cindy.

Your impact on

CANADA'S LARGEST RECREATIONAL AND CREATIVE ARTS THERAPIES PROGRAM

At Sunnybrook's Veterans Program, our goal is to create a home that meets the needs of our residents.

"Our Veterans are really living their best lives here," says Katherine Baldwin. "They're doing things they never thought they could do – and with the help of provincial, federal and donor support, we're continuing to make that possible."

Enhancing the mind and body

New to the Veterans Program is yoga therapy, led by instructor Ingrid Wirsig. Open to residents, their families and Sunnybrook staff, the yoga program promises to enhance physical, emotional and spiritual well-being for participants.

Expressing the soul

The Veterans Program also offers art and music therapy. Provided in individual or group sessions, our art therapists work with residents to express themselves through a variety of media, including photography, painting, woodworking and ceramics.

Residents also have access to music therapy, including playing instruments, singing, and even composing and recording music.

Returning to in-person activities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of our programs shifted to virtual formats to ensure the safety of our residents. Many programs have since returned to in-person settings, including:

- **Floral arranging**, a popular monthly group activity led by a florist, in which residents learn how to create floral arrangements;
- **Meal programming**, an opportunity for residents to cook, bake and gather with a group over a meal;



Top: Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre resident Stan Dinney holds a Valentine's Day card from a student at a local school.



Bottom: Ingrid Wirsig leads a yoga class.

- **Live music**, where residents can gather three nights a week to enjoy live musical entertainment performed by professional musicians from the community.

One-on-one fun

Our recreational therapists also work with residents who prefer smaller groups or individual interactions. This includes coffee chats, brain aerobics, community outings and scheduled time with therapy dogs.

Your impact on **HONOURING OUR VETERANS**

As the largest Veterans' care facility in Canada, honouring our residents and those who served our country is one of our main priorities. "Ongoing recognition of our Veterans and honouring their history is what makes Sunnybrook so special," says Dr. Jocelyn Charles, medical director of the Veterans Centre.



Operation Raise a Flag

In honour of Remembrance Day, our annual Operation Raise a Flag campaign helps to raise funds in support of the Veterans Program, as well as appreciates our Veterans with a sea of flags.

In 2022, more than 30,000 flags were planted by volunteers and Sunnybrook staff. The effort included a visit from Ontario Premier Doug Ford.

In addition to Canadian flags, we also continued to honour the contributions made by First Nations, Inuit and Métis Veterans in service to Canada with artwork designed by Indigenous artist Philip Cote.



The Last Salute

2023 marks the 75th anniversary of Sunnybrook's opening as Sunnybrook Military Hospital in 1948.

To commemorate this important anniversary, a collaborative team led by the Veterans Program created The Last Salute: a collection of exquisite photographs of 40 of our centenarian Veterans by Yuri Dojc, alongside their stories collected through interviews and developed by Alannah Campbell.

The Last Salute includes a virtual photo exhibit, a Remembrance Day video, an in-person photo exhibit and a forthcoming artbook.



Cenotaph restoration

Providing the highest quality care and dignity in aging to our Veterans remains a key priority for us – one of the reasons why Sunnybrook is the largest Veterans' care facility in Canada.

The cenotaph was built to honour the sacrifice made by Canadians returning from war and to serve as a daily reminder to the Veterans at Sunnybrook of our gratitude for their service.

With the help of donor support, the cenotaph is undergoing restoration to maintain the integrity of the monument, including structural reinforcements, improvements to decorative features and enhancements to the landscape.

Your impact on the

PETER CIPRIANO CENTRE FOR SENIORS HEALTH

With the establishment of the Peter Cipriano Centre for Seniors Health, Sunnybrook is responding to the urgent need to provide more specialized and coordinated services for our growing population of seniors. Your support is making it possible to develop the new centre.



Enhancing seniors care in our province is critically important. With 2.5 million people aged 65 and older living in Ontario – a figure expected to double in the next 20 years – it has never been more urgent to prioritize coordinated, person-centred care for our seniors.

The Peter Cipriano Centre for Seniors Health will be located at Sunnybrook's Bayview campus in close proximity to the Veterans Centre, which means the Cipriano Centre's leading-edge seniors services will be easily accessible to our Veterans.

Creating meaningful spaces

The Peter Cipriano Centre for Seniors Health will facilitate coordinated care for seniors by uniting interprofessional providers under one roof and bringing care to patients at a single point of access. Care will be delivered through a combination of clinical services, a day hospital and mobile outreach. The clinical services include:

urgent care, bone health, diabetes, dermatology, rheumatology, foot health, post-delirium care and mental health. The day hospital will involve programming for preventive care and health education. Research will be embedded into care through clinical trials and health services research.

Additionally, education for the next generation of seniors health practitioners will expand, including more opportunities for non-medical learners, nursing students and other allied health providers to engage with mentors and hands-on training.

Inventing the future of seniors care

Thanks to donor support, we are on our way to establishing the Peter Cipriano Centre for Seniors Health. Realizing the new building, we will more than double the interprofessional team dedicated to seniors care at Sunnybrook, and quadruple the clinical space dedicated to seniors care – enabling us to be there for more seniors and Veterans when it matters most.

Your impact on **LOCAL TO GLOBAL INITIATIVES**

Deep brain stimulation study to treat PTSD

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a debilitating illness that impacts the lives of more than 3 million Canadians. It can occur in individuals who have experienced traumatic events, such as Veterans who have experienced war and violence. Thanks in part to donor support and a \$500,000 grant through the Government of Canada's Veteran and Family Well-Being Fund to investigate innovative treatments for PTSD, Sunnybrook researchers found early evidence that deep brain stimulation (DBS), a type of non-invasive brain surgery, is safe and potentially effective in treating severe PTSD. By targeting specific areas in the brain known to play a role in PTSD, this study is the first of its kind in Canada.

"Although this research is still in its early stages, these preliminary results are encouraging, suggesting DBS could be a breakthrough approach in managing treatment-resistant PTSD," says Dr. Nir Lipsman, principal investigator and director at Sunnybrook's Harquail Centre for Neuromodulation.

Extending leadership beyond borders

When Sunnybrook first opened its doors 75 years ago as Canada's largest Veterans hospital, one of our commitments was to provide leading care to those affected by war – and that is still true today. In October 2019, we took our efforts globally as the Sunnybrook Ukraine Surgical Education Initiative launched with their first mission to Lviv.

In 2022, Sunnybrook partnered with the Canada-Ukraine Foundation to deliver the Sunnybrook Ukraine Surgical Education Initiative as part of the newly established Canada Ukraine Surgical Aid Program (CUSAP). Led by Dr. Oleh Antonyshyn as medical director, CUSAP provides both ongoing medical support to injured Ukrainians and educational training and development to surgeons in Ukraine and abroad.

Over the course of the two missions, 10 full operating days were dedicated to complex surgical care and education involving multiple specialists. All told, Ukrainian surgeons built their knowledge and expertise over more than 120 hours in the OR, treating 48 patients in urgent need. We are honoured to help rebuild lives and enhance surgical capacity in Ukraine, thanks to donor support.

Enhanced comfort and care

Thanks to generous donor support, our Palliative Care Unit recently completed Phase 2 of renovations to the K1 east unit. Our bed capacity is 56 beds, making it the largest palliative care unit in the Greater Toronto Area.

The renovated units include personalized lighting, mounted flat-screen TVs, and a bench that pulls out into a visitor bed to allow for visitors to stay overnight.

"Our mission is to help our patients live each day to the fullest," says Sandra De Costa, patient care manager of the palliative care units and manager of palliative consult team. "It's thanks to donor support that we can create a peaceful atmosphere for our residents as they transition into palliative care. We're honoured to go on this journey with them."



OUR THANKS TO YOU

We are committed to helping our Veterans achieve the best possible quality of life.

This means ensuring that they feel safe, engaged and comfortable through meaningful programs and personalized care.

With your support, we are able to serve those who have done so much to serve our country.

On behalf of all our staff, residents and their families, thank you.