

# Healing the Future

Innovations in research and care that will shape the future of health care.



Jeff and Debbie Gifford at Sunnybrook

## GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

**“We know the struggles of living with hearing loss. With this gift, we hope to make cochlear implants more accessible to others.”**

For Jeff and Debbie Gifford, leaving a legacy gift to Sunnybrook in their Wills was a fitting way to say thank you for the high-quality care they experienced when they both received their second cochlear implants a few days apart during the second wave of the pandemic. The implants changed their lives so greatly that Debbie believes they got “a second chance at life.”

### Innovative devices

Until receiving her first cochlear implant in 2016, it had been close to 35 years since Debbie was able to pick up the phone and call her mom.

While the 61-year-old had been born able to hear, a series of severe ear infections when she was young had caused profound hearing loss. Debbie’s mom had supported her every step of the way as she began navigating the world with an invisible disability. But routine tasks like talking on the phone could be unbearable.

Poor sound quality and lack of visual information make phone calls challenging for people with hearing loss. When Debbie’s mom moved into a retirement home, communication became even more difficult.

Her voice thick with emotion, Debbie remembers after her first procedure when she heard her mom’s voice on the telephone: “It was like we didn’t miss a beat.”

### Improving accessibility to care

Wanting the same life-enhancing moments for more patients inspired Debbie and her husband, Jeff, to support Sunnybrook’s cochlear implant program with a legacy gift. Jeff was born with some hearing loss – it ran in the family – that declined throughout his childhood. After he saw how much the single cochlear implant had helped his wife, he went in for his own surgery in 2018.

(Continued on Page 2)

## GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING *(Continued)*



**Dr. Vincent Lin and Dr. Valerie Dahm, during the cochlear procedure**

*“We feel so lucky to have implants in both ears, our quality of life is so much greater than we ever expected. We’re committed to supporting this program at Sunnybrook now more than ever.”*

**- Debbie Gifford**

“Sunnybrook has become our home away from home, everyone has been so kind,” says Jeff. “We know the struggles of living with hearing loss. With this gift, we hope to make cochlear implants more accessible to others.”

Sunnybrook, which has the largest cochlear implant program in Canada and one of the largest in North America, is leading the way with this emerging, exciting approach. Rather than amplifying sound like a hearing aid, which are helpful for some people with residual hearing ability, a cochlear implant provides the sense of sound by stimulating the auditory nerve directly. Sunnybrook otolaryngologist Dr. Vincent Lin is helping to pioneer the procedure.

Since receiving their second cochlear implants, the world has opened up to Jeff and Debbie like never before. “We feel so lucky to have implants in both ears, our quality of life is so much greater than we ever expected,” says Debbie. “We’re committed to supporting this program at Sunnybrook now more than ever.”

Today, the retired couple is busy renovating their home, and is excited to finally make travel plans. “I was always reluctant to travel, I felt like I’d rather be in my safe space,” says Jeff. “Now I can’t wait to try new things!”

But it’s the everyday moments Debbie remembers most, like the first time she could tell the difference between bird songs and of course, chatting with her mom. Jeff still remembers how important that first phone call was for his wife. “It was just so exciting for both of them. Her mom never thought that her

daughter would be able to communicate with her in that way,” he says, before adding softly: “It still gives me goose bumps.”

### A Lasting Legacy

You can join Debbie and Jeff Gifford in creating a powerful philanthropic legacy by remembering Sunnybrook Foundation in your own estate plans. You may direct your future gift to any area of the hospital’s work, or leave your gift undesignated to be used where the need is greatest.

As a legacy giving donor, you will also become a member (either publicly or anonymously) of our honorary Kilgour Legacy Society. It’s our way of keeping you informed about what’s happening at Sunnybrook while celebrating your commitment to invent the future of health care.



**Debbie and Jeff Gifford with Dr. Lin**

## MURIEL DOBBIE - MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Muriel Dobbie was a private person. She was also an extremely generous one. After her passing in 2020, Sunnybrook was grateful to learn that she had remembered the hospital with a generous gift in her Will, specifically for St. John's Rehab.

When Dr. Larry Robinson, Chief, St. John's Rehab, first heard of the gift, he thought: "How wonderful is this?" as estate gifts like Ms. Dobbie's enable the renowned St. John's Rehab Research Program to attract and retain some of the most highly qualified scientists and investigators in the rehabilitation field. Dr. Robinson shares "It is only because of donors, like Ms. Dobbie, that we can make this level of impact in the lives of our patients and in our communities."

Over its 75 years, St. John's Rehab has become a national leader in specialized rehabilitative treatment. But the rehabilitation offered today differs vastly from that provided in its earliest years. Why? Extensive and evolving research, along with the implementation of its findings, has transformed patient care.

A good example is the work undertaken around the impact and needs generated by COVID-19. As one of three facilities in the greater Toronto area offering inpatient rehabilitation services to COVID cases, the needs of both patients and staff soon became clear to research scientists at St. John's. How could Sunnybrook provide the best possible care for COVID patients? What specialized services were needed? How could medical practitioners provide optimal care while concurrently keeping everyone safe? How could St. John's specifically maximize patient recovery?

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**- Dr. Larry Robinson,  
Chief, St. John's Rehab**



George Karkanis tested positive for COVID-19 at the end of the 2020, and while dealing with cognitive and physical symptoms associated with Long COVID, George worked virtually with clinicians at St. John's Rehab to build his mental and physical strength.

George explains: "There's not a lot of information about long COVID right now, and at times, it felt like I was alone or that it was never ending. My care team was really supportive of my journey and if I stumbled or needed help, they were only an e-mail away."

More recently, research has focused on best practices in the care of those dealing with Long COVID.

Specifically, St. John's Rehab scientist Marina Wasilewski, PhD, led one of the first studies in Canada to explore the entire COVID-19 patient care journey – from acute care, to rehabilitation, to returning back into the community. Her extensive qualitative research determined three critical findings: the need for compassion, the need to balance critical care with human connection, and the need to reduce fragmentation in COVID care across the system. These findings are now being implemented and serve as the cornerstone for recommendations to improve the COVID-19 care journey at Sunnybrook and beyond.

With thanks to donor support, last year St. John's was able to provide effective, quality care to over 60 in-patients with COVID-19, ranging in age from 20 to 90 with an average stay of 18 days. In addition 40 outpatients with Long COVID symptoms have already benefited from St. John's services. Donor gifts have also enabled the renovation of patient facilities at St. John's to ensure maximum safety from COVID-19.

Sunnybrook strives to maximize the benefits of each legacy gift they receive. Sander Hitzig, PhD, research director of St. John's Rehab research program, shares: "Dr. Wasilewski and her work exemplify the high calibre of scientists we have here at St. John's. Research has helped solve problems as they emerge, which has enabled better patient care. St. John's can also use its research findings as a platform to generate additional funding. It's a win-win."



**Dr. Sander Hitzig,**  
Research Director  
St. John's Rehab Research Program

“We are able to undertake the ground-breaking research we do thanks to good people like Ms. Dobbie who remember us with a gift in their Will. We are deeply grateful. And so are the patients we serve.”

## A WORD ABOUT EXECUTORS

Your executor (or estate trustee) ensures your assets are distributed as you wish.

You need a methodical, trustworthy person who is willing to take on the task and who appreciates what is important to you. If your estate is simple, you might choose a family member, with an alternate named should your chosen executor be unable to serve. A more complicated estate might require several executors, each responsible for a specific part of the estate.

Because of the complexities of estates today, it might also be wise to consider a corporate trustee such as a bank, trust company, or legal firm to act on your behalf. Executors can charge for their services, if they wish, but all are expected to make business decisions in the best interests of your estate.

Finally, it's to your advantage to arrange your Will and other personal papers so that your executor can easily find them, clearly ascertain your assets and debts, and notify your beneficiaries.





**Dr. Andy Smith, MD, MSc, FRCSC, FACS**  
President & CEO,  
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

“As the hospital’s president and CEO, I witness the impact of donor support on a daily basis. Together with our donors, we share every discovery, every breakthrough, every moment where we are there for families when it matters most. What happens inside our hospital simply wouldn’t be possible without this vital support.

A legacy gift is especially valuable because these gifts often allow us to respond to our highest priorities and most urgent needs at the time. I take pride in knowing my legacy gift to Sunnybrook will support the priorities and urgent needs of the future, so we can continue to deliver the highest quality of care for generations to come.”



Sunnybrook Foundation has partnered with Will Power, to help valued donors like you make a meaningful philanthropic difference through your Will.

Will Power is a national movement to inspire Canadians to make an impact on the causes they care about with a gift in their Will.

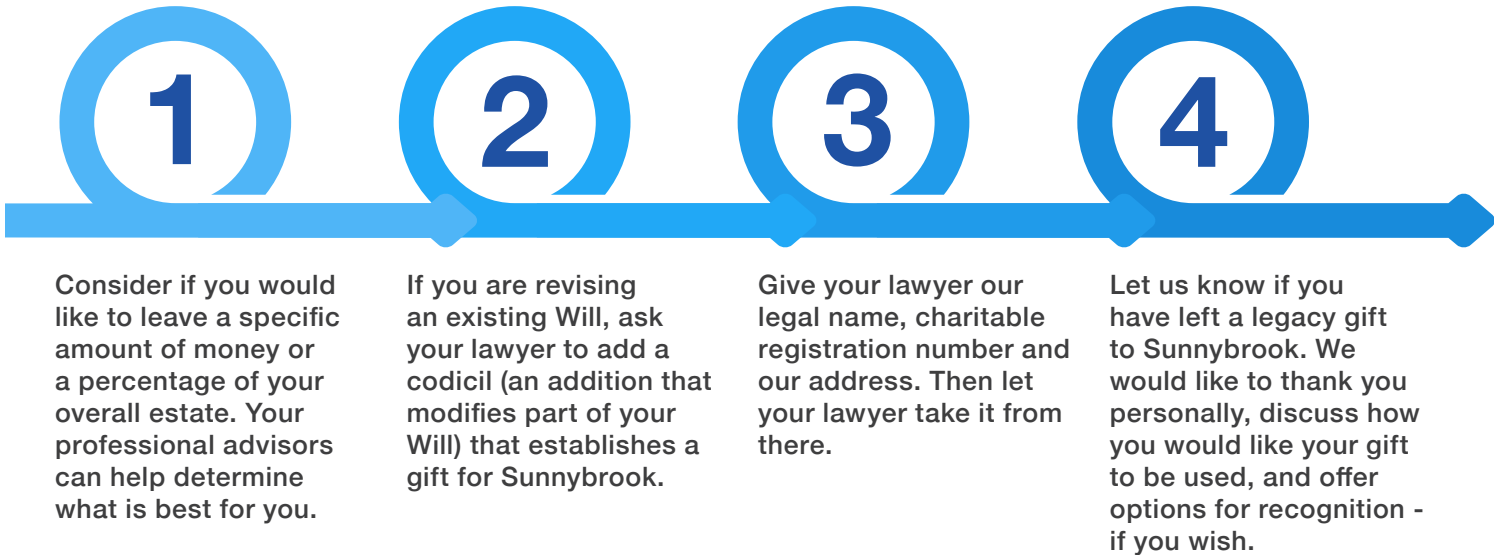
Can you really make a difference with your Will? In short, yes.

Even a small percentage of your estate left to Sunnybrook can have a big impact, while still leaving the majority for loved ones.

Learn about YOUR Will Power today:  
[www.willpower.ca](http://www.willpower.ca)

## FOUR EASY STEPS

It’s easy to establish a gift in your Will for Sunnybrook. With these four simple steps, you can make a difference for future generations to come.



## PLANS, FUNDS AND GIFTS TO SUNNYBROOK

RRSPs or RRIFs can be used to create a gift for Sunnybrook and the financial savings for your estate could be significant. Here's why:

When a person passes away, the total value of the funds in their registered retirement account must be reported as income. This income is fully taxable to their estate unless funds in the registered account can be rolled over to a surviving spouse or a dependent child. However, if a charity like Sunnybrook Foundation is made beneficiary, the gift remains outside the estate, thereby reducing probate fees while creating a gift that will provide a tax receipt for the estate. This receipt can be used to offset other taxes that may be incurred. It's a win-win.

Speak to your financial advisor to see if gifts of RRSPs and RRIFs are right for you. We are always here to act as a resource for you as well.

If you have already left a legacy gift to Sunnybrook, please let us know, so we can thank you and ensure your wishes are fulfilled. Your legacy gift will enable us to continue to provide compassionate, innovative care for future generations.



## KILGOUR LEGACY SOCIETY

Everyone who has remembered Sunnybrook with a legacy gift is honoured and welcomed into the Kilgour Legacy Society. Members of the Kilgour Legacy Society have made a commitment to heal the future: to ensure those who follow in our footsteps inherit a world even better than ours. And for this we are truly grateful. If you have remembered Sunnybrook with a legacy gift, would you please let us know? We would like to thank you and ensure that your legacy gift is used exactly as you wish.

If you would like to discuss legacy gift opportunities or share your intention, please contact Tammy Garcia, Philanthropy Director, Gift & Estate Planning at 416-720-3625 or by email to [tammy.garcia@sunnybrook.ca](mailto:tammy.garcia@sunnybrook.ca).