

Smaller than a pound of butter...

AT HOME WITH SURREY'S MIRACLE MICRO-PREEMIES, A YEAR AFTER THEIR BIRTH AT ROYAL COLUMBIAN HOSPITAL

This year has been hectic for Surrey's Christine Ashton, but she would not want it any other way.

The Surrey mother of twins Thaddeus and Quinntin has embraced family life since arriving home with her boys this past spring. It was just before Easter that she left Royal Columbian Hospital's Variety neonatal intensive care unit for the first time with her babies, who had received care for six months as some of the tiniest premature babies ever seen by the neonatal team.

"Since then, it's been so busy with medical appointments," says Ashton. "But the cuties are doing well and are getting bigger and wider."

Ashton was only 23 weeks pregnant when she was rushed to Royal Columbian Hospital with contractions last October. Thaddeus was born first, weighing only 405 grams, or as Ashton puts it, "less than a pound of butter." Quinntin was born two minutes later, at 570 grams.

As one of four hospitals across the province prepared to handle the most fragile newborns, Royal Columbian Hospital cares for hundreds of tiny ones each year. But twins as premature as Thaddeus and Quinntin are rare.

"I was in shock," says Ashton. "Especially not knowing if



Thaddeus and Quinntin, at home after six months in Royal Columbian Hospital's Variety neonatal intensive care unit.

they were going to survive, and knowing their chance of survival wasn't very high. I just wanted to give them a chance."

"Here we had a situation where we had micro-preemies at less than 24 weeks, and on top of it, twins," notes neonatologist Dr. Zenon Cieslak. "The outcomes are not generally good."

In the neonatal intensive care unit, Thaddeus and Quinntin were supported by specialized equipment like Giraffe Omnibed incubators and a jet ventilator, which donors like Variety – the Children's Charity of BC and the TB Vets Charitable Foundation have helped to fund.

Despite a number of challenges, Ashton noticed gradual improvements in her boys' conditions. And after 188 days, she was finally able to bring them home.

Ashton can't believe the twins will soon be celebrating their first birthdays. She says they enjoy going out for walks with her

around the neighbourhood and are fascinated by other children playing. And despite the constant attention infants like Thaddeus and Quinntin require, Ashton loves every minute of it. ■



Thaddeus shown next to a pencil, illustrating his small size at birth.

A mother's grief

SEEKING MENTAL HEALTH CARE AT ROYAL COLUMBIAN

Gregory Dowsett wasn't supposed to live as long as he did. Right from the start, he faced some complicated health problems, including being born with only three heart chambers instead of four. Greg underwent a few surgeries and suffered a stroke shortly after turning one year old.

But mom Marilyn says her son lived life to the fullest and travelled extensively to places like South Africa, Australia, and England, where he enjoyed spending time with relatives.

In late September, 2003, Greg was rushed to hospital after falling ill. He was kept in an induced coma until he passed away several days later, at the age of 25. His death devastated Marilyn.

"He was the first thing, the last thing, most of the things I ever thought of," says the Port Coquitlam woman about her son. "I never thought about doing anything without first thinking of Greg."

The grief was overwhelming, and Marilyn describes having regular panic attacks. "We went to a barbecue once, and I actually stood in the middle of this backyard and screamed at the top of my voice," she recalls.

Marilyn was referred to Royal Columbian Hospital psychiatrist Dr. Anson Koo, who eventually admitted her. "I was terrified," says Marilyn. "But my husband took me and knew it



Marilyn Dowsett credits Royal Columbian Hospital for helping her after her son's death.

was the best thing, because I wasn't doing very well. I wasn't coping at all."

Marilyn spent five weeks at Royal Columbian Hospital, followed by 13-weeks in an outpatient program. "I met the most caring, the most compassionate people you could ever meet in your entire life," recalls Marilyn. "I was also amazed at who else was in the hospital with me. How many young people, how many ordinary people, people that didn't seem different. They were just struggling with life."

Over time, Marilyn learned coping techniques that she says have helped her enormously. She continues to see Dr. Koo during follow-up visits.

"My life has changed completely since Gregory died," she says. "I am 100% a different person. I just feel so fortunate that I was where I was at the right time in order to be able to get this long-term support." ■

The meaning of moments

COQUITLAM WOMAN IS THANKFUL FOR THE CARE GIVEN TO HER FATHER

A health crisis is difficult for any family. In these moments, a grieving daughter has discovered the small gestures can be as significant as the expert care.

For Coquitlam's Juliana Kim, it started when her father Mike had a stroke in early 2012. He was rushed to Royal Columbian Hospital, where he spent a week before he was able to return home.

The family would find itself back in the hospital a year later, when Mr. Kim was again admitted, this time for persistent coughing. It would be diagnosed as stage 4 lung cancer.

Over the next several months, Mr. Kim would be admitted to RCH two more times. He passed away in late September, 2013.

After struggling with the uncertainty over her father's health last year, Juliana now recognizes and appreciates the care at Royal Columbian.

She remembers a doctor's words of encouragement during an especially challenging time trying to juggle school and helping care for her father. Juliana says the physician's advice helped her focus heading into graduation.

She also credits a conversation with a nurse for giving her father the strength to carry on during treatment. These are among the personal exchanges that make Juliana grateful for the efforts of the health care professionals who looked after her dad. ■



Juliana Kim thanks the hospital for its support. Foundation photo.



Roy Fawcett and his wife Phyllis in the backyard of their Chilliwack home more than a year after his heart valve replacement. Foundation photo.

The way to a beating heart

ROYAL COLUMBIAN HOSPITAL PERFORMS MILESTONE 100TH EVER MINIMALLY-INVASIVE HEART VALVE REPLACEMENT

For Roy Fawcett of Chilliwack, a summer camping adventure with the grandchildren was just as much about creating memories as it was about enjoying the outdoors. And he's thankful he had the energy to do it.

It was a different story just a couple of years ago. Back then, Fawcett could hardly move from one room to the other in his house without having to take a break. Fawcett suffered from aortic stenosis, a common condition that occurs when the heart's aortic valve leaflets get calcified and become immobile. It was leaving him very short of breath.

Fawcett says Royal Columbian gave him his life back. That's because the hospital is one of three in the province able to perform a minimally-invasive procedure called a transcatheter aortic valve implantation – or TAVI for short. Royal Columbian is also the designated centre for open-heart surgery and minimally invasive cardiac procedures in Fraser Health.

This past summer, Royal Columbian conducted its 100th ever TAVI, which is the option for patients whose health or medical history make them at high-risk or unsuitable for open heart surgery. Without TAVI, those patients could suffer heart

failure and sudden death.

TAVI replaces the aortic valve in a beating heart by carefully threading a catheter (a thin flexible tube) that contains the new valve, usually from the groin artery to the heart.

Fawcett says the change in his health was almost instantaneous. Since undergoing TAVI last year, Fawcett is able to garden with his wife again. And he has the energy to spend quality time with his grandchildren again.

"The team at Royal Columbian Hospital has given me back a quality of life that I thought was lost forever," says Fawcett. "My family and I are thankful beyond words". ■

New Foundation President & CEO

INTRODUCING JEFF NORRIS

He's worn many hats over the years, but it was during a time when Jeff Norris was wearing a bicycle helmet that he discovered a passion for philanthropy.

While at university, he was hired to co-ordinate a cycling fundraising event. The experience opened his eyes to the world of non-profits.

Jeff has made a positive impression on a number of organizations since then. This includes seven years with St. Paul's Hospital Foundation, where he helped grow its Lights of Hope campaign.

He comes to Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation from Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), where he worked since 2006 as Chief Advancement Officer and also served as CEO of the KPU Foundation and executive director of the KPU Alumni Association, a group he was involved in founding.

In 2012, Jeff was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Club of Ladner for his community work. In 2014, he was recognized by Business in Vancouver with a "Forty Under 40" Award for his business accomplishment. Married with two daughters, Jeff is also active in his community and regularly contributes as a volunteer and board member of various associations. ■



Staff photo.

An original Canuck on love and healing at Royal Columbian

VANCOUVER CANUCK ALUMNI MAKE ROYAL COLUMBIAN A CHARITABLE RECIPIENT OF ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC

Back in 1970, Eddie Hatoum had to cancel a date with his girlfriend when he separated his shoulder and underwent surgery at Royal Columbian Hospital. That's okay though. They're married now.

At the time, Hatoum was preparing for the Vancouver Canucks' inaugural 1970/71 season, after the team claimed him in the NHL Expansion Draft.

Unfortunately, the smooth-skating forward suffered a bad injury during training camp. He fell while trying to get by the two defencemen and knew right away he was in trouble.

"I was about to hit the ice with my head," recalls Hatoum. "So I turned and landed probably about 190 pounds on my shoulder, and that's when it separated."

One of the team's trainers put him in a van, and off they drove to Royal Columbian Hospital. After a bumpy and painful



Former Vancouver Canuck Eddie Hatoum and fellow alumni & Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation board member John Ashbridge.

ride from the arena to the hospital, a doctor quickly realized Hatoum would need to go to the operating room.

Hatoum was out of action for several weeks before finally rejoining his teammates and playing in 26 games for the Canucks that first season. Today, Hatoum is a member of the Canuck Alumni and plays a number of benefit hockey games and golf tournaments across the province.

Hatoum reflected on his experience at Royal Columbian Hospital during this past spring's annual Canuck Alumni Golf Classic. Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation is a charitable recipient of the event, which saw members of the 1970 team reunite for the day with other former players.

Along with being grateful for the care he received at Royal Columbian, Hatoum fondly remembers the daily hospital visits from then-girlfriend Frances, with whom he had apologetically cancelled a planned date.

"She came out to Royal Columbian every day from Vancouver, and the rest is history," says Hatoum, who married her after the two reconnected decades later. ■

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