

50th Wedding
Anniversary Turned
Into Fundraiser

PAGE 4

Lifelike Robotic Cats
Inspire Real Joy

PAGE 5

Loyalist Opticians
Association's Legacy
Strengthens Eye
Care in Kingston

PAGE 6

Gift to KHSC Supports
Patients with Cancer

PAGE 7



Runner Prepares for 100-Kilometre Challenge to Support NICU

Willem Sagriff, with
baby Lola and wife Liz



**University Hospitals
Kingston Foundation**

uhkf.ca

613.549.5452

foundation@uhkf.ca

4-55 Rideau St
Kingston ON
K7K 2Z8

When Willem Sagriff steps on the Point Municipal Park track in Sydenham on October 3, there will be no starting gun, no competitors and no medal waiting at the finish line. Instead, what will drive him forward, lap after lap, is something far more powerful.

The 27-year-old Kingstonian will be focused on one goal; running 100 kilometres to raise funds for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC), a place that forever changed the way he sees gratitude, vulnerability and resilience.

Willem was inspired to help after he and his wife welcomed their daughter in June 2025.

“Our room was just past the NICU, and I had a lot of time to sit there and think about how lucky we were that our baby was born healthy,” Willem recalled.

This planted the seed for what would become an extraordinary physical and mental challenge.

An avid runner, Willem began setting ambitious running goals several years ago after what he describes as a “wake-up call” run with his wife Liz (then girlfriend). They went for a short

two-kilometre run and Willem was gasping for air while Liz was completely fine.

The realization hit hard. The fitness that he took for granted in high school was gone. “It really bugged me, and it pushed me to get serious about my fitness.”

Since then, Willem has completed many long runs and currently trains five days a week with added strength training sessions. Last year, he tested his limits by attempting to run the 104-kilometre Cataraqui Trail, but his body gave out at 75 kilometres.

“Running 100 kilometres has always been a goal in my head,” he said. “I know exactly

what went wrong (on the Cataraqui Trail) and how to correct it. The strength training has made a huge difference, both physically and mentally. I’m very confident in my fitness abilities for October.”

Willem expects his fundraising run to take between 11 and 12 hours. His goal is \$6,000 for the NICU.

“This is about supporting the tiniest members of our community,” Willem shared, “and the teams that care for them.”

To support Willem’s fundraiser, contact Gary Melnikov (UHKF Associate, Community Relations) at **613.549.5452 ext. 5915** or visit uhkf.ca/Events.

A Message From Tamás (Tom) Zsolnay

President and CEO of University Hospitals Kingston Foundation (UHKF)



Depending on when you read this, I may have already stepped down as CEO to enjoy retired life. As I reflect on my time at UHKF, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude.

When I joined UHKF in 2019, I could not have predicted the challenges the foundation would face or the extraordinary generosity that would rise to meet them.

During the global pandemic, donors like you stepped forward in remarkable ways, ensuring that patients, families and care teams had the support they needed at a critical time. Your compassion and commitment helped strengthen our health-care system when it mattered most.

Over the past several years, the community has embraced a bold vision for the future of care for southeastern Ontario. Through donor and volunteer support, programs like Honour Your Caregiver and the Women’s Giving Circle grew

significantly, along with the number of UHKF donors and monthly giving community.

Together, you have helped raise an incredible \$189 million since 2019. It’s an achievement that speaks not only to generosity, but to a deep and enduring trust in the care provided across our hospitals.

While my time here is nearing its conclusion, my confidence in UHKF’s future and this community has never been stronger.

The stories in this Summer Foundation Report are examples of strong community support. Read about Willem Sagriff, who is running 100 kilometres to raise funds for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and Providence Care volunteer Chris Forster whose outstanding service earned him special recognition.

Thank you for being part of this journey and for helping build a stronger future for health care across southeastern Ontario.

Play About Cancer Turns Into Fundraiser



A play about cancer turned into a fundraiser for Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC) to help cancer patients and their families.

On January 21, a special “pay-what-you-can” performance of the play “W;t” took place at Domino Theatre in Kingston, raising \$1,241.

The production follows Dr. Vivian Bearing, a poetry professor navigating advanced ovarian cancer. Blending intellect, humour and raw emotion, the play is a poignant exploration of what it means to truly live, and the grace that can be found in vulnerability and compassion.

Funds raised went to KHSC’s Adult Special Services Fund, which helps patients and families manage additional costs associated with cancer treatment, including transportation, lodging and meals.

Thank you to the organizers, volunteers and patrons at Domino Theatre who were instrumental in bringing the event to life.



YES! I want to support life-saving care!

Mail this form to University Hospitals Kingston Foundation
4-55 Rideau St Kingston ON K7K 2Z8 or visit uhkf.ca/Donate

I'd like to make a monthly gift of \$ _____ **OR** a single gift of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____

Email Address _____ Phone _____

I have enclosed a **VOID** cheque (for monthly gift) or a cheque payable to “UHKF” (for single gift)

Or please charge my ☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ American Express

Card Number _____ Expiry _____ / _____

Name on Card _____ Signature _____

UHKF recognizes donors by name in its publications to encourage others. I do not wish my name to be published. You may change or cancel your monthly gift at any time. Tax receipts will be issued for all qualifying gifts of \$20 or more. We do not sell, share, trade or rent our donor lists. Charitable Registration No. 820218147R0001. **27-06NL01 Summer 2026 Foundation Report.**



The Clost family

50th Wedding Anniversary Turned Into Fundraiser

What began as a milestone celebration for Betty and Dan Clost became something much more meaningful; a way to give back to the health-care teams who saved Betty's life.

The Trenton couple marked their 50th wedding anniversary by turning their celebration into a fundraiser in support of Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC), raising \$2,394.

The decision was inspired by Betty's sudden and life-threatening cardiac emergency just months earlier.

In the summer of 2024, Betty began experiencing pressure in her chest during walks and occasional discomfort that she initially attributed to a lingering respiratory illness.

"It didn't feel dramatic at first," she said. "It was just something that didn't make sense and wouldn't go away."

After one frightening episode of jaw pain, Betty was referred for further cardiac testing. What she expected to be a routine angiogram in Kingston quickly escalated into an emergency. Doctors discovered a 95 per cent blockage in a major artery.

"I went in thinking they might place a stent and I'd be home the same day," Betty said. "Instead, I was being told I needed immediate open-heart surgery. We never knew how sick I was until then."

Betty underwent double bypass surgery at KHSC and spent seven days recovering in the hospital before returning home.

Dan recalls how frightening the experience was for their family.

"Watching her being wheeled into surgery was terrifying," he said. "But the staff kept checking on us, giving updates and making sure we were okay too. That meant more than I can say."

Both Betty and Dan say the care they received from surgeons, nurses and support staff left a lasting impression.

"There wasn't one person who was too tired to smile," Betty said. "Everyone from the health-care aides to the people serving the meals were amazing."

When their 50th wedding anniversary approached, the couple decided gifts were unnecessary.

Instead, they invited friends and family to donate through University Hospitals Kingston Foundation in their honour. "After 50 years of marriage, you don't need more things," Dan said. "We believe in giving back, and this felt like the right way to say thank you."

For Betty, the fundraiser is both an expression of gratitude and a reminder of how fragile life can be. "You can't measure what they gave me," she said. "If people take anything from our story, I hope it's that donating, even a little, really can make a difference."

Lifelike Robotic Cats Inspire Real Joy

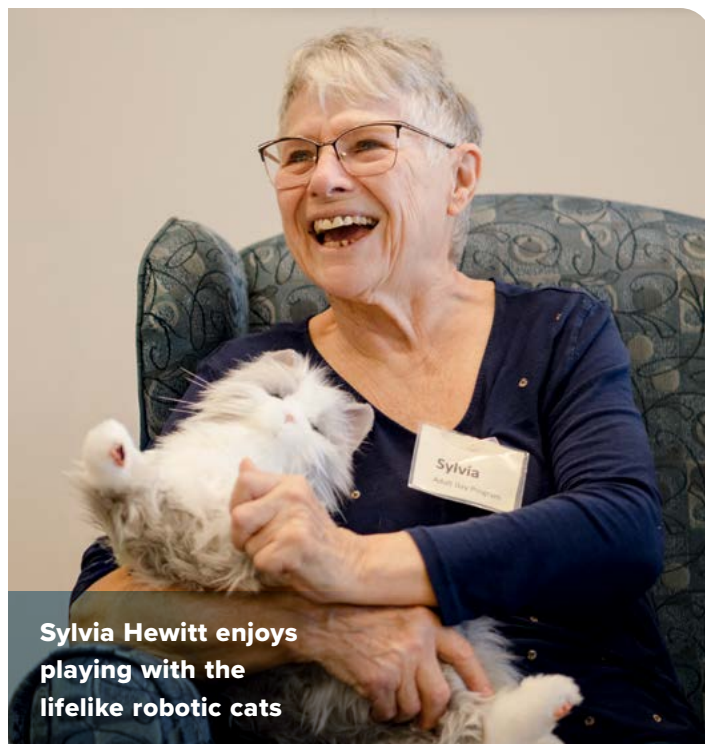
Sylvia Hewitt cradles a long-haired cat in her arms, stroking its soft fur. She lifts a small comb and gently brushes its head. When the cat lets out a meow and begins to purr, Sylvia's face lights up. She laughs and leans in close, whispering to it as if it might answer back. She knows the cat isn't real. But that doesn't matter. "It's cute, cute, cute," Sylvia says, smiling. "You can pick them up and pet them and kiss them."

The lifelike robotic cats are companions for clients of Providence Care's Adult Day Program, often referred to as the Hildegard Centre by the community. It's located within Providence Transitional Care Centre at 340 Union St. The community-based program supports adults living at home who are experiencing cognitive impairments such as dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or brain injury.

The cats were purchased using donated funds from the University Hospitals Kingston Foundation (UHKF).

These are more than simple stuffed animals. The realistic companions blink, purr, meow and respond to touch, offering comfort without the logistical challenges of having a live animal in a health-care facility.

"We had seen similar cats years ago in other programs and noticed how successful they were," says Beth Bruce, Coordinator of the Adult Day Program. "Some people know they're not real; some people believe they are. But either way, the connection is genuine."



Sylvia Hewitt enjoys playing with the lifelike robotic cats

For many clients, the cats stir long-held memories of pets they once loved.

"These cats provide comfort without the concerns that come with having a live animal in the building," Beth explains.

Many clients live with dementia and quietly battle depression and isolation. Staff see how a gentle nuzzle or a cat's purr can break through in ways words often cannot.

"Families often tell us their loved ones come home happy," Beth says.

Beth emphasizes that donor support makes enhancements like robotic companions possible. The animal may be robotic, but the happiness it inspires is entirely real.

"We're so grateful to the donors," she says. "Their generosity allows us to bring in programs and equipment that simply aren't in our operating budget. These cats are bringing real joy, and that's thanks to community support."



The KHSC Ophthalmology Clinic received a \$30,000 gift

Loyalist Opticians Association's Legacy Strengthens Eye Care in Kingston

A \$30,000 donation from the Loyalist Opticians Association to the University Hospitals Kingston Foundation (UHKF) will help equip the expanding Ophthalmology Clinic at Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC)—reflecting the group's long history of support for eye care in the community.

Formed nearly 50 years ago, the Loyalist Opticians Association (founded by the late Marc F. Raymond) brought together opticians from across the region to promote eye health and professional standards.

As the years passed, many of the association's members passed away, leaving only a few to manage the organization's remaining funds. Mona Davis, a retired Kingston optician and former treasurer, along with Gail Heywood, whose late husband Keith was an optician, made the decision to direct the money to local eye care.

"The Kingston Opticians had accumulated about \$30,000 during their time in operation

in the Kingston area," said Gail. "(Mona and I), who have access to this fund, were looking to decide the best use for the money now. Since it was collected in Kingston, it should benefit the people of Kingston who need help with eye care."

In consultation with KHSC Ophthalmology Program Medical Director Dr. Stephanie Baxter, the pair chose to support the Johnson Level 2 expansion of the Ophthalmology Clinic at the Hotel Dieu Hospital site. The funds will help equip a newly acquired space featuring seven examining rooms, designed to operate as a stand-alone unit for specialized ophthalmology care.

"This space will be a combined clinical and research space, allowing the services to easily incorporate clinical studies within day-to-day patient care," said Dr. Baxter. "Funding will go a long way to helping make this a state-of-the-art clinical-research space at KHSC."

For Mona, who spent 27 years as an optician in Kingston before retiring to Marmora, the donation brings both closure and pride.

"When founder Marc F. Raymond passed away in 2022, we decided it was time to do something with the money," says Mona. "I'm happy it is going to be used to improve people's vision because good eye health is important."



HONOUR YOUR CAREGIVER

Giving the gift of recognition has never been so meaningful!

Make a donation through the Honour Your Caregiver program to say THANK YOU. A donation also means that our hospitals receive direct support and much-needed funding for equipment, education, research, facility upgrades, maintenance and more.

Scan to donate or visit uhkf.ca/HYC to support health care today.





Susan Duncan with a photo of her husband John

Gift to KHSC Supports Patients with Cancer

When Susan Duncan lost her husband John to cancer in March 2025, she knew she wanted to do something meaningful to honour the life they built together.

So, she made a significant donation to Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC) in his memory; an act of gratitude for the care he received that will help future patients facing the same situation.

John dedicated his life to helping others. A paramedic for more than 40 years and a volunteer firefighter for 48, John was known for his strength, humour and compassion.

“He was always positive, no matter what,” Susan said. “Even through his treatments, he never complained. He was just so thankful to be here, to see his grandkids and great-grandkids grow up.”

John was first diagnosed with head and neck cancer in 2014; a type of cancer potentially linked to chemical exposure early in his career

as a firefighter. Despite being told the disease was advanced, John acted with determination and faith. After multiple rounds of chemo, radiation, and surgery, he returned to work. Years later, when the cancer spread to his lungs, his care team at KHSC treated him again. “They fought for him,” Susan recalled. “They looked after both of us and made sure I understood everything that was happening.”

The Duncans had long talked about giving back to the cancer centre. When Susan learned about new radiotherapy equipment that could improve precision and patient comfort—particularly for head, neck, and lung cancers—she knew it was the perfect fit.

“John put up with dry mouth and difficulty swallowing for 11 years. Knowing this equipment can reduce those side effects made my decision easy. I know John would be really happy about that,” she said. “It’s amazing to think that something good can come from John’s cancer journey. That’s what he would’ve wanted, to keep helping others.”

Dr. Timothy Owen, who cared for John through his cancer treatments, described him as a ray of sunshine who was positive no matter what life threw at him.

He says the impact of the gift made in John’s honour is already being felt.

“The donation has allowed us to acquire key pieces of equipment that directly enhance both the safety and precision of care we provide,” Dr. Owen said. “It’s moving to see how her thoughtful gift translates into safer, more compassionate care. John’s legacy will be felt in our clinic every single day.”

Providence Care Volunteer Honoured for Helping Others

At 72, Chris Forster has spent a lifetime walking alongside others in moments that matter most. Now, as a volunteer with Providence Care, he is being recognized for that quiet presence through the University Hospitals Kingston Foundation (UHKF)'s Honour Your Caregiver program.

Chris volunteers at Providence Care Hospital on the Palliative Care Unit and with the Spiritual Health Department. On Tuesdays, he visits patients and families receiving palliative care, checking in with nursing staff before making his rounds. On Thursday afternoons, he helps transport patients to Catholic Mass in the hospital's Worship Centre and brings Holy Communion to those unable to attend.

Receiving the Honour Your Caregiver recognition was a bit of a shock.

"But a good shock. It certainly gives me encouragement," Chris says. "Without occasionally receiving recognition and heartfelt gratitude, it can be challenging to continue giving as a volunteer. It helps make my work feel valued."

The Honour Your Caregiver
program allows
patients and

families to recognize caregivers (including volunteers) with a donation made in their honour through UHKF.

In Chris' case, the recognition came from the parents of a long-term patient he visits regularly. The patient is non-verbal and requires significant support. His visits are simple but intentional.



"It's about recognizing that he has dignity and deserves respect as much as any other human being," he says.

Chris' path to palliative care is personal. His mother received palliative support before her death in 2017, and a volunteer was at her side in her final moments.

"That was a wonderful gift to our family," he recalls. "That's partly why I got into palliative care."

A former chaplaincy leader at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School for nearly 25 years, Chris retired in 2019 and began volunteering with Providence Care in late 2023. His Catholic faith and lifelong commitment to pastoral ministry continue to guide him.

"One of the main reasons I volunteer comes both from my family upbringing and from my Catholic faith," he says, referencing the Bible's call to care for the sick and vulnerable. "That teaching has always been a major motivator for me."



Proudly Supporting

Providence
Care



Kingston Health
Sciences Centre