



ISLAND KIDSfirst

Your generosity at work

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children's
HEALTH FOUNDATION
OF VANCOUVER ISLAND

formerly
QUEEN
ALEXANDRA
FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN

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The Bear Essentials of love

Seventeen-year-old Emily Breingan has lived through enormous challenges in her young life.

Emily was born with Down syndrome, but also with an immunodeficiency that resulted in serious infections during her early years. She also has gastrointestinal challenges, which means she relies on a feeding pump.

Later on, Emily was also diagnosed with autism and Crohn's disease.

Despite everything, Emily is a bright, lively 17-year-old. Her mother, Holly, is enormously grateful for the help that the Children's Health Foundation has been able to offer Emily, through the Bear Essentials program.

“There is already a lot of stress and worry day to day, and some of those stresses and worries will always be there,” says Holly. “But to have the financial stress removed and know there is support for immediate needs — it’s almost like feeling you’ll never be alone.”

2018 brought a number of reminders about just how important the Bear Essentials program is to our Island families.

It was September, the weekend before Labour Day. Holly and Emily were getting ready for Emily to return to school, when Emily fell and broke her foot. Emily needed a special aircast boot in order to go about her daily life.

But back-to-school is an expensive time, as we all know. “We already had so many costs, I felt like it was either school supplies or the boot,” remembers Holly.

Fortunately – through donor support – the Bear Essentials program was able to pay for Emily's boot. It took her foot 11 weeks to heal... 11 weeks during which she wouldn't have been able to get around.

And then in December, came the terrible windstorms that shut down power in many places across the Island. And since Emily relies on a power-charged feeding pump, a power outage could be



Holly and her daughter Emily.

a real emergency. It can only last for 24 hours without power.

It made Holly realize how much they rely on that pump, and on power. Holly is hoping that the Bear Essentials program may be able to help Emily out with a back-up feeding pump this year.

We are honoured to have been able to help this family in the past, and know that we can count on our donors to keep up their compassionate support of the Bear Essentials program so we can be there for them again. *Bear Essentials is run in partnership with Help Fill A Dream.*



Lucy and Clara.

Tiny warrior

When Misty McKenzie was pregnant with twins, she could sense something was wrong. Already a mom, she knew what was normal in a pregnancy and what wasn't.

Misty's instincts were right. And when she went into labour five weeks early, she didn't have family present to support her.

So, except for one friend, Misty was all alone when she was given the news that one of the twins – little Clara – had a heart murmur. Doctors decided to fly the babies to Victoria for extra support.

In immense pain from her surgery at delivery, Misty managed to get on the helicopter to Victoria.

But once there, she was on her own and terrified.

“I was in a state of shock, and I couldn't afford a hotel,” she remembers. “I thought I was going to have to sign myself into a homeless shelter.”

But the nurses back at the hospital in Campbell River had reached out to Jeneece Place, and our staff contacted Misty once she was in Victoria.

“Walking through the doors of Jeneece Place, I think I was crying. The staff were just so helpful and supportive. They told me not to worry about anything, and just to focus on the baby. They said I could stay there as long as I needed to.”

Jeneece Place has been there many times for Misty and her family, as Clara has needed a lot of medical help – including heart surgery. She has had a stroke and is visually impaired. But as Misty says, “She is a tiny warrior.”

Misty knows first-hand how incredibly important Jeneece Place and our supporters are to families in their times of greatest need. And how much families will benefit when we build our new home away from home in Campbell River.



Misty and her sweet twins.

A new home...

COMING SOON!

Children's Health Foundation is working alongside community partners and donors to build a home away from home in Campbell River. This special home will support Island families needing a place to stay while their child receives medical care.

The Campbell River home away from home will be modelled on the Foundation's Jeneece Place in Victoria, which has served thousands of families over the years.

Taking care of a child with health care challenges is stressful enough. But adding in time off work and

cost of travel can significantly add to this stress.

We aim to provide a safe and comfortable place to stay for Island families where they can focus solely on their child and each other, and not worry about costs of accommodation.

A special campaign to raise money for the building's construction will be coming soon!

To learn more, to get involved, or to make a gift, please contact us at 250-940-4950 or info@islandkidsfirst.com.

Be our Valentine

Kids at the West Shore Child, Youth and Family Centre had a great time helping us make Valentines for the Foundation's monthly donors.

It was a great opportunity to let more people know about the important work of Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island, too. This building is full of children and their families, and the kids all enjoyed having a fun activity to do before and after their appointments.

If you'd like to learn more about monthly giving – and receive one of these cute Valentines next year! – we'd love to talk to you at 250-940-4950 or you can go online to sign up at islandkidsfirst.com/donate-now.



Thank you, Dale!



Dale Collins.

Dale Collins's commitment to helping others was forged in her childhood.

Born in a small New Brunswick town, Dale was raised by a single mother. Now she realizes just how much the community supported her family.

Many years later, tragedy struck Dale's life when a young person

that she was close to took their own life after struggling with depression.

As Dale spoke to friends and clients about what had happened, many people shared how they, too, had friends or family members who struggled with their mental health.

That spurred Dale to want to help. She discovered Foundry Victoria – a project supported by the Foundation in downtown Victoria, where young people receive support and counselling for mental health and substance use, amongst other important services.

For the last two years, Dale has been a dedicated monthly donor. And on Giving Tuesday in 2018, she wanted to encourage others to become monthly donors too.

For each person that signed up as a monthly donor to the Foundation, Dale donated an additional \$100. It was a huge success, and

helped us raise \$21,000 on Giving Tuesday – the largest amount we have ever made!

As Dale says,

☞☞ When you leave this earth, does it matter what things you had or that you drove a fancy car? No - it matters what you did and how you made people feel.

The more we talk about mental health, the more we can raise money and awareness, and hopefully save some young people. ☞☞

Donor spotlight: Ian and Sue Wheatley

Ian and Sue Wheatley know what it's like to care for a child with unique health challenges.

Their daughter, Gemma, was born with a kidney condition that required regular check-ups at the hospital.

Over the years, the couple saw many parents who were really struggling to make the journeys needed to get care for their children.

Ian and Sue knew they wanted to help Island kids. They first heard of the Children's Health Foundation in 2016. Ian brought Gemma to our annual spring family gala, and was moved by the experience.

"Hearing the personal stories of what people are going through is powerful," he recalls.

Ian became a dedicated supporter of the Foundation. He joined our Board and our finance committee. So, Ian knows first-hand how well donors' gifts are cherished and stewarded.

Last November, Ian heard about Dale Collins's challenge to donors to start making



The Wheatley family.

their gifts monthly, and eagerly signed up as a monthly supporter.

"The goal is to keep the Children's Health Foundation going in perpetuity. I know that any of the dollars I put in are going to good use. We're lucky that we're in a position where we can give back. And I think that if you can, then you absolutely should."

Upcoming events

BAYVIEW OPEN

Join us as we hit a hole in one for Island kids at the 37th annual Mackenzie Tour PGA event at Uplands Golf Course May 30 – June 2. Last year, the generosity of our community helped raise more than \$180,000 at the Bayview Place DC Bank Open. This year we hope to raise even more funds to help Island families access the care they need, when and where they need it most.

This tournament is open to public spectators, tickets available at the gate with all proceeds going to Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island.

Come watch some professional golf, enter for your chance to win a round trip anywhere WestJet flies, and support local children and youth with health challenges.

We also have a number of volunteer opportunities – let us know if you would like to get involved!

MONTHLY TEA & TOURS

Monthly Tea & Tours of our facilities including Foundry Victoria, Jeneece Place, Queen Alexandra Centre for Children's Health, and more. Contact info@islandkidsfirst.com if you would like more details about upcoming tours.