

# IT'S ABOUT ABILITY

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2019/2020 ANNUAL REPORT



# MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

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The Children Rehabilitation Foundation's (CRF) mission is to raise funds to improve the lives of children living with disabilities that access services through the Rehabilitation Centre for Children and SSCY Centre. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic this mission is fraught with uncertainty, much like the lives of those families that utilize the equipment and services supported by CRF. Each year the foundation sets its fiscal goals with this mission in mind and a list of expectations regarding events for the year to come, all surrounded by a sea of uncertainty. It is then the responsibility of the Board of Directors to assist the Executive of CRF to navigate this uncertainty.

Figuratively speaking, it would not be an understatement to say the past year for CRF started at full cruise speed and relatively calm seas but dramatically finished at a more cautionary speed after entering an ocean of uncertainty. The first nine months of the fiscal period were possibly the best nine months that CRF has financially experienced in years. Many of our annual events resulted in record levels of support. Planning, execution and donor support were in line with expectations and an impressive financial year was expected. Then everything changed.

Twelve months ago the idea that a viral infection would bring the world almost to a standstill was probably nothing more than a couple of lines on a risk management chart for most organizations. Then as we all know a few cases of COVID-19 started a chain reaction and as a result traditional sources of fundraising slowly evaporated. The introduction of social distancing, self-isolation, shuttered businesses, and a shift to a work at home labor force have all but neutralized traditional fundraising strategies. A new norm has developed which is filled with uncertainty and it requires a new set of glasses to view the fundraising landscape.

There is one certainty amidst the vast landscape of shifting protocols, norms, and health policies. That certainty is the need of CRF's clients. The foundation's mission is to improve the lives of children by funding needed equipment and services. This need has not diminished. This need is not subject to a flattening of a curve. The need is present, it is growing and it is essential that we find a way to continue to support children in need.

This is the challenge now. It is a formidable challenge when we know we must mute our primary fundraising avenues for the betterment of society. It is a challenge that will require a new pathway to be forged on creativity, ingenuity, and perseverance. We have no doubt that we can be successful at continuing to meet our mission. We know we can succeed because we have planned for these challenges. We can financially weather this storm and we have the human talent to think our way to a solution, but this will only get us part of the way to success. We also know the most significant element in our pathway to success will be the continued support of our funders and volunteers.

The support of our funders and volunteers is both a means and an end to our collective efforts. Your continued support is critically important. We fully understand that usually our message to you is presented under different circumstances. Mass attended events such as bike rides, golf tournaments, curling bonspiels, and of course gala dinners are a cornerstone to fundraising. We know that in the absence of these face to face events we must articulate our needs to you coherently and with easy participation mechanisms. This is part of our stated challenge and we are committed to meeting that challenge so you can understand the need, determine your support and participate in the solution.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that we are living in extraordinary times. We will survive but we need to aspire to more than just survive. We need to remember our mission and the children that depend on our support. The Children's Rehabilitation Foundation is committed to looking for unique solutions that provide a comfort level to our supporters old and new. We are confident that we can get our message out to you and that you will come forward to help those that need your contribution. Together we can succeed both in terms of surviving these challenging times but also in supporting children with disabilities.

**Peter Garagan**

Board Chair, Children's Rehabilitation Foundation

# OUR IMPACT

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## MISSION

The Children's Rehabilitation Foundation raises funds to improve the lives of children who access services provided by the Rehabilitation Centre for Children and SSCY Centre.

## VISION

For all children to have the support required to realize their abilities.

## IMPACT

The life-changing programs and equipment funded by the foundation give children and youth the opportunity to enjoy the freedom of childhood – to play outside with their friends, participate alongside peers in the classroom, and strengthen connections with family.



# WITH YOUR SUPPORT

We purchased 175 pieces of specialized equipment

Provided 881 recreation opportunities, from cooking clubs to Zumba lessons, through our LIFE program

Funded Rehabilitation Centre for Children Specialized Communication Resources for Children department

Supported clinical services at Rehabilitation Centre for Children

Backed critical childhood disability research

Modified 120 bikes in the W.A. Laddie Hutchison Bike Clinic



# ALYSSA'S STORY



Alyssa White has a smile that can captivate a room. Her charisma and contagious energy are just a few of the many reasons the 14-year-old represented the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation (CRF) as their 2019 Youth Ambassador.

"CRF has been there for us when we needed them and they provided Alyssa with equipment that helps her independence," says Alyssa's mom, Charlene DeClercq.

Alyssa was born with spina bifida – a condition that occurs when the bones of the spine don't form properly around part of the baby's spinal cord. The disability can impact a person's mobility in different ways. Alyssa has undergone multiple surgeries on her legs and feet to help with her mobility.

"If you have a dream, don't let anyone stop you," says Alyssa, whose dream is to represent Canada in sledge hockey at the Paralympics (only men's competition is currently recognized at the Paralympic level).

In just a few short years of playing sledge hockey, Alyssa has developed into a talented athlete. This past year she became the youngest player on the women's national team.

Your generosity allowed the foundation to give Alyssa a high-performance sled that will allow her to continue to develop her skills and chase her dreams.

"I truly believe she lives up to the slogan of 'see the ability in disability,'" DeClercq says. "A lot of this self-determination is a product of the support Alyssa received from the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation"

[Watch Alyssa's full story on our YouTube channel!](#)

# Improving quality of life through **RESEARCH** in pediatric rehabilitation



Research, evaluation, and quality improvement at the Rehabilitation Centre for Children (RCC) and SSCY aims to: continue learning about the issues that are important to children, youth, and families, improve the care received through our centres; increase community participation; and improve quality of life for children, youth, and families. Our research department includes a staff of two. The first is our RCC/SSCY Research Director, Dr. Kristy Wittmeier, a physiotherapy clinician-researcher who holds the Dr. John M Bowman Chair in Pediatrics and Child Health and is affiliated with the Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba (CHRIM) and the University of Manitoba. The second is me, Shayna Pierce, who is the RCC/SSCY Research Development Coordinator. Together, along with the SSCY Research and Evaluation Committee, we help to uphold and achieve these goals by supporting researcher and clinician-led research and program evaluations. I support each project team in unique and varying ways, including designing and developing the project, applying for ethics approval and funding and sharing results with families and other clinicians through events such as Breakfast at SSCY. Both Research Department positions are funded by the generosity of the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation (CRF). Some of the exciting new research projects that have been initiated over the past year include:

- Development of a Psychological Database of Children Assessed at the Manitoba FASD Centre
- Designing a Responsive and Integrative Model of Respite Care for Families of Children with Complex Care Needs and Conditions (CCNC) through Patient-Oriented Research
- Developing a Living Laboratory in Pediatric Rehabilitation: A New Paradigm for Integrated Knowledge Exchange and Patient Engagement in Research

Beyond these projects, I am excited to announce that a new child health research collaborative ENRRICH: Excellence in Neurodevelopment and Rehabilitation Research in Child Health, has been developed through a unique partnership between CHRIM and the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation. ENRRICH brings together researchers and clinicians from RCC/SSCY, CHRIM, University of Manitoba, and the Pan Am Concussion program with the goal of improving the quality of life for the children and families who require pediatric neurodevelopment and rehabilitation services in Manitoba, central Nunavut, and northern Ontario. The theme will be co-led by our Research Director, Dr. Kristy Wittmeier, and Epidemiologist and Research Scientist for CHRIM, Dr. Kelly Russell, and supported by Research Coordinator Brittany Curtis and me.

"We are very excited about this opportunity and believe that the research conducted by ENRRICH will improve the quality of life for children and youth with neurodevelopment and rehabilitation needs in Manitoba and the area," says Dr. Russell. "We are looking forward to bringing together the research community in Manitoba to collaboratively work towards this goal of improving child health outcomes."

ENRRICH will work closely with patients and families through a Family Research Advisory Council. This council will help to ensure that research is focused on positively impacting the children in need of specialized rehabilitation and development services. Theme leadership includes guidance from Elder Mary Wilson, who will provide traditional, cultural, and spiritual guidance as it relates to various activities within the theme. With the combined support of the CRF and CHRIM and the strength of partnerships created by this theme, we are excited to see the growth of research capacity and potential at the RCC and SSCY. We look forward to the research and innovation that will come from these new and exciting partnerships.

**Shayna Pierce, BSc**

Research Development Coordinator, Rehabilitation Centre for Children

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

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We saw record support and participation at several of Children's Rehabilitation Foundation events this fiscal year, including A Night of Miracles, Cruisin' Down the Crescent, Canadian Tire Regent Starkids Golf Tournament, and Tim Hortons Smile Cookie Week.

This generosity has allowed the foundation to continue its mission of supporting children in our community with over \$840,000 in funding to support equipment, programs and research at the Rehabilitation Centre for Children.

Over the years the foundation has been quick to adapt to changes in our community and this year will be no exception. As we face the COVID-19 pandemic together, we continue to evolve and ensure we're maximizing our income generating opportunities to support our mission as best we can. However, the reality of social distancing guidelines, business closures, increasing unemployment and inevitable changes to individual spending habits will have an impact on our 2020/21 outlook.

Fortunately, we have the reserves to weather the storm and will use this opportunity to focus our approach and come out stronger on the other side. I wish health and happiness for all our stakeholders during these uncertain times. Thank you once again for supporting our foundation!



**Joey Enright**

Board Treasurer  
Children's Rehabilitation Foundation

To all our supporters who attended

# FUNDRAISING EVENTS

like A Night of Miracles



...picked up  
a Tim Hortons  
Smile Cookie and

# SPREAD THE WORD



...or took on extra chores to

# DONATE ALLOWANCE

and give a bike to another child



We are  
**GRATEFUL**

for each and  
every one of you!



# ALLOCATIONS

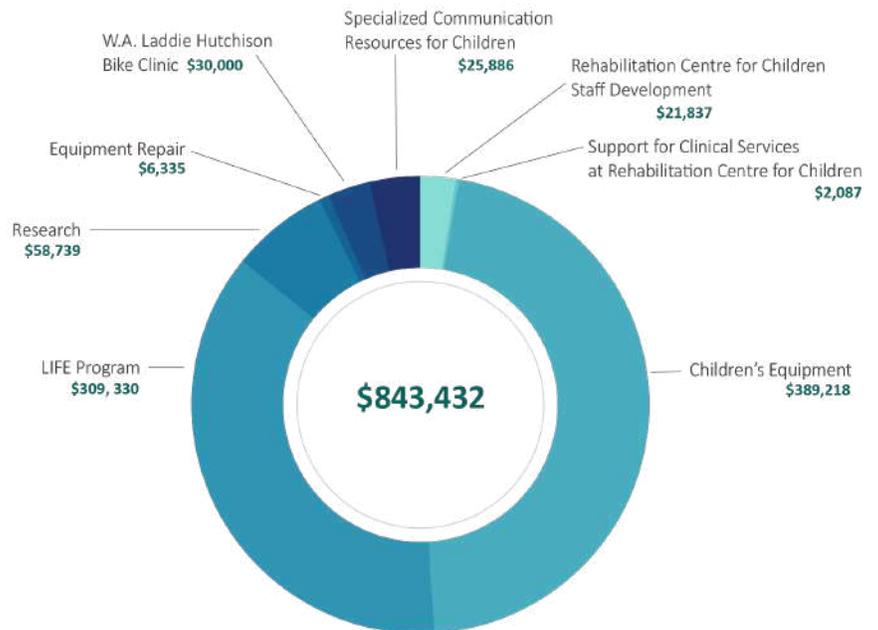


The Allocations Committee receives, reviews and recommends to the board requests for funding of research, programs, education, and assistive technology. In 2019/20 the Allocations Committee undertook the following tasks:

- Revised the program funding application form to include statistical and previous year outcomes.
- Revised the application and evaluation forms for the Leslie Barker Fund.
- Met with Shayna Pierce, Rehabilitation Centre for Children (RCC) and SSCY Research Coordinator.
- Received updates on projects supported by the Leslie Barker Fund.
- Drafted terms of reference for the Research Review Committee.
- Considered and provided advice on out-of-the-ordinary requests to the foundation for funding.
- Reviewed and recommended to the board the 2020 requests for funding made to the foundation by RCC and SSCY Centre.

## Dr. Archie Cooper

Chair, Children's Rehabilitation Foundation Allocations Committee



*The 2019/20 Allocations Committee includes Barb Borton, Carrie Costello, Ruby Duxbury, Julie Huish, Marianne Klassen, Christine Schollenberg (ex officio), Jackie Wasyluk, and Archie Cooper (Chair).*

# FINAL THOUGHTS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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We make stories happen! When the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation (CRF) receives an application to fund equipment, it all starts with a story. Let me share with you how you made 178 stories become a reality this year.

These stories start with a family walking through the SSCY Centre doors. Parents often come to appointments with a plethora of ideas, eager to talk about how they've seen another child benefit immensely from a piece of equipment. Rehabilitation Centre for Children (RCC) staff, from physiotherapists to engineers, help assess and trial equipment before an application for funding is submitted to the foundation. This is where the 178 stories are realized.

Therapists complete a thorough application, which includes a letter explaining how this equipment will support the child. The letter is often hand-delivered to our office by the therapist who is eager to share how this equipment will be a catalyst for the child's growth and independence. Every story is different but is always centred around happiness and joy – how excited the child was to move on their own, or how emotional mom and dad were to see their little one's legs peddle for the first time. To quote one of our recent application letters "biking is a preferred activity for Alej, second to dancing to music. This bike will give her exercise opportunities, a chance to socialize, movement breaks, and enjoy being like her friends." Alej's story is just one of the 178 stories I have the honour to read every day with tears in my eyes.

As I reminisce about the 2019/2020 year, I'm proud to say it was strong on many accounts. We did a celebration of life dedication for the Feasey-Taiarol family in memory of their son, Kael. Tim Hortons Smile Cookie week broke records. A Night of Miracles gala was our most successful yet. Global News' 'Making Our Own Milestones' series highlighted impactful stories from the foundation. We have incredibly generous donors with big hearts that help make all this happen. I am very grateful for their passion and dedication to the foundation.

Now, I fast forward to the *end* of our 2019/20 fiscal year. We are normally finishing the year off strong with fundraising, funding equipment and recreation programs, and planning for the coming year's events. Not so this year as the world deals with the COVID- 19 pandemic. Under public health orders we put everything on hold. There would be no more additions to the 178 stories. There would be a new normal. I had to shed down all the layers, work on different levels, learn new technology (not my strong point I might add) and adapt to working in a different way. I quickly learnt a very valuable lesson to hit the unmute button in a Zoom meeting. And, guess what? Not everyone combs their hair in Zoom meetings! We are resilient, smart, creative, resourceful, adaptable, engaged, kooky and fun. We are an amazing group of individuals, full of passion for the foundation. We will move forward one day at a time with this pandemic looming over us.

I will leave you with one final thought: we create great stories. We make extraordinary things happen for our clients and families. I share this with my colleagues at the Children's Rehabilitation Foundation each day. To our supporters and donors, you make a difference in a child's life and you will remember these stories for a lifetime.

**Christine Schollenberg**

Executive Director, Children's Rehabilitation Foundation

