



Breast cancer survivor, Leslie Gunn, was 29 when she was diagnosed and received treatment at Southlake's Regional Cancer Program.

BY OUR SIDE: KEEPING CANCER CARE CLOSE TO HOME

With one diagnosis, life changes. Then comes months or years of appointments, treatments, illness and overwhelming uncertainty. Travelling far from home to find the right care just adds more disruption and anxiety at a time when support systems are vital. Thanks to you, your community doesn't have to.

Your support has helped Southlake's Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, **one of the top-ranked regional cancer care centres in Ontario**, offer compassion and treatment close to home for thousands of families, despite the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. As the pandemic forced us to reduce the number of procedures we could perform, urgent cancer

surgeries continued. However, patients' families have been unable to join their loved ones at these critical moments. Instead, our doctors and nurses stepped up to ensure that everyone who comes to Southlake for treatment has caring, compassionate people by their side. Just as they went above and beyond to offer support, so has our community. **On behalf of all of us: thank you.**

Not only did you help us replace and upgrade the critical tools cancer care requires, your donations helped fund innovative new treatments. **Everywhere your gifts reached, people's lives felt the difference.** You will see how just some of the support came to life in this report.



Radiation Therapist, Belinda Lawrence, cares for cancer patient at Southlake.



Paediatric oncology patient goes for a walk with Jennifer Barbeau, Pediatric Oncology Nurse, at the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.

VITAL SIGNS

Your Impact by the Numbers*



A DECADE OF TREATMENT

This past year, the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre marked our tenth anniversary having welcomed our first patient on April 1st, 2010. Since then, the scale of the care that caring donors like you helped provide has been nothing short of remarkable:

621,578 OUTPATIENT VISITS

272,044 RADIATION FRACTIONS

117,168 CHEMOTHERAPY
& SUPPORTIVE
TREATMENT VISITS

*Statistics reflect annual numbers from the most recent hospital data available.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE OF THANKS FROM THE FRONT LINE:

We see the toll chemotherapy takes on patients every day. It's a marathon. But we also see the power of having loved ones nearby to help them through. Now that COVID keeps family members away from the hospital, so many of my colleagues have taken on the role themselves. I can't tell you how inspiring it's been to work with the kind of people who treat patients like their own family. For all of us, this is not just a job but a career, a passion, and a choice to always give 100%. With the help of all the wonderful donors, we are always able to provide the best possible care to our patients each and every day. Thank you for always providing the support we need to continually provide compassionate, high-quality care every day.

Barbara Kok RN Chemotherapy Nurse

THE PEOPLE YOU HEAL

DIANE'S STORY: Blindsided by a diagnosis, finding support from a remarkable team.

For years, teacher Diane Van Keulen felt a growing pain in her ribs and shoulders. It would occasionally subside, but it never truly went away. In 2019, the pain grew so severe that her daughter and husband both insisted that she go to the Emergency Department at Southlake. There she was told the unthinkable: it was lung cancer. Stage four.

Diane had never been a smoker. She wasn't high-risk. Without clear warning signs or indicators that doctors should be considering cancer, tumours had been growing in her lungs and bones for two years. Now it was too late for surgery. But the team she found at Southlake wasn't going to give up.

"That's when it really hit me: when they were pushing me in my wheelchair and I saw the words 'Cancer,' that's when I broke down." **Diane remembers the overwhelming day – and the people she met. "But they were wonderful. The nurses and staff, they were just incredible."**

Oncologists Dr. Zishan Allibhai and Dr. Shaqil Kassam moved quickly to begin treatment: first immunotherapy, then chemotherapy. But neither was working, and Diane was becoming weaker, sicker and in ever-greater pain. She credits managing that pain and the overwhelming stress that came with it to palliative care physician Dr. Katie Mulhern and a team of nurses whose support Diane felt was vital. When the pandemic hit and her family was unable to accompany her to appointments, that team became even more important. So did Southlake's proximity: "If I had gone to any other hospital, it would have devastated me," Diane recalled. "I couldn't do a two-hour trip. The stress of that would not have helped with my healing journey."



Diane at her daughter's wedding in 2020, months after being diagnosed with stage-four lung cancer.

When the pain forced Diane to visit Southlake's Emergency Department, Dr. Kassam knew they would need to move fast and think outside of the box for treatment options. "He called me on Sunday night – on his vacation – and said 'Clearly, the chemotherapy isn't working. So I'm going to put you on this new drug. Selpercatinib'."

Diane jumped at the opportunity. And within days of starting the new regimen, she felt completely different. "By the end of that week, I could eat anything. I was enjoying the hospital food!" **Her unique type of lung cancer was responding well to the innovative treatment, despite its advanced stage.** The worst was behind her.

Diane recently celebrated what she called her "two-year cancer-versary," an almost unthinkable milestone only months earlier. She credits her remarkable recovery to the dedication of her doctors and nurses. "I'm so blessed to be benefitting from my doctors' advocacy and their actions. I can't say enough about Stronach Cancer Centre. I really can't."

Your donations help equip Stronach Regional Cancer Centre with the tools that heal hundreds of cancer patients like Diane. Because of you, clinicians like Dr. Allibhai and Dr. Kassam can provide the leading edge treatment needed to get people back to living the lives they love.

THE EQUIPMENT YOU INVESTED IN TO SAVE LIVES

Having the right tools when we need them does more than simply provide greater treatment options and better outcomes. They can keep patients comfortable and give clinicians deeper insight, while enabling Southlake to serve our quickly growing communities without falling behind. While the government provides a baseline of funding for the equipment we need to treat cancer, truly leading edge care requires us to go above and beyond that foundation. This is where your support becomes so vital.

When equipment reaches the end of its service life, we refurbish and repair when we can, extending that life to that we can prioritize replacing the tools that are beyond repair. At the same time, your support lets us identify and secure the latest technological innovations. Here are just a few that have had the greatest impact this past year:

PRONE BREAST SYSTEM

This innovative positioning system keeps female breast cancer patients stable and best positioned to increase the accuracy of radiation, resulting in lower doses required and less toxicity to their lungs and heart. Not only will this equipment lead to better patient outcomes it also provides greater comfort during treatment.

"Thanks to our donors, patients can find the most effective breast cancer treatments without needing to travel to a downtown hospital. The new prone breast system makes it far easier to target cancerous tissue while minimizing the exposure to radiation for the rest of the torso. We can adjust and re-position as necessary, and keep the patient comfortable throughout the procedure. It makes such a difference."

Dr. Tatiana Conrad, Radiation Oncologist

ULTRASOUND ENDOSCOPES

This new, minimally invasive device uses high-frequency sound waves to screen for, diagnose and determine the



Dr. Julius Toth, Physician Lead of Southlake's Surgical Program, performing thoracic surgery.

stage of cancer and other conditions such as digestive and lung diseases, which meet high patient volumes without the need to delay or postpone procedures.

"Cancer treatment is hard enough on patients without the added strain of an invasive operation. Reducing the impact on a patient's body is one of the key benefits of the new endoscopic screens – we can get a clear picture of the chest without making the kind of incisions that require extensive recovery times. The ultimate result is faster, less-traumatic treatment, and it's thanks to our community support."

Dr. Julius Toth, Physician Lead, Surgical Program and Thoracic Surgeon

GAMMA PROBES

Used to detect radiation in patients, these critical devices help surgeons accurately locate unhealthy tissue, such as tumors, parathyroid glands, and lymph nodes, within the human body using an injection of radioactive dye. Gamma probes enable a smaller incision to be made, reducing the recovery time of critical cancer surgeries and lowering the chance of complications.

"In many of the 300 cases of breast cancer we see each year, surgery to remove the tumour is a recommended treatment – but we also need to check the patient's lymph nodes to determine how aggressive the cancer may be. For that, we need gamma probes, inserted with a tiny incision. The new probes provided by donors mean that we now have enough to ensure there's always a fully sterilized probe available without relying on disposable covers that can actually increase the risk of infection."

Dr. Sara Temple, Surgical Oncologist



Patients look for the leading edge in cancer care. So do doctors. Both can find it at Southlake because of our community. By providing our hospital with the latest technology and treatment options, donors help ensure that patients can stay close to their families and that the most talented physicians want to work here. It makes such a difference to the quality of care we can provide.



Dr. Peter Anglin

Physician Lead, Regional Cancer Program



Radiation Oncologist Dr. Tatiana Conrad with her cancer-free patient, Sheila Verzin.



Dr. Sara Temple, Surgical Oncologist at Southlake, in the OR.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Having reached our tenth anniversary this year we look ahead to the increasing need for cancer care in our communities. Cancer reaches all demographics, so as our population grows, so does the need for care. Already one of Canada's fastest growing communities, the 8% growth our region saw between 2010 and 2015 is expected to more than double to 17% by 2025. We will need to be ready to ensure we have the resources and equipment to meet that growth head on.

However, age remains the number one risk factor for cancer. Southlake's communities are also some of the fastest aging in Ontario. By 2035, nearly 570,000 of us will be over the age of 65. We know that this means the need for exceptional cancer care is going to rise dramatically in the coming years.

We will need to expand our capabilities and capacity to meet the increasing needs of our growing and aging communities.



Clinician provides support for a cancer patient at Southlake.



Preparing chemotherapy drugs to be administered to a patient in the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.

The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre at Southlake, completed in 2011.





Southlake was able to provide timely surgical care for most newly-diagnosed cancer patients, something that was not true in other areas of the province.

It has been an awful time for these patients, as they have had to navigate most appointments, treatments and hospitalizations without their family and loved ones physically with them.

It would have been so much worse if they also had suffered significant delays in time to critical surgical treatment. Thank you for ensuring we could continue to offer the vital care that these patients needed.



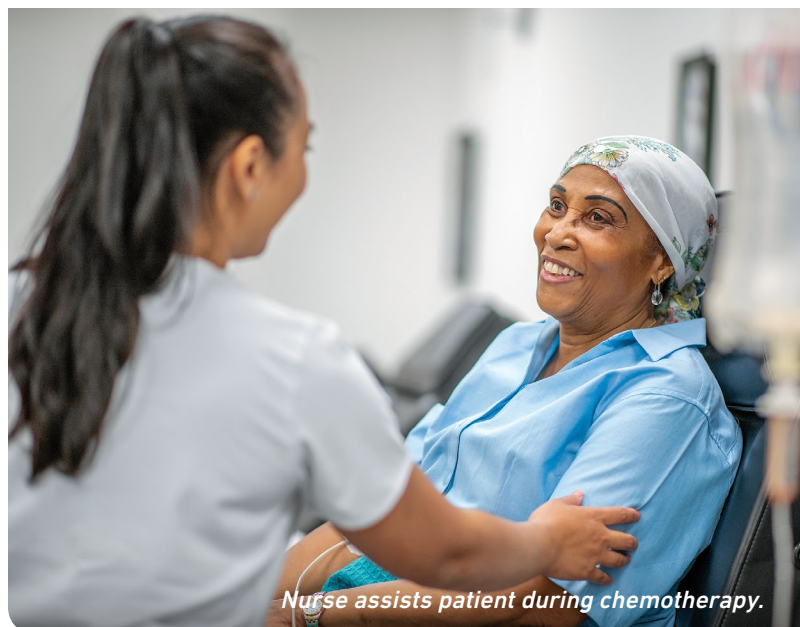
Dr. Sara Temple
Surgical Oncologist



Surgical Oncologist, Dr. Sara Temple, operating on a patient at Southlake.



Oncology clinical team members at the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.



Nurse assists patient during chemotherapy.

THANK YOU

You helped keep families facing cancer together — and their care close to home.



We are so grateful for your support in any year, but 2020 showed us just how deep that support is and how vital it can be. You enabled our Regional Cancer Program to continue healing in the face of overwhelming disruption and adversity, while equipping us with new tools and capabilities. But in many ways, the past year was an indicator of the need still to come. As our communities grow and new needs arise after the pandemic, your support will be fundamental to facing the challenge.

Caring, thoughtful donors like you help unlock the full talent and potential of our physicians and nurses, giving them the tools to match their skill. The impact on care is tremendous. Treatment can be a journey of months or years, and Southlake's teams develop close relationships with every patient that are so important for personalized care. Keeping that journey — and those relationships — close to home depends on having the space and the equipment available. Because of you, I'm proud to say that we do.

On behalf of the entire hospital, I am so thankful to have you by our side.



Jennifer Klotz-Ritter President and CEO, Southlake Foundation



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Leading edge care takes a community, and your support is more than important: it's vital.

If you have questions or would like more information about the difference your gift has made, we're here to help.

Reach out and connect with us at 289.319.3234 or foundation@southlakeregional.org

southlake.ca/donate

