

# GIVING LIVES BACK

SPRING 2021



**West Park** get  
FOUNDATION your  
life  
back



## **In this issue:**

Message from the CEO

Going Above and Beyond as a Nurse

Profile on Dr. Steven Dilkas

Back to Life and Work After Losing a Leg

Dispatches from the Frontline: IPAC

Spotlight on Neurological Rehab Team

Foundation Events

# A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



**Joanne Cole**  
Chief Executive Officer  
West Park Foundation

On behalf of the entire Foundation team, I hope that you and your loved ones are in good health. And although, at the time of writing, we are in lockdown for the third time, the warmer spring temperatures and ramped up vaccine rollout give us all hope for a better summer ahead.

Once again, the stories in our newsletter reflect the many changes at West

Park over the past year; and illustrate the commitment of our dedicated frontline teams to keep our community safe, support each other and continue to provide the high-quality care for which we are known.

On the page opposite, you will find our profile of Gayani Hettiarachchi, a nurse on the CAVC and LTV units, whose already challenging job of caring for our ventilated patients has been even more so during the pandemic. In Dispatches from the Frontline, you can read about the pivotal work of the Infection Prevention and Control unit and, as well, we shine a spotlight on the innovative neurological rehab team. In the work of these teams, it is easy to see why West Park has fared so well over the past year.

As always, construction continues on our new hospital and, as the floors go up so does our excitement for what the new facility will mean for the care and comfort of our patients.

Another bright spot in our year has been producing our virtual events for our generous community. On June 24, we will hold our fourth "gourmet at home" event and our third featuring popular Chef Lynn Crawford. Our last two events with Chef Lynn were sell-out successes, so be sure to get your tickets to Wine, Dine, Summertime and join in the fun. Ticket information can be found on page 8.

As always, the support of our donor community – in all the many ways that support is shown – is an inspiration to all of us at West Park. Thank you!



## CONSTRUCTION REACHES TOP FLOORS

The spring season has brought warmer weather to the bustling West Park campus. And it has been amazing to see the sun shining down as construction of our new, world-class hospital continues to advance.

Crews are currently working on the top (6th) floors of both the North and South Inpatient Blocks; and interior work continues on the lower floors, including the installation of sprinklers, drainage pipes and studs for the walls. It was especially exciting to see the forming of our new therapeutic pool, which will be six times larger than the current one.

While the new hospital won't open until the latter end of 2023, the installation of panels of the exterior brick has already begun. The new building's exterior was designed to evoke a warm and welcoming feeling that draws from West Park's natural heritage.

Keep up with all the action on campus by tuning into our live Construction Cam at [wpconstructioncam.org](http://wpconstructioncam.org). And visit [westparkfoundation.ca/why-give/the-get-your-life-back-campaign/](http://westparkfoundation.ca/why-give/the-get-your-life-back-campaign/) to learn how you can support our new hospital.

# GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND AS A CAVC NURSE

For many years before Gayani Hettiarachchi became a nurse at West Park, she had an image of the hospital in her mind.

Her aunt was a nurse at West Park for 30 years, and would often tell her inspiring stories about the patient population she worked with; about her fellow nurses who became like family when her husband passed away from cancer, and she became a single mother to her two young daughters; and about the hospital's beautiful grounds, near the Humber River, which were full of crab apple trees.

These stories galvanized Hettiarachchi into changing professions. She left her job as a licensed hair dresser to study nursing. And once she began working as a registered practical nurse (RPN), her aunt suggested she apply to West Park.

"I came to West Park almost 14 years ago and have been working in the Chronic Assisted Ventilatory Care (CAVC) Service ever since," she says. "The hospital even supported me, through bursaries, to go back to school and become a registered nurse. So I am very grateful to West Park."

Working in CAVC is a unique challenge, Hettiarachchi says, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her patients are unable to walk and rely on ventilators to breathe. Nurses in this unit also perform aerosolizing procedures on their patients because they cannot clear their airways on their own.

"Our patients are completely dependent on us for their care, but our goal is to give them the best quality of life. We are like their second family," she says. "When they couldn't have visitors, we stepped in to provide the extra support they needed, even helping them stay in touch with loved ones."

Last spring, West Park expanded its services to open the Long-Term Ventilation (LTV) Unit, which has helped move medically stable, ventilated patients out of intensive care units across the GTA, and ensure that people who have become critically ill with the COVID-19 virus can receive the necessary critical care.

"We were excited by the challenge because we believed we were playing our part to help during the pandemic," says Hettiarachchi. "I'm so proud of both units I work in, LTV and CAVC. My colleagues continue to provide amazing care. And despite all the challenges, including wearing PPE all day, they just do what is necessary to support each other and our patients."

Hettiarachchi continues to be inspired by her work and looks forward to the opening of West Park's new hospital. She is even a supporter and ambassador of the Family Campaign, a staff giving program that is helping to fund the new building.

"The new hospital will enable us to provide even better, individualized care for our patients," she says. "We will have more precise control over things like patient room temperature, which will help patients who can't regulate their own body temperatures.

"I want to support the cause of building our new hospital and in some small way to give back to West Park."





Dr. Steven Dilkas at the Pan Am Games in Toronto

# MOTION IS MEDICINE

When it comes to physical activity after experiencing a severe injury or illness, Dr. Steven Dilkas truly believes that “motion is medicine.”

“After having a life changing event, people can become less active, and we know that can increase their risk for other medical complications,” says the physiatrist in West Park’s Amputee Rehabilitation Service. “I am really passionate about physical activity, both as a form of rehabilitation and beyond, in terms of community reintegration.”

Dr. Dilkas has always been interested in physical function, which led him to specialize in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He has been working with West Park’s amputee population since completing his medical residency in 2009.

“Our patients come to us after an amputation in an acute care hospital,” he says. “We work on building up their strength, their endurance, their flexibility, and their independence with their daily activities. Once they’re healed, we are able to create prosthetic devices for them onsite so they can function as best as possible.”

In addition to his work at West Park, Dr. Dilkas also practices sports medicine. Last fall, he was appointed Chief Medical Officer at the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario, where he works with high-performance athletes, including Olympic and Paralympic athletes. And later this summer, he will be going to the Paralympic Games in Tokyo as the physician for the Canadian women and men’s wheelchair basketball teams.

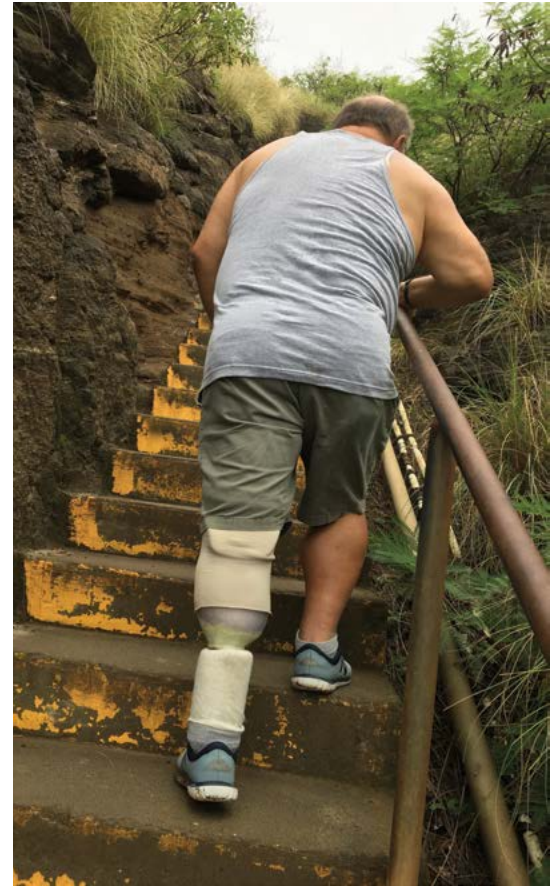
“At West Park, it’s very rewarding to help people who have been through significant health challenges, and to see patients who have lost a lower limb go from being bed bound to walking again,” Dr. Dilkas says. “Sports medicine and helping people achieve at the highest levels is just another spectrum of the continuum of care. You’re allowing elite athletes to optimize what they can do, whether it is personal best performances or reaching podiums on the world stage.”

The global pandemic has definitely added challenges to Dr. Dilkas’s many roles, but it has also allowed him to better understand his patients’ circumstances, and consider how best to serve them. He is especially looking forward to one unique aspect of West Park’s new hospital that will enhance the patient experience for the amputee population.

“Our new hospital will have a satellite hemodialysis service, which is critical because many of my patients with diabetes have an increased instance of kidney disease and require dialysis,” he says. “Right now, my patients are having to have their rehab disturbed to go back to an acute care hospital three-times a week in order to have this done.”

“West Park is very patient focused and patient centred, so I look forward to enhancing our ability to offer comprehensive rehab care across the continuum for individuals with limb loss.”

# BACK TO LIFE AND WORK AFTER LOSING A LEG



For Vince Della Pia, West Park is truly a special place because it turned what could have been a life-altering experience into a positive one.

In the summer of 2018, Vince developed an infection on his toe that wasn't responding to antibiotics. By the end of September, he had to have his left leg amputated below the knee to prevent the infection from invading his bones and becoming critical.

When Vince came to West Park that October, he was immediately impressed. He was met by a nurse who told him about the doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and prosthetists who would be working alongside him in his recovery. He was also encouraged to start working towards his independence right away.

"From day one, the tone was set about what the expectations were," he says. "I wasn't the only patient my therapists were working with, but when they were working with me, I was their number one priority."

After two in-patient stays, first to recover from his amputation surgery, and then to learn how to walk in his new prosthetic limb, Vince was ready to return home.

"Three months after my surgery, I was back to full function. I was discharged from West Park in mid-December and back to work after the holidays in January," he says. "I am a financial planner, and I was driving myself to the office and working full days. Most people aren't even aware that I have a prosthetic leg unless I tell them."

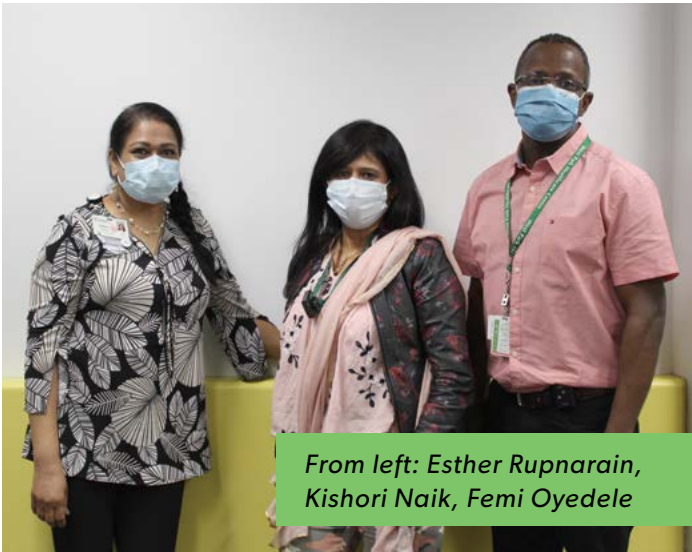
Vince believes West Park really prepared him for the physical and mental challenges of being an amputee. One year after his amputation, he even travelled to Hawaii with his wife and accomplished a physical feat that he continues to be proud of.

"We hiked up the rim of Diamond Head on the island of O'ahu, which involved going straight up with a lot of switchbacks," he says. "And I did that on my prosthetic. It took me a little longer than everybody else, but I did it. I felt pretty good after that day."

Over two years has passed since Vince left West Park, but the facility has left a lasting impression, which inspired him to give back and support the Get Your Life Back Campaign to build its new hospital.

"This place really lives up to its tagline," he says. "It gave me my life back and put me in a position to succeed even more."

# DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONTLINE: IPAC



*From left: Esther Rupnarain, Kishori Naik, Femi Oyedele*

When it comes to preventing and containing the spread of infections at West Park, there is one department that touches every aspect of care and operation, allowing the hospital to not only function, but to be a safe place for patients and staff.

The small but mighty Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) team consists of four Infection Control Practitioners: Esther Rupnarain, Kishori Naik, Femi Oyedele, and Practice Lead Sandi Noble provide boots on the ground and surveillance in the Centre; and are led by Manager Gulzar Karmali.

“We interact with every single department in the hospital and our goal is to prevent the spread of infections, both healthcare-associated infections and those coming in from the community,” Noble says. “We do this by liaising with the clinical and allied staff, monitoring signs and symptoms, and by reviewing lab reports. Everyone is on the lookout for any signs or symptoms of infection. We then provide guidance on precautions and procedures aimed to prevent the spread of infections and keep patients, visitors and staff safe.”

IPAC’s important role in the hospital has become especially critical during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We started planning our COVID-19 response in January 2020. Even before the pandemic was declared last

March, our team worked diligently to provide staff with the education they needed,” Noble says. “During the first wave, there was an explosion of knowledge, and new and evolving protocols that we had to be well-versed in in order to explain and implement the necessary changes.”

It was a challenging time for everyone, Noble stresses.

“We all have loved ones that we go home to every night, and we did not want to risk their safety,” she says. “My first grand-daughter was born last February and I had to stop seeing her, so that was really tough. Many people have been experiencing life changing events that they cannot participate in.”

But one positive outcome from the longer hours and working with greater collaboration across the hospital is that staff has grown closer – and more aware of IPAC practices.

“We all know that we are in this together, and we know we have to look after each other,” Noble says. “There are frustrations too, but we are all working together to problem solve and look out for each other.”

Staff are also looking forward to the opening of West Park’s new hospital, which has been designed to enhance infection prevention and control.

“The new hospital will solve many issues that we are facing now. Currently we have many multi-bedded patient rooms, but the new facility will have a majority of single rooms,” Noble says. “Patients will soon have more space that will prevent the spread of infections.

“It will be fantastic!”



*Sandi Noble*

# SUPPORTING EACH OTHER THROUGH HIGHS AND LOWS



It has been over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, and the past several months have been especially challenging for West Park's frontline healthcare workers as they continue to work hard to keep their patients and fellow staff safe.

While all units across the hospital were adjusting to a new way of providing care, neurological rehabilitation was in a unique situation as a high-intensity rehabilitation program.

"Our team had to get creative with how to provide therapy in these new circumstances while also keeping staff safety in mind," says Amie Enns, Clinical Practice Leader - Occupational Therapy, Neurological Rehabilitation.

"Every member of the team stepped up during those times. We rallied together, and the comradery I saw kept the team going, and it still does," says Rachna Chaudhary, Service Manager, Neurological Rehabilitation.

Michelle Efosman, Physiotherapist, organized Friday morning dance- and sing-alongs with employees, physicians, and patients standing in doorways and hallways – six feet apart – for eight weeks.

Lynn Suter, Clinical Practice Leader – Physiotherapy, also helped keep spirits up with daily 'memes' sent to her teammates through email, providing everyone with a much-needed laugh during stressful days.

Daily informal huddles – which eventually transitioned to weekly – also provided the team opportunities to support each other through the highs and lows. As well, the physicians and environmental services employees continued to be consistent and reassuring presences on the unit.

While change is hard, life continues and important moments still continue to happen, Chaudhary says. "Nothing will ever be perfect, but we helped each other through it and were still able to provide exceptional care that the team should feel extremely proud of."



**WEST PARK FOUNDATION**  
*Golf Classic*

## 2021 GOLF CLASSIC

Don't miss your chance for an exclusive golf experience in support of West Park!

**Join us on August 9th, 2021 on the stunning fairways of the renowned Lambton Golf & Country Club for West Park's 2021 Golf Classic.**

Visit [westparkgolfclassic.ca](http://westparkgolfclassic.ca) to learn more about sponsorship opportunities and to register your foursome. West Park Foundation is committed to the health and safety of all participants in our events. Check the website for up-to-date news on the COVID-19 protocols for our Golf Classic.

# OUR VIRTUAL DINNER SERIES IS BACK IN TIME FOR SUMMER!

Kick off the summer season with a delicious barbecue dinner hosted by the Food Network Canada's very own Chef Lynn Crawford! From Chef Lynn's grill to yours, join us virtually on Thursday, June 24, from 6 to 8 pm, for **Wine, Dine, Summertime**.

Chef Lynn has created an enticing menu bursting with fresh summer flavours. Participants will get to cook alongside her as she shares her top grilling tips and helps you elevate your alfresco dining.

A ticket for two, which includes a box filled with the finest locally sourced ingredients, and a delectable bottle of wine to complement your meal, is \$350. Participants will receive a tax receipt for a portion of the ticket after the event. Proceeds will support West Park's critical mission.

For tickets, sponsorship opportunities, or to view the full menu, visit: [westparkfoundation.ca/events/wine-dine-summertime](https://westparkfoundation.ca/events/wine-dine-summertime)

# WINE, DINE, VALENTINE WAS A SELL-OUT SUCCESS!

Thank you to everyone who joined us on Sunday, February 14 for Wine, Dine, Valentine, presented by EllisDon. More than 370 participants tuned in to cook alongside Chef Lynn Crawford, who created a sumptuous, seasonally inspired three-course menu for the event. The evening was a great success, raising \$136,000 and helping to advance West Park's critical mission!



**Thank you to our sponsors, whose support helped make our event possible:**

## Presenting Sponsor



## Culinary Sponsor



## Wine Sponsor

*Dr. David & Patricia Psutka*

## First Course Sponsor

*LiUNA Ontario Provincial District Council*

## Main Course Sponsor

*Carpenters & Allied Workers Local 27*

## Dessert Course Sponsor

*Extendicare Assist*



**82 Buttonwood Avenue  
Toronto, ON M6M 2J5**  
foundation@westpark.org  
416-243-3698

westparkfoundation.ca

- West Park Healthcare Centre Foundation
- @westparkfdn
- @westparkfoundation
- /company/west-park-foundation

**PRIVACY STATEMENT**—"West Park Healthcare Centre Foundation considers your privacy a priority. We do not rent, sell or trade your information. Your personal information will be used to provide you with information about how your gift is used and updates on West Park Healthcare Centre."

Charitable Business No. 11929 5350 RR0001