

# GIVING LIVES BACK

WINTER 2022



**West Park**  
FOUNDATION

**get  
your  
life  
back**



*Kim Verwaayen: I Am Not Done*

## **In this issue:**

- Message from the CEO
- Inspirational new awareness campaign
- Celebrating milestones
- Help fill our time capsule
- A COVID recovery story
- Foundation events

# A MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



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

As the pandemic enters its third year, the crucial role of a rehabilitation hospital in our healthcare system has never been more clear.

For months, West Park has been treating people suffering the long-term effects of COVID-19, both as in-patients and on an outpatient basis. Our deep expertise in respiratory medicine, as well as our focus on complex continuing care and long-term ventilation, has made us a leader in the fight against the virus from day one.

In this issue, we tell the harrowing story of Chris Smith, who spent five months in acute care with COVID-19 – barely escaping with his life – before arriving at West Park for five weeks of in-patient rehab. We are thankful that the talented physicians and staff were able to get Chris back home with his family.

And we are so proud of the vital role we play that we want more people to know about it. As you will read in these pages, we've launched an awareness campaign to tell the West Park story. Our video series, "I Am Not Done," features three stories of remarkable strength and determination. You may have seen them on TV and online the past few months, but I invite you to visit our website to have a look.

We also celebrate the progress of our new hospital and the success of our capital campaign to support it. We were joined by many members of our community in November for a wonderful event to mark surpassing the 50 per cent mark of our Phase 1 fundraising goal. Thank you to everyone who has helped us get this far.

As always, I hope you and your loved ones are healthy and looking forward to the year ahead.

## I AM NOT DONE: BRINGING THE WEST PARK STORY TO LIFE

In November, the Foundation launched an exciting new awareness campaign to help tell the West Park story to a wider audience.

"I Am Not Done" features stories of incredible resilience in the face of life-changing health challenges. Anchored by three videos, the campaign tells the story of former amputee patient Jamoi Anderson, tumour survivor Rashmi Sanjay and Kim Verwaayen, who suffered from debilitating lung disease (learn more on the page opposite).

"Each of these patients faced very different challenges, and had different recovery goals, but they all had one thing in common: the strength, courage and determination to face their challenge head-on and a realization that they were not done living their best lives," says Joanne Cole, Foundation CEO. "And with the help of the skilled team at West Park, they got back to the lives they love."

The videos can be found at [westparkfoundation.ca/spotlight](https://westparkfoundation.ca/spotlight). In this first stage of the multi-year campaign, the videos were featured on TV and online and were accompanied by print and digital ads.

"We are grateful to the talented teams at Mindshare and Blue Ant Plus, who generously donated countless hours to help bring the West Park story to life," says Cole. "We hope these videos will make more people aware of the vital role that rehabilitation plays in a person's recovery, and in their ability to live full, independent lives."

"Most of all, we grateful to Jamoi, Kim and Rashmi for telling their stories."

*Visit [westparkfoundation.ca/spotlight](https://westparkfoundation.ca/spotlight) to learn more and watch the videos.*

# STORIES OF COURAGE AND RESILIENCE

*Meet the three former patients who inspired the “I Am Not Done” campaign*

## Jamoi Anderson

In 2008, a severe viral infection put Jamoi in hospital and in a 26-day coma. While saving his life, the treatment left the athletic 23-year-old with gangrene in his foot. After making the difficult decision to amputate his left leg below the knee, he was admitted to West Park.

“My goal was to do what I was doing before,” says Jamoi. His new team at West Park embraced the goal and helped get him there. “There’s nothing I can’t do now that I could do before amputation. I rock climb, I ski, I play basketball with able-bodied people.”



## Rashmi Sanjay

Early in 2017, Rashmi was diagnosed with a rare tumour on her spinal cord that threatened to paralyze her from the neck down. The 40-year-old mother of two underwent a six-hour surgery, with no guarantee that she would ever walk again. Seven days later, she arrived at West Park.

Rashmi had a goal – to get back to her children, Rhea and Eshan, who were nine and seven at the time. “The therapists were phenomenal,” she says. “They didn’t tell me what to do – they listened to how I was feeling and worked around that.”

Less than four weeks into her stay, Rashmi returned home. “Walking into my own house and seeing the children and their ‘welcome home’ cards was very emotional. I couldn’t have been happier.”

## Kim Verwaayen

Kim suffered from coughing fits so severe they left her incapacitated. For the Women’s Studies professor, teaching - even socializing - seemed impossible. In 2017 she was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis and came to West Park with just 54 per cent of her lung function.

“I used to be a vibrant, energetic and life-loving person,” she says. “Before I came to West Park I would say I would give almost anything to get even a little bit of that person back.”



West Park taught Kim how to manage her condition, which has been the key to her recovery. “Learning how to breathe, strengthen our muscles is simple but genius,” says Kim. “For the first time I feel excited and hopeful,” she says. “West Park is a miracle place. I wish everyone who is ill could experience what happens at West Park.”



# FRONT ENTRANCE TAKES SHAPE



With structural work on the new hospital largely complete, crews have continued to clad the building in its distinctive grey brick and have also completed the curved exterior wall panel of the auditorium. It is this panel that gives the new hospital its dramatic front entrance.

Shown here is the entrance as it looked in December, and the architect's rendering of its finished look. Almost there!

Stay up-to-date on the progress of our new hospital by checking out all the action on our construction cam at [wpconstructioncam.org](http://wpconstructioncam.org).

Or watch all the progress over the past year at [westpark.org/campusdevelopment](http://westpark.org/campusdevelopment).

# CELEBRATING THE HALFWAY MARK

*Ian Troop says the Get Your Life Back Campaign has wind in its sails*

Ian Troop knew things were working when he got a text from a friend during the Vanier Cup game in early December. The friend had seen one of the new West Park videos during the show and was impressed. "There's still lots to do but we're on our way," Troop says. "We've got wind in our sails!"

Troop is Chair of the Get Your Life Back capital campaign, and helped celebrate two significant milestones at the Foundation's 'We're Halfway There' event in November: placing the last piece of structural steel on the new hospital, and raising \$26 million of the Phase I campaign goal of \$50 million. "When you think about the hopes and dreams of so many people for so many years, and all the work that's gone into getting here, it's a big accomplishment," Troop says.



# HELP FILL OUR TIME CAPSULE!

Help us share the energy and excitement of this historic time at West Park by “filling” our time capsule with special messages for future patients and families.

The capsule will be buried outside in 2024, in the beautiful West Lawn of the new hospital, and will stay there until future generations decide to take a peek!

What would you like to say to the West Park community of the future? You can craft your own message or you can get started by answering these questions: ***What is your wish for the new West Park? How do you hope it will help our patients?***

Send us a note, a video, or an audio submission by email to [Timecapsule@westpark.org](mailto:Timecapsule@westpark.org).

Check out some of the messages we’ve already received:

*“My hope for this new hospital is that it becomes well known as the little jewel that it is, and that it goes from strength to strength.”*

The event included a walk-through of the new hospital building led by Shelley Ditty, Vice-President Campus Development and Support Services, and a look at the three new videos developed to help raise awareness of West Park. “It was educational and energizing,” says Troop, “an opportunity to take stock, take a deep breath, and get ready to bring this home.”

He says that over the past three years the Foundation has been successful in reaching out, activating networks,

*“I hope that all of the wonderful new bedside and room technology will give me more independence, and will allow me to do more things myself, without needing assistance for those everyday tasks.”*

*“My hope is that West Park is forever a place of hope, healing and compassion for our patients and a place that heartens our staff and inspires excellence in their practice.”*

*“I am hoping for an enhanced patient-family experience with the new technology and new upgrades in the new hospital. And I’m sure this will improve how we as nurses, do our job and deliver the best possible patient-centred care.”*

*“My hope is that the new hospital will provide a calming refuge for recovery. That views to the outdoors and the beautiful west lawn will provide comfort and inspiration to meet the challenge of getting lives back, and that this beautiful new facility will be matched only by the caring and skill of our talented clinicians and staff.”*

and telling the great stories of West Park. The awareness campaign is the icing on top, bringing the stories to a new and larger audience. “People are motivated to give by emotion,” he says. “These patient stories are very compelling. They came to West Park at a point when they weren’t sure what their future would be and now they’re resuming their lives. That’s a great place to build support from.”

Moving forward, he believes the professionalism of the Foundation, the ability to leverage the new hospital building, and the three-year awareness campaign will ensure that the fundraising goal is reached. Already the videos are attracting more inquiries and web traffic. Equally important, Troop hopes everyone – board members, staff, and other stakeholders – will reach out and share the West Park story. “We are all West Park’s best ambassadors.”

It’s time, he says, to ‘think big and act small.’ “We need to think big, in terms of the new hospital and our awareness campaign. And we need to act small, having one-on-one convos with people who may be motivated to make a difference. Three years from now, West Park will no longer be Toronto’s best kept secret!”



*The West Park community, joined by Premier Doug Ford, celebrated at the official Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new hospital, in October 2018.*



# TO THE BRINK AND BACK: A COVID STORY

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*Chris Smith at home, post-COVID.*

“My 15-year-old daughter tells me she’s stronger than I am now—and it’s probably true.”

That’s Chris Smith, a 50-year-old father of two, talking about how he feels after a six-month COVID-19 journey that included five weeks of rehabilitation at West Park.

In early May 2021 Chris, an IT project manager, thought he had a cold. He had chills and an “unparalleled” headache. By Mother’s Day, he was so weak that he was lying on the floor to get comfortable. His wife called the COVID-19 hotline, and Chris was soon whisked off by ambulance to North York General Hospital. A few days later, with his oxygen levels dropping dramatically, he was told he would have to go on a ventilator. He spoke to his family by phone, saying what could have been his final goodbyes.

While he was unconscious and ventilated, Smith’s oxygen levels continued to drop. In a last-ditch attempt to save his life, his doctors decided to transfer him to Toronto General for ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation) treatment. It was a risky move: ambulances don’t have ventilators, so there was concern that he might die before reaching his destination.

The ECMO machine, used to treat severe respiratory distress, acts as the heart and lungs of the patient, oxygenating the blood and pumping it through the body for as long as needed. It wasn’t all plain sailing. Several times there were medical emergencies, including serious bleeds and blood clots. At one point, Chris required a middle-of-the-night emergency embolization to stop a hemorrhage in his chest.

When he returned to consciousness after six weeks, he still needed ECMO and was unable to move his arms and legs due to muscle depletion, nor speak due to tracheotomy surgery. “I lay there immobile for 12 hours a day, staring at the walls, the clock, the ceiling tiles,” he says. “I had down times but for the majority of time, I was positive. I did whatever they told me I had to do to get out of this predicament!”

He was removed from the ECMO on August 1 and transferred back to North York General. He gradually began to gather strength. In mid-October, he arrived at West Park for rehab. “It was a very positive experience,” he says. “The food was so good my sister told me to send her pictures!” He quickly became fast friends with his roommate, enjoying hours-long conversations. He has nothing but praise for the respiratory rehab program. “I didn’t think I needed to learn how to breathe – I’d been doing it for 50 years! – but I learned something new at every class.” He was well enough to go home in late November.

Life had one more curve ball for him. His father, though in poor health himself, had been an important cheerleader throughout the whole ordeal. Sadly, his health declined soon after Chris got home, and he died in mid-December. Says Chris: “It seemed like he was just hanging on for me.”



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Ticket sales close March 29<sup>th</sup>. Winning ticket drawn March 30<sup>th</sup>.



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Ticket purchasers must be 18 years of age or older and in the province of Ontario at the time of purchase.

Read the full Lottery Rules of Play at [www.westparklottery.ca](http://www.westparklottery.ca) | Lottery licence # RAF1222909

**Questions? Call Ashleigh Manzon at 416-243-3600 ext. 4215**

# UNCORK UNTAP UNWIND - AMAZING!

Thank you to all our participants and sponsors who joined us on October 22 for UNCORK UNTAP UNWIND. Our 6th annual event was a great success in support of West Park Healthcare Centre, raising \$115,000 in gross proceeds towards our critical mission.

Canadian chef and Food Network Canada personality Lynn Crawford returned by popular demand to host the virtual event, which was presented by EllisDon. She created a stunning three-course menu for the evening's cooking demonstration, with recipes from her new cookbook, *Hearth & Home*.

The meal began with Lyonnaise Salad with Warm Mustardy Vinaigrette and Brown Buttered Croutons, was followed by Halibut with N'duja Sausage, Cauliflower Puree, Kale and Toasted Hazelnuts and then finished with a delicious Pineapple Rum Cake with Caramel Sauce. An exquisite wine pairing, Southbrook Vineyards' 2018 Laundry Vineyard Pinot Noir, accompanied the meal.

The event also featured an exciting silent auction and a soulful performance from powerhouse vocalist and four-time Juno Award winner Simone Denny.

Thank you to our sponsors, whose generous support helped make the evening possible!



**Chef Lynn Crawford**



**Simone Denny**

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