

GIVING LIVES BACK

Spring 2025



West Park shoots for the stars! page 7

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West Park
FOUNDATION

Get your life back.

The ear is the road to the heart

– Irish proverb

By Doug Earle,
CEO, West Park Foundation

Irish playwright and Nobel Laureate George Bernard Shaw wisely observed that "the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

Communication is more than just words. Beyond tone and body language, communication is far more complex than just a verbal exchange. And sometimes, the most powerful communication can happen in the absence of the spoken word.

Through different media, and sometimes in silence, communication's ultimate goal is simple. It is to deliver a message that is understood.

But first, we need to listen.

It is the art of listening, this elusive, yet essential ingredient, which has been elevated to new heights at **UHN's West Park in the Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) clinic** with transformative effect, giving voice to those who are unable to communicate using the spoken word.

AAC is an umbrella term that covers communication methods beyond spoken language. It can be used to support or even replace verbal speech, depending on the individual's needs and goals. From simple gestures and pictures to high-tech speech-generating devices, AAC offers a personalized solution for each client.

Lori Shaw, Speech Language Pathologist and Clinical Coordinator at West Park, best describes it: "It's about listening to our clients and understanding their needs. Who are they trying to communicate with? What are they trying to say? And then it's about figuring out what works in each situation."

Thanks to the advances in AAC, West Park's clients with neurological and neurodegenerative disorders or congenital physical disabilities can now be heard. Using methods that either supplement or replace an individual's speech and/or writing, AAC techniques or devices can be used to enhance participation in important life activities.

AAC client Kerr Wattie says, "AAC makes life worth living. It's central to my well-being. It's the only way for people to get to know who I am and what's important to me and for me to understand and be understood."



Thirteen years ago, Steve Arscott was diagnosed with ALS. A graphic designer by training, Steve finds it next to impossible to communicate without AAC. However, with AAC tools such as Pocket Talker, Click2Speak and a head-tracking camera, Steve has mastered eye-gaze and head movement technology which allows him to produce the most amazing artwork.



Illumination Alley by Steve Arscott.

When asked what others can do to make conversations easier for him, he says, "Just take the extra time to try and understand what I am saying. Let me finish my thought."

Most of our efforts to develop communication skills relate to reading, writing and speaking. But little effort is placed on developing our ability to really hear the other person's perspective. And letting the other person finish.

Just because you say something, it doesn't mean the other person has understood. And just because someone with ALS or cerebral palsy has difficulty in speaking, it doesn't mean they don't have something important to say.

We just need to listen.

"It's Good for His Soul"

Music therapy helps one patient deal with the pain

Guy DiProspero sings with Music Therapist Daiva Zemaitis.



How do you feel when you listen to music? If you play an instrument or sing, how do you feel when you express yourself musically?

For many patients at UHN's West Park, weekly music therapy sessions are an important part of their lives, helping to lift their mood, achieve communication goals, and provide cognitive stimulation and an outlet for creative expression. And for stroke survivors who want to regain their speech, vocal exercises are crucial.

Music Therapist Daiva Zemaitis says it is also about choice-making. "Choice-making builds trust and gives patients autonomy. When they've lost so much, this is one thing they have control over."

This morning, she's working with Guy DiProspero, who has been at West Park since June. After several cardiac arrests caused a severe anoxic brain injury, Guy was left with dystonia – a highly painful movement disorder that causes the muscles to contract, which affects his ability to speak and move.

Guy has always loved music, his wife Sandra says. "The house was never quiet, he always had music playing."

Today's session begins with Daiva asking Guy if he wants to hear a fast or slow song. Guy mouths "slow" in response. Daiva asks if he wants to hear "I Just Called to Say I Love You" or "Forever Young" and Guy chooses the former.

Daiva sings the lyrics and plays the melody on her guitar, while Guy mouths along to many of the words. Daiva encourages Guy to help her finish the first line of the chorus, "I just called to say I love you". Guy is emotional, moving to the music.

It's great for his wellbeing, Sandra says. "He deals with a lot of pain. But music therapy brings memories back. It calms him down and often puts him right to sleep if he's agitated. It's good for his soul."

The music therapy program is partially funded through the generosity of West Park donors. "West Park should be applauded for providing patients like my husband with this wonderful gift," says Sandra.



From left: Susan MacDonald, Director, Art Strategy at UHN; Doug Earle, CEO of West Park Foundation; and Martha Cumming Buchanan, Director, Major Gifts and Campaign Director.

Art of Hope

On April 8, we were delighted to host Art of Hope to officially open the stunning art installations in UHN's West Park and celebrate the role that art plays in enriching the lives of our patients.

Guests had a chance to take an art tour, meet some of the artists whose work is brightening the halls of the hospital, and hear a fabulous keynote address by Sara Angel, Founder and Executive Director of Art Canada Institute.

Thank you to our donors who supported the art program at West Park.



Pankaj Seth with his new computer.

A New Beginning

At the Gage, donor support helps ease transition to independent living

In the heart of midtown Toronto a co-op apartment building houses a unique West Park service: the Gage Transition to Independent Living (GTIL) program.

With 10 wheelchair accessible apartments and a team of Life Skills Educators, 24/7 personal care attendants and a Health Educator, the GTIL helps adults with physical disabilities learn the skills needed to live independently in the community. Clients have either a newly acquired disability, or an existing disability but have only lived in an institution or at home with parents or family. Clients are supported for up to a year to make the transition to independent living.

Catherine Monchesky, one of the Life Skills Educators, says that "the goal is to help clients become comfortable managing day-to-day life care needs on their own. Learning how to manage on your own and knowing who to call if things break down."

Clients learn key skills such as directing personal care, grocery shopping, banking, preparing meals, booking medical appointments and using transit.

When extra support is needed, West Park Foundation's patient assistance grants can help.

Living with a disability is expensive; from the cost of a power wheelchair to the cost of medications and accessible kitchen tools or appliances, the expenditures add up and government funding doesn't always cover it all.

The Foundation's grants can help bridge that gap, covering items such as power or manual wheelchairs, ceiling lifts and other assistive devices. The grants

have helped patients experience recreational activities, such as a trip to the aquarium, to show how they can enjoy them independently in the future.

One recent recipient of a grant is Pankaj Seth, 62, who came to the GTIL in the summer of 2024 after a below-knee amputation. He's learning to live with prosthetic and a wheelchair, and with the help of the skilled team at the Gage, he's now comfortable using WheelTrans and is learning how to use the TTC in his wheelchair. He says, "There's just so much coming at me that I need some help sometimes."

One barrier to Pankaj living an independent life became clear in early 2025. A Naturopathic Doctor by trade, Pankaj wants to offer online courses on meditation and breathwork to naturopaths, which would allow him to work virtually.

But his decade-old computer couldn't access Zoom and other key programs needed to run online courses. Thanks to the generosity of West Park Foundation donors, he was able to buy a new computer. It was a huge boost for him that people are giving him a hand up.

"This is fantastic," he says. "It's a mental release because I wasn't feeling safe about my ability to work after my injury. So I'm getting organized around that now."

In the coming months, Pankaj will apply for the necessary certifications and secure an apartment, and by July will be living on his own and earning his own income.

He says, "I'm really impressed with this program. I tell them all the time that they're a really good team."



Bernie McGarva at Killington Peak.

Bernie McGarva went in for day surgery on a small aneurysm behind his knee. The surgery was more complicated than expected and ultimately the doctors had to amputate his leg. The next day, McGarva noticed a walker at the end of his hospital bed and decided to try it. "I took a couple of steps and was exhausted but thrilled to be back on my feet."

That tells you a lot about Bernie. He faced an unimaginable challenge and simply decided to get on with it. Now he's honouring the people at UHN's West Park who helped him get his life back by making a legacy gift to the hospital.

Bernie grew up in Toronto, graduated from UTS and went on to study government at Harvard and law at the University of Toronto. "I was always interested in the law from the time I was a kid, and I hoped I could use it to make a difference." He practiced for many years as a civil litigator with specializations in shareholder and construction law before moving into the field of alternative dispute resolution.

After the amputation, Bernie was determined to keep moving, despite considerable pain. "I was motoring around the entire hospital floor, so they decided to move me over to West Park for rehab quickly!" There he found the practical help and inspiration he needed, working with outstanding doctors, prosthetists and therapists.

Honouring Inspiration

Bernie McGarva makes a legacy gift to recognize those who kept him moving forward when things got tough

"At West Park I met so many patients who encouraged and inspired me with their approach to getting their lives back. I learned a lot there." His wife and chief cheerleader Pippa also played a key role in his recovery.

Always active and a longtime hockey coach, Bernie no longer runs or skates. He swims and cycles to stay in shape and is delighted he can hit the ski slopes again, using a specialized prosthetic.

When he was approached to join the board of the West Park Foundation, Bernie jumped at the chance to give back. He enjoyed coming back to the hospital, often working with familiar faces in new ways and connecting with recent amputees to provide the support and encouragement that was so important to him.

Although he has fond memories of the warm, friendly atmosphere in the old hospital, Bernie is thrilled with the new building, which he calls "an absolutely stunning transformation." He says the building has helped raise the profile of West Park and spread the message of its mission to help people get their lives back on a larger scale.

And the choice to make a legacy gift? Bernie says simply, "I want to say that I believe in the cause and that I want others to consider contributing to it."



William Gage
LEGACY CIRCLE

More donors like Bernie McGarva are partnering with us to create a legacy gift to West Park through their Will or estate plans.

If you would like to learn more about investing in the future of UHN's West Park Healthcare Centre, please contact Jacqueline Cooper, VP Development at 416-243-3613 or jackie.cooper@uhn.ca.

West Park's Transformation Continues

UHN's West Park opened its new hospital building in April 2024, but that wasn't the end of our campus redevelopment.

This winter, we completed the expansive Fuller Family Central Plaza outside of the hospital's main entrance. The plaza welcomes visitors and the wider community to West Park, and is an inviting gathering point for patients, visitors and staff.

Construction has begun on the new West Lawn that will feature outdoor therapy spaces to better support patients as they recover. The West Lawn will flow from a unique courtyard between the new hospital and West Park's legacy building, now called the UHN Reactivation Care Centre (RCC). RBC Foundation generously supported accessibility



Fuller Family Central Plaza.

improvements for the West Lawn, including a ramp from the courtyard to the second-floor rooftop garden on the legacy building, making this healing space accessible to all patients, visitors and staff.

Finally, indoor renovations on the RCC continue and, when our full campus redevelopment is completed in 2026, UHN will add 188 additional beds to the healthcare system.

Improving Access to Pulmonary Rehabilitation

UHN's West Park Healthcare Centre and Lung Health Foundation have partnered to launch an exciting new online initiative that will help both patients and healthcare providers find pulmonary rehabilitation programs close to home.

The Canadian Pulmonary Rehabilitation Portal is an easily navigable, open access directory of pulmonary rehabilitation programs across Canada.

The initiative can trace its roots to a research study, led by Lee Verweel, West Park's Manager of Research and Innovation, that looked at the rise of virtual pulmonary rehabilitation programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. In discussing the results of this study it became clear to Dr. Roger Goldstein, Head of Respiratory Medicine at West Park, that there was an opportunity to enhance access to pulmonary rehabilitation across the country by creating a comprehensive database of programs (in person, out-patient and virtual) for physicians, as well as people

with chronic respiratory conditions, to know where to access care. A small West Park team quickly volunteered to develop the project.

West Park Foundation helped bring together the West Park Respiratory and Lung Health Foundation teams to leverage the study's database of programs to be accessible, searchable by postal code and relevant to the public. Program details, including how to refer and access, are available.

"We are delighted to support the development of this unique online tool that will help more people with lung disease access the care they need," says Doug Earle, CEO of West Park Foundation.

The portal can be found at
CanadianPulmonaryRehab.com.



Winning team McCain Capital Partners.

West Park Shoots for the Stars!

The 6th Annual West Park Foundation Tournament of Stars took place on March 21-22 and was a fantastic success, raising over \$700,000 in support of UHN's West Park!

The activities kicked off Friday evening at the Celebrity Draft Party where the 17 teams drafted their NBA and WNBA celebrity players, including Jamaal Magloire, Carlos Boozer, Jerome "JYD" Williams, Ticha Penicheiro, Mario Chalmers and more.

Bright and early Saturday morning, teams hit the courts at U of T's Goldring Centre for a fun but competitive 5 on 5 tournament, cheered on by family and friends, along with West Park patients and clients of the Gage Transition to Independent Living program. West Park's gaming E-Warriors put on an impressive display of their adaptive gaming skills in the Sony PlayStation video game corner.

Lunchtime saw great food and the Kids Skills and Drills Clinic led by NBA alumni JYD and Ricky Davis, as well as a Three-Point Shoot Out competition open to all attendees.

The hotly contested championship title was won by Team McCain Capital Partners and their celebrity teammate Cuttino Mobley.

See you next year!



NBA alumni Jerome Williams and Ricky Davis with Kids Clinic participants.

Thank you to our generous sponsors for making this year's Tournament such a great success.

Trophy



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Walk for West Park on May 31!

The West Park Warriors in 2024.

Join the West Park Warriors team at We Walk UHNITED on Saturday, May 31 and support our patients as they work hard to regain their independence and get their lives back.

This family-friendly event begins at 201 Elizabeth Street (the Toronto General Hospital outdoor parking lot) and includes both 2 km and 5 km routes plus entertainment and interactive activities at the post-walk celebration.

This is a great opportunity to show your support for UHN's West Park while enjoying a fun morning with family and friends.

Learn more and sign up at:

WestParkFoundation.ca/events/we-walk-uhnnited/



Hit the links at the 2025 Golf Classic

The 2024 winning foursome from King International had some fun on the links!

Join West Park Foundation for a great day of golf with colleagues and friends on Monday, August 11 at the beautiful and prestigious Lambton Golf & Country Club, which will be one of the qualifying sites for the 2025 U.S. Open.

The tournament gets underway with a 12:30 pm shotgun start, and includes a full lunch upon arrival, on-course activities and contests, a silent auction and a post-game cocktail reception. Funds raised from this event will support West Park's critical mission to help people recover from serious injury or illness and get their lives back.

This event sells out each year, so book soon to avoid disappointment.

Visit WestParkGolfClassic.ca to learn more about sponsorship opportunities and to register your foursome.

Culinary Showdown

November 1, 2025

Don't miss this epic culinary battle featuring some of Canada's hottest chefs!

Learn more at TheCulinaryShowdown.com



West Park
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Get your life back.



Accredited
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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Statement: At West Park Healthcare Centre Foundation, we are committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse and accessible environment, an important part of living our brand. We are dedicated to building a staff and board that reflects the diversity of our community.

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