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Donating to the Lakeshore General Hospital's Guardian Angels program helps in the fight against COVID-19

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Oct 28, 2020 • October 28, 2020 • 3 minute read





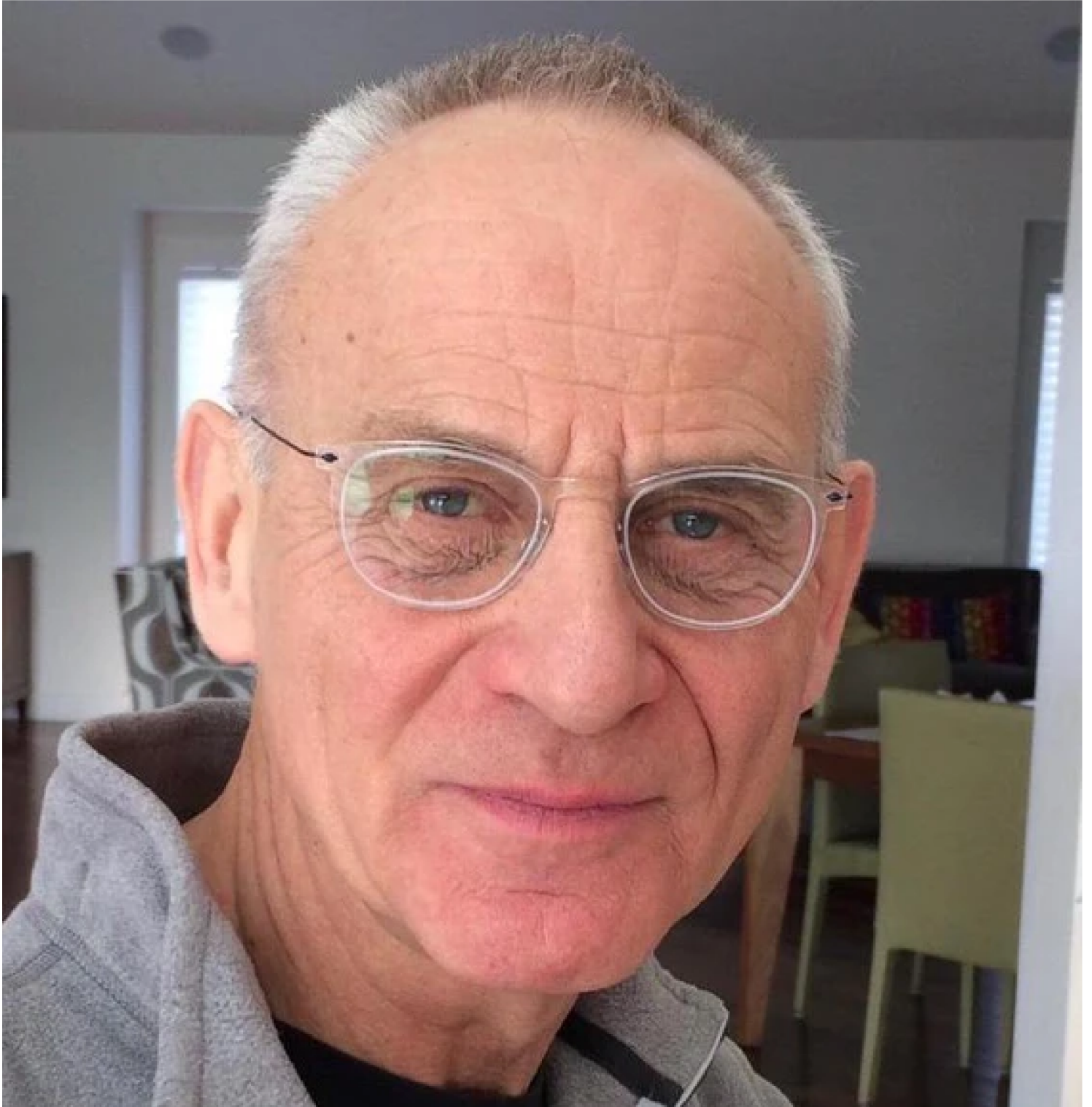
Lakeshore Guardian Angels program honours those who provide exceptional care for their patients.

It's not unusual for patients to give their doctors gifts, especially during the holiday season, but Dr. Rolf Loertscher, the head of the Department of Specialized Medicine at the Montreal West Island IUHSSC, wishes more of them would redirect their generous spirit toward the health system, specifically via the Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation.

“It is nice when they come with a bottle of wine...that is thoughtful, I always think they went out of their way, but to be honest, it would be far more effective in helping good care if it was given to the Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation,” said Loertscher, a nephrologist who has been working out of the hospital for more than 16 of his 30-plus years in Quebec's health care system.

For those who would like to recognize a doctor, or other hospital caregiver, the Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation offers the Lakeshore Guardian Angels program. It's a way to honour those who provide exceptional care and demonstrate compassion towards their patients. If a physician, nurse, orderly or other staff member provided exemplary service during a visit to the Lakeshore, patients or their families can make a donation to the Foundation in his or her honour through the program.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW



Dr. Rolf Loertscher, the Head of the Department of Specialized Medicine at the Montreal West Island IUHSSC.

Each recipient gets a letter and a pin in recognition of the honour. In six of the last eight years, Loertscher has been named as a Lakeshore Guardian Angel and it's an honour that he doesn't take for

Loertscher has been named as a Lakeshore Guardian Angel and it's an honour that he doesn't take for granted.

“When gifts come into my office, I have no expectation in that sense, but when they go towards our foundation, that does really wonderful things for the hospital, then that’s an extra step the patient made,” said Loertscher. “They really mean to express their gratitude, no question, but as a physician, it’s a humbling experience.”

Heather Holmes, the Managing Director of the Lakeshore General Hospital Foundation, said the program has been around since 2011, but she feels that not enough patients are aware of its existence and wants to raise its profile.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

“We decided to relaunch it because I think we just hear so many good stories about the quality of care received and I don’t know that people realize that they can underline that care with a donation in honour of the person who helped them,” she said.

Holmes explained that patients can request their donations be used for specific purposes, but these days, general donations are being used to help the hospital in the fight against COVID-19. Early on, donations were used to buy extra personal protective equipment that was in short supply, but now it’s being used to build a wifi network to cover the entire hospital which Holmes says will be an important tool in the war against the virus.

“It means medical professionals won’t have to cross into different departments so they can do things remotely and it’s also for the patients,” she explained. “If patient visits are limited, or even cancelled, wifi can provide them with some human contact.”

STORY CONTINUES BELOW



Every dollar that the Foundation receives is welcome, especially during the pandemic.

Loertscher welcomes the advent of wifi in the Lakeshore, saying it's something that physicians have been asking for a long time as a tool to help them be more efficient as they move from floor to floor and unit to unit. He also said you cannot underestimate its importance to patients who want to stay in touch with their families.

“The Lakeshore is an underfunded, understaffed hospital that does its best to provide adequate care with limited means so the existence of a foundation that can support programs like this is an extremely important thing, because there are certain things that the government wouldn't come around and fund,” he said

Another project funded by donations to the Foundation that started before the pandemic began, but has proved to be timely in the fight against the virus, was the addition of four new intensive care rooms. Work is also underway to upgrade the already existing 11 rooms along with a complete renovation of the emergency room in the years ahead.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

Holmes said that it might sound cliché, but every dollar that the Foundation receives is welcome, especially during the pandemic.

“I’ve heard donors say ‘I only have \$5. It’s not really going to do anything.’ Yes, it absolutely does. If everybody helps us with \$5, we’ll win the battle against COVID together.”

To make a donation or to find out more about the Lakeshore Guardian Angels program, visit <https://fondationlakeshore.ca/donate/lakeshore-guardian-angels/>.

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