

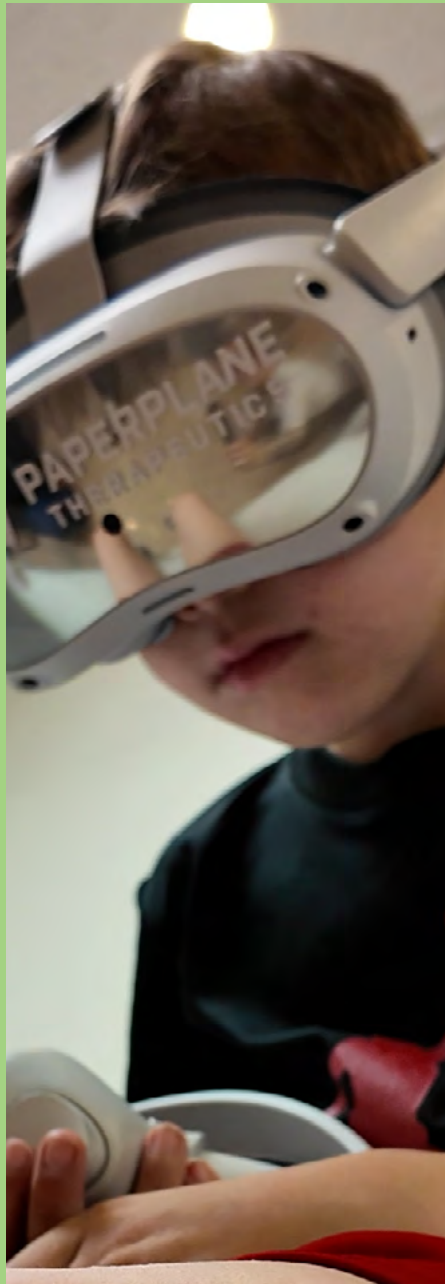
As a  
**DONOR,**  
**YOU**  
are a  
**VITAL**  
part  
of the  
**CHEO**  
family



**When CHEO faces challenges, donors are with us every step of the way.**

With your support, we can continue building healthier futures for infants, children and youth. Your donations lead to improvements in equipment, enhanced hospital programs, ground-breaking discoveries and life-saving treatments at CHEO. You understand that the need to improve patient care, reduce wait times and replace medical equipment is ongoing and vital.

We are grateful for your kindness and generosity. Your desire to help families can be seen in every part of CHEO, the CHEO Research Institute and Roger Neilson Children's Hospice. This report shows just some of the accomplishments made possible thanks to your personal commitment to children and youth.



## Having an MRI is like going to the movies

Getting an MRI can be scary for patients, the equipment's loud noises and confined space can be a difficult experience. Some children cannot remain still for a scan and need general anesthesia which involves many staff members to administer and monitor safely. The scan itself can be hours long, requiring parents to take time off work to be at the hospital. The waitlist for an MRI with general anesthesia can often be more than a year long.

In 2023, CHEO's MRI Success Clinic introduced the use of virtual reality (VR) to support patients during MRI imaging. The MRI Success Clinic consists of a one-hour appointment with an MRI technologist where patients are prepared for their MRI using coaching and VR techniques to simulate an MRI scan.

To provide children with an enjoyable experience during their MRI, patients can safely wear the VR headset inside the MRI scanner. The headset keeps children entertained with their favourite TV shows and greatly reduces the noises made by the machine.

Thanks to VR support, 28 patients between the ages of three and seven have completed their MRI without the use of general anesthesia in 2023. This increased efficiency is helping to shorten CHEO's waitlist and provide MRI scans to more patients in less time.



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## Equity, diversity and inclusion at CHEO

**Celebrating Pride at CHEO:** With the help of generous community contributions CHEO's Play Program continued to evolve. The team brought play and distraction opportunities to patients and families in waiting spaces, and worked to align activities with equity, diversity and inclusion across the hospital. During Capital Pride week in Ottawa, Play Program volunteers, and Child Life volunteers held craft sessions and activities such as decorating stones with positive messages and displaying them outside on CHEO walkways, colouring pride flags, and celebrating all things Pride!

**Reading across CHEO:** In 2023, over 1,000 books were purchased thanks to donor generosity and volunteers distributed double the number of books to kids and families than the year previously. CHEO continues to work to ensure that stories shared reflect the diversity of CHEO kids and families. Special attention is given to books that include characters with disabilities, different cultural backgrounds, and those from the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Books were purchased in braille and in a variety of languages to make reading and stories accessible to all kids and youth at CHEO.

## Breaking down communication barriers

With the increasing number of newcomers arriving in Canada, the families that CHEO supports are becoming more diverse. Many of these families do not have English or French as a first language, which can result in challenges when communicating with their care team.

Donor funds have assisted in reducing these barriers by covering the cost of translation for medical records and language resources for families. Examples of documents that community funding has helped translate include diagnostic certificates into Mandarin, patient experience surveying questions into Arabic, patient discharge summaries into Swahili and eating disorder meal planning guides into Spanish.

**Thank you for ensuring that families receive medical information in their preferred languages, reducing safety risks and increasing families' overall experience with the health care system.**



## Spreading joy as a therapeutic clown

CHEO's Therapeutic Clown Program brings an immense amount of joy and laughter into a child's hospital stay or clinic visit. Here at CHEO, Zedd the clown helps to ease anxiety using spontaneous humour and gentle play to minimize stress and redirect a young patient's thinking to positive and enjoyable things.

For many patients at CHEO whose lives depend on 24-hour medical care, their waking hours are dedicated to medical needs and invasive routines, when all they dream of is joy, imagination and play. Zedd has been an outlet for many patients, taking the time to invest in play sessions, giving them the opportunity to draw pictures using markers, crayons and big sheets of paper. Using Zedd as a conduit, patients can tell him what colours to use and where to place the crayon. This not only enables patients to colour but empowers them to imagine.

Your generous gift to CHEO's Therapeutic Clown Program fund improves the hospital experience for so many children and families, today and for years to come. Thank you for making their time at CHEO as joyous as possible.



## Supporting families in need

Staff at CHEO look for ways to help fill critical gaps through family assistance, so that parents can be their child's foremost support without having to deal with unsurmountable financial pressures. There has been an ever-increasing need for assistance in the last few years given the rising cost of living and a high number of families struggling with basic living costs.

Over the course of 2023, 103 families experienced a financial hardship as a result of their child's treatment and received financial assistance funded by donor dollars. In addition, 384 parking passes were issued, and over 75 families were supported with a wide variety of specialized equipment, food gift cards and taxi chits to enable attendance at appointments.

Beyond making day-to-day expenses more manageable, donor generosity provided nine families with funds to cover funeral expenses, two families received financial assistance when their child was receiving palliative care, and nine families were provided travel assistance to help cover out-of-pocket costs while travelling out of Ottawa to access medical care. These examples are just a few ways your dollars have provided tangible and compassionate help during the most difficult times for local families.



### **Addiction services for CHEO’s children and youth**

Having safe, productive and open conversations about substance use is important. Thanks to donor generosity, CHEO’s patients and staff have access to an addictions counsellor from Ottawa’s Rideauwood Addiction and Family Services. From training hospital staff on substance use issues and resources available to them, to following up with patients discharged after having been admitted to CHEO because of a drug overdose – this community funded service has a major impact on the health and well-being of youth and their families.

Access to an addictions counsellor can make long-term recovery a more realistic possibility. Counselling raises the chances of positive results, enhanced quality of life and lower relapse rates in youth. Furthermore, it helps youth create coping mechanisms, and provides access to the resources they need for a successful recovery.

### **Helping families purchase mobility equipment**

CHEO Foundation’s Family Assistance Fund helps families with the extra costs associated with having a child with a disability. Often government funding and private insurance plans do not fully cover the cost of equipment necessary to support children with special needs. This past year, thanks to donor generosity, the Family Assistance Fund helped purchase specialized equipment for children.

For example, you helped a family pay the extra cost for a specialized Roll’er Chill-Out Chair for their 15-year-old daughter. This chair helped to improve her daily living by reducing the amount of chair transfers at home, school or in therapy sessions. The chair’s built-in accessories such as the feeding and activity tray, and ottoman support offers comfort and seating. This is just one example of many, showcasing how families benefit from real improvements to their daily life thanks to you.



Photo from the Rock’er Roll’er website