Thank You: For supporting a better future for critically ill babies; For funding visionary research; For giving back in extraordinary ways.

Dr. Yenge Diambomba, Clinical Director of Nurseries, holds 2-day-old Julia Koren in Mount Sinai’s Valentine Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.
“We were in the NICU for 96 days.” It was July of 2003 and Lauren and Sam Pezzullo’s second son, Linden, had been born premature at 27 weeks. He weighed 3 lb. 3 oz., and he had meningitis and septicemia. It was also the summer of SARS. “It was quite the experience we had,” says Lauren, with wry understatement.

Linden battled through the many hurdles that prematurity put in his path. Those 96 days changed his parents’ lives. They started The Linden Fund, a charity supporting neonatal intensive care units (NICU) across Canada. And Lauren became an advisor to the team designing Mount Sinai’s new Valentine NICU. “They asked for interested parents, and my hand shot up like a rocket,” she recalls. “It’s an honour to be able to directly influence and impact the change.”

The expansion of Mount Sinai’s Lawrence and Frances Bloomberg Centre for Women’s and Infants’ Health is vital. In the last decade, that patient volume has nearly doubled and our program has become the most comprehensive in Ontario, yet our physical space has remained the same. The addition of six storeys on our Murray Street tower provides much-needed space, and the opportunity to implement evidence-based design principles that will benefit patients, families and health-care teams.

“The new concept makes it even more about the patient,” says Dr. Yenge Diambomba, Neonatologist and Clinical Director of Nurseries. “Over the years, we’ve listened to parents. For instance, the new space will be a mixed unit, for Levels II and III. A transfer between levels can

“With a single-room design, we are creating a temporary home where the family will stay for the duration of their NICU journey.”

DR. YENGE DIAMBOMBA
Welcome to The Best Medicine Matters! Very appropriately, our autumn newsletter features stories inspired by this season of Thanksgiving.

I find it inspiring to work in a sector where gratitude is expressed so sincerely and so often. Every day it seems I hear from patients or family members who are grateful for the compassion and care they have received at Mount Sinai. Nurses and physicians are thankful because your gifts enable new resources, such as our exciting new centre for women’s and infants’ health. Scientists at the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute are grateful for the donations which advance research that has the potential to transform the way we treat devastating diseases.

My Foundation colleagues and I are grateful for your extraordinary support. Your generosity plays a vital role in our ability to remain at the leading edge of clinical care and scientific research. Thank you for all that you do.

With warm regards,

Susan Horvath
President, Mount Sinai Hospital Foundation

The current ward-style unit will be replaced by 60 private rooms. “Babies need a calm environment,” says Dr. Diambomba. “We can’t exactly recreate the womb, but we want to recreate some aspects of it. We’ll be able to reduce light and sound stimulation, and putting more of a barrier between the babies promotes better infection control.”

There will be space for a family member to sleep in the room, and enhanced privacy, which Lauren Pezzullo says is essential. “I was one of the unfortunate parents who went through almost losing my child and not having anywhere to grieve,” she says. “With the new design, families will have space and privacy to be together at difficult times.”

“We’re trying to bring the family closer to their baby,” says Dr. Diambomba. “We want them to know they can still be a parent, even in the NICU, and we want to show them how.”

To learn more, or to make a contribution to our new Valentine NICU, please go to mshfoundation.ca

Dr. Yenge Diambomba holds 2-day-old Julia

be very traumatic; parents have to adapt to a whole new environment. With a single-room design, we are creating a temporary home where the family will stay for the duration of their NICU journey.”
Caring for a Greying Population

Launching education programs, hiring specialist nurses and physicians, building senior-friendly elements into all re-development plans — these are some of the steps Mount Sinai is taking in its journey to becoming a senior-friendly hospital.

But the most important step is attitude. “The aging population has been an area of concentrated effort for the past few years. We’ve incorporated geriatrics in our strategic plan and thought about what we need to do to lead the way,” says Jocelyn Bennett, Senior Director of Mount Sinai’s Centre for Acute & Chronic Medicine.

Demographics underscore the necessity of this approach. Next year, baby boomers begin turning 65, and seniors will constitute 15 per cent of Canada’s total population.

The implications of this “grey wave” are evident in our Schwartz/Reisman Emergency Centre, where nearly 21 per cent of patients are 65 or older. In response, the Hospital introduced the Geriatric Emergency Medicine (GEM) nurse role.

“We focus on geriatric principles of care,” explains GEM nurse, Nana Asomaning. “From an Emergency perspective, that means we identify factors that limit the patient’s ability to live functionally and cope with whatever issues brought them here.”

GEM nurses co-ordinate with a wide network of colleagues, including social workers and occupational therapists. The inpatient geriatrics team is another essential component of senior care. “We work to maximize abilities and minimize complications,” says Rebecca Ramsden, the team’s Nurse-Practitioner.

The duo clearly love their work. “We very much enjoy working with this population,” says Rebecca. “The social and medical complexities that can exist provide you with challenging opportunities. It really is a fascinating and rewarding area to work in.”

“The historical perspective of the patient is as interesting as their clinical presentation — what has contributed to their health and the way they’re living now,” says Nana. “It reminds you of why you went into nursing, because you’re not just focused on the medical model, you really get to see the patient for who they are.”

A Gift that Keeps on Giving

For his mother’s 80th birthday, Toronto lawyer Howard Black concluded that she would be happier giving than receiving. He made a five-year pledge to fund MAUVE, a new volunteer program, in his mother’s name.

Maximizing Aging Using Volunteer Engagement, aka MAUVE, was established in July 2009 as part of a strengthened emphasis on enhancing the Hospital’s clinical geriatric programs.

MAUVE provides elderly patients with an integrated continuum of care via trained volunteers who work closely with hospital staff. It aims to improve the patients’ quality of life and reduce the risk of functional decline during their hospital stay. Volunteers are trained in nutrition and hydration and to determine patients’ levels of space and time orientation. They help seniors maintain their dignity and a positive outlook by assisting with simple aesthetics and grooming.

Volunteers tailor their services around their senior charges’ interests. One hung a world map in a patient’s room to encourage the former world traveler to share stories. Another brought in books and videos for a patient who loved gardening.

Beverley Black, a passionate volunteer, was delighted. “It was the most wonderful thing any of my children could have given me. Howard knows how much I enjoy my work here at Mount Sinai and how much I get out of it.”
Tea Party an Outpouring of Support

Pristine white décor, immaculate arrangements of silk-wrapped peonies and gourmet cakes — this was one tea party Martha Stewart would have been proud to host.

The common thread binding the 125 guests was that they were all mothers, daughters or both, and all wanted to do something special for Michelle and Zachary (Zak) Goldman, who lost their son Avery at birth and spent six months with Blake, Avery’s identical twin, in Mount Sinai Hospital’s Valentine Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The idea originated with the couple’s friends Erica Godfrey and Lauren Spanier, and was executed to perfection by Allyson Meredith (Bobbitt), co-owner of the Bobbette & Belle bakery. They wanted to support the grieving parents, and help raise money for the Avery Goldman Fund that Zak established to keep Avery’s memory in the forefront and to thank the doctors and nurses who fought to save Blake, who weighed a meagre 1.4 pounds at birth.

The initial goal was to raise $5,000, but the outpouring of love and support was so overwhelming the tea party ended up raising $35,000. Zak and friends hope to see it become a much larger annual event. “We’d like to double it next year,” he says.

Long-time member and new vice-chair of Leadership Sinai, Zak adds he isn’t untouched by the coincidence of how things come around: Blake spent two months in the Level II Nursery, which is supported by Leadership Sinai. “Now I know what I’ve supported. My passion for the Hospital has grown, and I want to get even more involved.”

A Powerful Force for Fundraising

“I feel like it’s my calling,” says Jodie Tummers, of her dedication to raising funds for Mount Sinai’s Special Pregnancy Program. In December 2008, she was diagnosed with Twin-to-Twin Transfusion Syndrome (TTTS), a condition which affects 15 per cent of identical twin pregnancies. She was referred to Dr. Greg Ryan, the first physician in Canada to use fetoscopic laser to treat TTTS. Jodie and her husband Geoff lost a son, Cole, but his twin, Cameron, is thriving.

“We wouldn’t have Cameron if it wasn’t for Dr. Ryan,” says Jodie. The grateful Tummers organized an event that raised $3,975 for Mount Sinai. Now, Jodie is building on this momentum with a fundraising page on the Foundation website.

“It’s great,” she says. “I’ve sent the link to friends and family so they can easily donate to a cause so near and dear to our hearts.”

The fundraising pages are designed for convenience. In just minutes, donors can customize their page with photos and text describing why they’re holding an event or celebrating someone special. There are sample solicitation and thank you messages, fundraising tips and an offline pledge form.

For Jodie, her page provides a focal point for all the TTTS moms she’s met online. “They want to fundraise, and this will allow us to have a single fund to donate to and ensure that the money we raise goes to the area we want to support.”
Researchers give thanks to Venture Sinai

In the fast-paced, competitive world of science, researchers at the Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute know that every bit of funding support is critical to furthering their research.

Venture Sinai was designed to do just that. Begun in early 2009, it’s the brainchild of Mount Sinai Hospital Foundation board member Jeff Rosenthal, who wondered what would happen if he applied an investor’s approach to fundraising for medical research.

Since the creation of Venture Sinai, this intersection of philanthropy and investment has inspired Venture Sinai Women and Venture Sinai 2.

“Usually, there is a gap between scientists and the general public. Venture Sinai acts as a bridge to connect the two groups.”
AZADEH GOLIPOUR

Dr. Robert Casper’s work on using stem cells to treat cancer was funded by the first Venture Sinai group. The Senior Investigator and his team have recently discovered that changes occur in cancer cells treated with culture medium in which human embryonic stem cells were grown. A better understanding of these changes may help open the door to more sophisticated treatments for cancer.

“I love that the women of Venture Sinai asked challenging and clinically important questions,” said Dr. Tone. “Recognition as the Venture Sinai Women Fellow helped me secure a new post-doctoral position to continue my research and establish new scientific collaborations.”

Venture Sinai 2 members chose to support Azadeh Golipour as their inaugural Fellow. Ms. Golipour’s work in Dr. Jeff Wrana’s lab in cancer and stem cells is on the cutting edge of research in Canada. Ms. Golipour’s hypothesis is that differentiated cancer cells can reprogram in vivo (within a living organism) to give rise to new cancer stem cells, resulting in recurring tumour formation. A better understanding of cancer stem cell biology will help lead to new treatments for cancer.

“Usually, there is a gap between scientists and the general public,” said Ms. Golipour. “Venture Sinai acts as a bridge to connect the two groups. This is a very important mission, as it leads them to work toward a common goal.”

To date, Venture Sinai has collectively committed nearly $750,000 to research at the Lunenfeld, and new Venture Sinai groups are expected to form later this year.

“The response has been overwhelming,” said Jeff Rosenthal. “I’m thrilled that the momentum for this initiative continues.”

To learn more, and to support visionary research, go to mshfoundation.ca
"In Your Own Words,"

"When you say you deliver The Best Medicine, you’re right. I saw it in action when my wife needed an emergency c-section!"

— Avi Koren, father of Julia, pictured on the cover, July 2010.

"Thank you Mount Sinai Hospital!

I am 95 years old and last week I spent 5 days at your hospital for chest pains and fluid in my lungs. I am writing to you because we hear so many negative things about Health Care in Canada. I think we are the luckiest people ever for we have the best and your hospital is an excellent example of it.

I was on the 17th floor. I received excellent care from your staff. Everyone was so competent and so kind.

Even when I was leaving everyone made sure that I had everything necessary to follow up with my doctors and that I understood all the directives. They wanted to make sure that I did not feel that they wanted me out. On the contrary.

I am quite deaf and often people do not take the time to speak with me. At your hospital they spoke to me with much respect.

Bravo to the whole team on the 17th floor! Thank you so much! I really appreciated all that you did for me."

— Salomon Benzaquen, March 2009.

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— Salomon Benzaquen, March 2009.

"The day I was discharged from Mount Sinai, Owen had to stay in the NICU. I was crying; it was awful. We got a hotel room so we could stay close to him. We went in that night and our nurse had dressed him in little pyjamas. To see him looking like a healthy little baby was incredible. I can’t even explain how much it meant to me, that a nurse did that.”

— Ornella Mercer, June 2010.

Share your story with us! Send an email to foundation@mtsain.on.ca or contact us via Facebook or Twitter.
This card symbolizes a thoughtful donation that will help Mount Sinai Hospital’s Bright Minds and Big Hearts continue to deliver The Best Medicine.

For the Holidays
For Always

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