Health Sciences Centre FOUNDATION

Foundation Connection

Delivering Tomorrow's Health Care, Today

FALL 2026

Crushed and Rushed

Donor-funded spine navigation equipment at HSC helps prevent paralysis after devastating injury

"Do what you need to do."

That faint whisper to an emergency room physician in Grandview was the last thing Sean Rickards remembers saying before being intubated and put in an induced coma in late October 2023. **It would be close to three weeks before he would speak again.**

Rickards, a self-employed contractor, was rushed to the nearest emergency room after a devastating worksite accident that saw him **crushed between an 18-ton truck and the bucket of a 20-ton excavator.** His ribs were broken, both lungs had collapsed, and his thoracic vertebrae were shattered.

"We were filling a farm dugout and the truck got stuck. I got out of the excavator to attach a chain to the truck. I was bent over so the driver of the truck couldn't see me. And I couldn't hear the truck's alarm when it backed up because of the excavator's engine, so I got pinned between the two," says the father of three. **"I was within a millimetre of my life. It was a miracle I wasn't cut in half or killed."**

At Grandview, Rickards was stabilized and prepped for the air ambulance flight to Health Sciences Centre in Winnipeg where surgical teams were waiting.

"To be honest, **when you hear about a patient like this coming in, you figure that he's going to be paralyzed**," says spine surgeon Dr. Jay Toor. "You feel like you're in damage control mode, hoping that surgery will at least help the patient sit upright in a wheelchair."



Sean Rickards, husband and father of three, was crushed between an 18-ton truck and the bucket of a 20-ton excavator: "I was within a millimetre of my life."

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But thanks to Dr. Toor, thoracic surgeon Dr. Sadeesh Srinathan, and so many other dedicated HSC personnel, **not only did Rickards avoid paralysis, he was walking up and down the hospital hallways after three weeks and even returned to his worksite with a crew six months later to finish filling the dugout.**

The surgery was an example of HSC teamwork and technology producing the best possible outcome. **The surgery began with Rickards on his back so Dr. Srinathan could repair his ribs and stabilize his sternum. Rickards was then turned over so that Dr. Toor could repair the vertebrae, supported by navigation equipment funded by donors to the HSC Foundation's Operation Excellence campaign.** The 3D visualization enabled by the equipment allowed Dr. Toor to perform his work with maximum precision while protecting the spinal cord.



The site where Sean Rickards was pinned between a truck and an excavator. "It was a miracle I wasn't cut in half or killed," he says.

Another procedure was required later on to address some "debris", as Rickards calls it, that had settled around his heart.

Now, three years later, Rickards continues to reflect on the episode with gratitude and awe for the surgeons, nurses, and the entire team involved with his care: **"They did everything humanly possible and then some. I have a lot to fight for and they were with me all the way."**

Mindy Rickards, Sean's wife, shares a similar sense of gratitude, even with the passage of time: **"The people at HSC cared not only for Sean, but for our whole family. We had regular updates, they always answered our questions, and they treated us with compassion."**

And after his harrowing experience, what does Sean Rickards want HSC Foundation donors and all Manitobans to know about HSC?: "We often read about shortcomings in the health care system, but I've always believed that bad news can make its way around the world before good news can get its pants on in the morning," he says. **"From personal experience, I can tell you that there's a lot of good news at HSC."**



"They did everything humanly possible and then some." The X-ray shows the rods and sternum plate that stabilized Sean Rickards's chest and spine.

When Gratitude Becomes a Legacy Gift

After facing cervical cancer and receiving life-changing care at HSC, Andrée-Anne Boisvert chose to give back by including the HSC Foundation in her will



Andrée-Anne Boisvert, who credits HSC staff with caring for "hearts and souls," has chosen to leave a gift to the HSC Foundation in her will.

Andrée-Anne Boisvert's earliest memories take her back to Sept-Îles, Quebec, visiting her grandparents on the shores of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Those memories remain vivid.

Born in Sept-Îles, Boisvert moved to Montreal as a toddler with her parents and sister Marie-Hélène. Her love of reading and English led her to study English literature at McGill University. **At 22, she moved to Winnipeg for a master's degree at the University of Manitoba and fell in love with the city.**

After freelance editing and working as a medical assistant, Boisvert became editor of *Mosaic*, the University of Manitoba's literary journal, before joining the Manitoba Department of Justice in 2019.

In 2021, her life was unexpectedly changed by a diagnosis of stage 3B cervical cancer. After a procedure to protect her kidney, followed by chemotherapy and radiation, **Boisvert underwent a radical hysterectomy** performed by Drs. Erin Dean and Alon Altman.



Once Andrée-Anne Boisvert recovered from a radical hysterectomy at HSC, she redid her will and included the HSC Foundation as a beneficiary.

Her critical health crisis was overwhelming and frightening, but she emerged with gratitude for the care she received.



Andrée-Anne Boisvert: "I'm a seedling that survived and I feel blessed. It is my responsibility to live my life with grace, intention, and generosity."

"I don't believe that the people who work at HSC just execute tasks. I think they look after people. They look after hearts and souls," she says.

Nurses, aides, cleaners, and the medical team all played a role in her healing. **Once recovered, Boisvert redid her will and included the HSC Foundation as a beneficiary.**

"No one asked me to do it; I just knew it was something I wanted to do. It's the right thing," she says.

Today, Boisvert enjoys reading, fitness, and gardening. Gardening offers her a metaphor for life: "I'm a seedling that survived and I feel blessed. It is my responsibility to live my life with grace, intention, and generosity."

By leaving a gift to the HSC Foundation in your will, you are contributing to the future of health care, helping to support innovative research and patient care for generations to come. ***For more information, contact Irma McKenzie, HSC Foundation's Director of Gift Planning, at 204-515-5624 or imckenzie@hscfoundation.mb.ca.***

To learn more about legacy giving, please scan the QR code:

50 Years of Making History

Celebrating Five Decades of Donor Impact

Since opening its doors in 1976, the Foundation has grown from a small group of volunteers raising funds for medical research into a driving force for better health care, helping bring innovative treatments and technologies to HSC, shortening the wait for care, and producing better outcomes for Manitobans.

For 50 years, donors have made extraordinary things possible. **And at the heart of every milestone are the people who choose to give**.

As we reflect and celebrate five decades, we also look ahead. The next chapter will be shaped by the same spirit that has carried the Foundation forward since 1976: people coming together to create better health care for everyone.

1976

- In September, the Health Sciences Centre Research Foundation was registered as a Canadian charity and opened its doors. On October 1, Dora M. Luckhurst made a donation to the Health Sciences Centre Research Foundation. It was the Foundation's first gift—made 48 hours after the Foundation started operations.

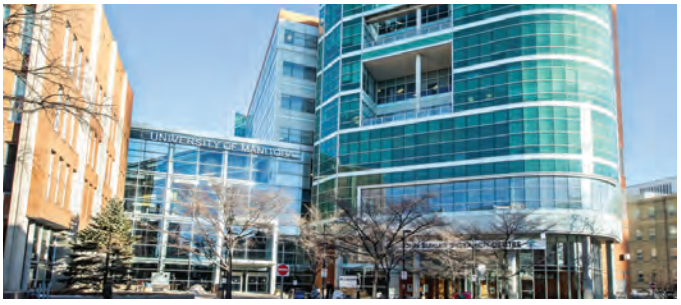
1980

- The HSC Foundation presented its first research grant. The recipients were Dr. J.H. Brown and Dr. Paraskevas and the title of their project was, "Depressive Illness and Neurological Complications in Malignancy: Can Tumour Antigens Induce Antibody to the Serotonin Receptor?"



1994

- Bonnie and John Buhler made their first of many contributions to the HSC Foundation. The John Buhler Research Centre on the HSC Winnipeg campus honours their exceptional generosity.



1999

- The late Paul Albrechtsen made his first donation to the HSC Foundation in 1999. He would become the Foundation's largest donor before he passed away in 2019.



2004

- HSC Winnipeg opened the Great-West Life PET/CT Centre in 2004, raising the quality of diagnostics in Manitoba.



2013

- The state-of-the-art Centre for Surgical Innovation started operating in the Kleysen Institute. Foundation donors invested $12.5 million in this important project.



2018

- The Firefighters' Burn Fund endowed a $2 million gift in support of innovative stem cell research.



2019

- Thanks to the generosity of donors to the HSC Foundation, HSC Winnipeg opened the doors to the new Wilf Taillieu Thoracic Surgery Clinic and Endoscopy Unit.



2020

- In March, we launched our COVID-19 Crisis Response Fund to support frontline workers at HSC and do our part to support HSC's response to the pandemic. This campaign raised over $2.5 million in support of equipment, meals, and more.



2021

- On Giving Tuesday, donors outfitted the RR5 Specialty Adult Rehab Inpatient Unit with a sport wheelchair, hand cycles, book stands, and other pieces of equipment to help people who have suffered spinal cord injuries, endured amputations, and have been diagnosed with neuromuscular disorders.



2022

- The HSC Foundation launches "Operation Excellence"—a capital campaign to expand surgical and diagnostic capacity at the Health Sciences Centre.



2023

- The HSC Foundation unveiled a redeveloped $1.8 million donor-funded Plastic Surgery Clinic. The clinic includes an advanced plastic surgery procedure room that has the same equipment and design standards as a general operating room, making this room the first of its kind in Canada.



2024

- HSC deployed the da Vinci Xi surgical robot—Manitoba's first surgical robot. Made possible by Operation Excellence donors, the robot has been used in thoracic, urologic, and gynecological oncology surgery to date.



2026

- HSC unveiled a new Elekta Esprit Gamma Knife, a precision technology that treats brain tumours and other disorders without the need for open surgery. Funded through Operation Excellence in partnership with the Province of Manitoba, the new system can treat larger tumours, offers integrated CT imaging, and may allow some patients to complete treatment and return home within two to three hours.



To learn more about HSC Foundation's history, scan the QR code:

“Thank You” Doesn’t Seem Like Enough

After an unexpected health crisis, Chris Maslowsky is grateful for the care and support from HSC that helped bring her back home to the people and moments she loves

My name is Chris Maslowsky, and I’m writing to thank HSC and donors to the HSC Foundation who help make extraordinary care possible for patients like me.

I’ve always been the healthy one in my family. I’m always on the go—checking in on my elderly parents, babysitting my granddaughter, dog-sitting the grand-dog, and doing yardwork. I’m the person who can’t sit outside for five minutes without finding something to do.

My family will tell you: I don’t get sick. Not even a cold.

So, when I found myself rushed to HSC twice during spring 2025—once by ambulance—nobody, least of all me, saw it coming.

What started as a cold I couldn’t shake turned into two hospitalizations in the span of a month. Then, on the morning of my dad’s 90th birthday, I could barely make it down the stairs. My daughter, Tara, drove me straight to HSC.

My oxygen levels had dropped dangerously low.

What happened next is mostly a blur to me, but Tara remembers it clearly. She watched as the HSC team moved incredibly quickly—providing oxygen, running tests, and working to understand what was happening.

They discovered blood clots in both legs and both lungs. I was given the highest dose of blood thinners possible and put on high-flow oxygen. After being monitored around-the-clock in a high-observation unit, my care team turned to a highly specialized procedure called a thrombectomy to remove the clots directly from my lungs.

Because the clots were so large and located in my lungs, my doctors told me this was an exceptionally rare procedure at HSC.

Thankfully, it worked.



Chris Maslowsky: “Patients like me know what it means to have HSC there when we need it most.”

And that’s where donor support matters.

Behind every patient like me is a health care system with the people, expertise, technology, and resources needed to respond when the unexpected happens. The generosity of HSC Foundation donors helps strengthen that system—supporting the equipment, innovation, and care that give patients access to the treatment they need, when they need it most.

After multiple tests came back clear, a bone marrow biopsy finally gave my illness a name: myelofibrosis, a rare bone marrow disorder affecting one in 800,000 people.

A family friend, a former nurse, told me she didn’t know anyone who had survived what I went through.



In 2025, Chris Maslowsky spent Mother's Day in hospital after recovering from a thrombectomy in the donor-funded Paul Albrechtsen Interventional Radiology Suites. This procedure—typically used for much smaller clots in the brain—saved Chris's life.

I think about that a lot.

But I also think about the people who cared for me.

The health care aides who washed my hair right in my hospital bed, patiently working through a month's worth of tangles. The staff who helped me change my hospital gown without ever making me feel like a burden. And the doctors who pulled Tara aside—because she was with me constantly—to make sure she was okay, while also checking in with my other children.

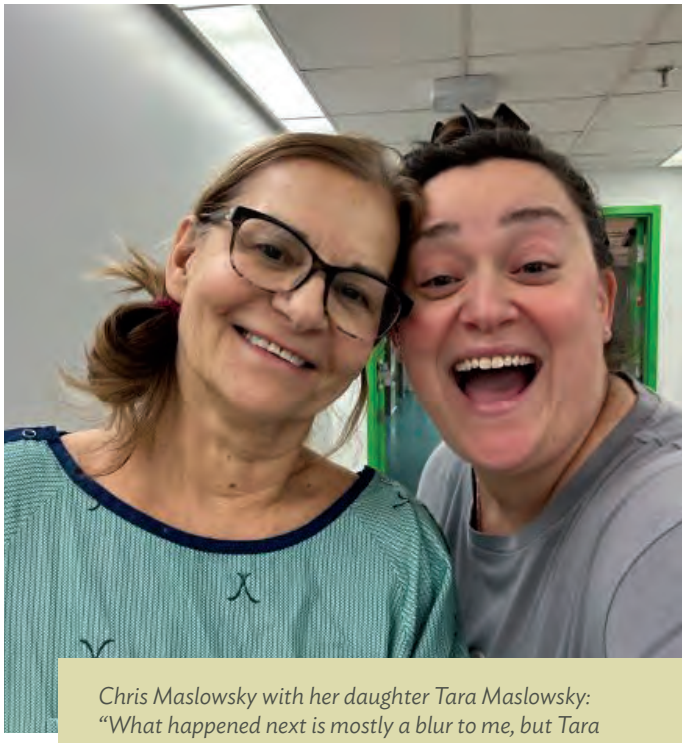
I always felt like I was truly being looked after at HSC. And while I will require medication and routine bloodwork for my disorder the rest of my life, I am stable and getting back to what I enjoy most.

"Thank you" doesn't seem like enough.

You may never know the name of a patient whose life is touched by your generosity. You may never meet the doctors, nurses, and health care aides whose expertise is amplified by your support.

But patients like me know what it means to have HSC there when we need it most.

For that, I'm endlessly grateful.



Chris Maslowsky with her daughter Tara Maslowsky: "What happened next is mostly a blur to me, but Tara remembers it clearly. She watched as the HSC team moved incredibly quickly."



Chris Maslowsky is back to doing what she enjoys most, thanks to you and the life-saving care at HSC.

2026–2027 Innovation HSC Campaign Brings Leading-Edge Care and Technology to HSC

Annual campaign provides health care teams with the technology and tools needed to deliver exceptional care

Through the annual **Innovation HSC** campaign, your support helps Health Sciences Centre invest in cutting-edge technology, enhance patient care, and respond to the growing and changing needs of Manitobans.

The 2026–2027 Innovation HSC campaign has a goal of $3.18 million, which will help fund innovative equipment, technology, and programs that will enhance patient care and help HSC meet the evolving needs of Manitobans.

SCAN ME



Follow the Line to *Solid Lines*



Solid Lines is the HSC Foundation's new monthly podcast about the **people, innovations,** and **community generosity** shaping care at HSC Winnipeg.

Presented by The Bouchard Family Foundation, each episode goes behind the scenes with patients and families, health care professionals, researchers, leaders, and community members. Together, these stories offer a closer look at the people and ideas driving progress at HSC Winnipeg.

Listen by scanning the QR code:

To make your donation today, visit hscfoundation.mb.ca or call 204–515–5612 or 1–800–679–8493 (toll-free).

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Health Sciences Centre Foundation
Phone: 204-515-5612 Toll Free: 1-800-679-8493
Email: info@hscfoundation.mb.ca Online: hscfoundation.mb.ca

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