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Owen Hart Memorial Fund In Support of the Special Children's Fund

Imagine dealing with the stress of your child being in hospital and on top of that worrying about being able to afford your most basic needs. Unfortunately, this is the reality for some families at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

Created as a lasting legacy, the Owen Hart Memorial Fund was established at the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation in 1999. This Fund is used to assist families who are facing financial challenges while their child is in Hospital such as bus and taxi costs, parking expenses, and meal vouchers for the hospital cafeteria. The special Fund allows our hospital's social work team to respond to immediate needs. No family is turned away.

The Owen Hart Memorial Fund is part of a broader Special Children's Fund which helps underprivileged families with children receiving care at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

The Holfords are one family willing to talk about just how stressful this situation can be. Several years ago, Nancy and Steven Holford got the devastating news that their 8-month-old baby girl, Kimberli, had a rare form of life-limiting epilepsy for which there was no cure.

Nancy was on maternity leave and her husband, Steven, was working to make

"At that time, neither of us wanted to think about work. All we wanted to do was spend as much time as possible with Kimberli. Unfortunately, there are still bills that have to be paid and we couldn't afford to stop work. It was incredibly stressful and difficult."

- Nancy Holford

ends meet for the family, which also included two teenage children.

After receiving the news, Nancy stayed at her baby's side, living at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

The Holford's home was in Red Deer which meant Steven was commuting to Calgary several times a week. The family found themselves with the stress of coming to terms with Kimberli's diagnosis, the added pressure of struggling to make ends meet as well as the mounting costs associated with their baby girl being in hospital.

Thanks to the donor-funded Special Children's Fund, a request was made

on behalf of the family for financial assistance.

"It wasn't much but at the time every little bit helped," says Nancy. "We were already in the most stressful of situations and having a few of those costs taken care of meant that we could focus on just being there for our daughter."

Nancy and Steven created beautiful memories with their daughter during her last few months of life, without having to worry as much about financial stressors.

"We were faced with the unimaginable situation of having to say goodbye to our sweet baby girl," says mom, Nancy, "During those last few months it was so important to be completely focused on Kimberli. Thanks to donor generosity we were able to do just that."

"On Christmas eve we were given a wonderful gift. Because of the kindness of strangers, we were able to take Kimberli out of the hospital. We were given a hotel room nearby and we spent Christmas together as a family," says Nancy. "It was the most amazing Christmas gift and we are so grateful for those memories."

Sadly, Kimberli passed away just a few days later.

"You never think that your child is going to end up in hospital. We are so grateful

to the people at the hospital and to the donors who funded those programs that helped get us through our most difficult days," says Nancy. "We know that our story didn't have a happy ending but we still want to give back to the place and people who gave us so much."

Thanks to you, caregivers at the Alberta Children's Hospital are now able to help reduce a small amount of stress for some struggling families whose children are in hospital. The Special Children's Fund was created to help assist families in desperate need who are struggling with the costs associated with the care and treatment of their child at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

"The families who benefit from the Special Children's Fund are in a position where, without help, their child's medical, social and emotional needs would not be met," says Catherine Morrison, Manager,

"Something as simple as taking care of a parking fee can make a big difference, keeping the connection between family and child intact."

*- Catherine Morrison, Manager
Special Children's Fund*

Special Children's Fund.

Having a child sick and in hospital is incredibly stressful and often that stress increases with the worry of trying to pay for necessities. The Special Children's Fund helps at least one of these families each and every day. For these families, the stress level can be reduced a little bit and they can focus on their child and just

being mom and dad.

"While there are several government funded programs which cover some of the costs, there are many out of pocket costs which the family must bear," says Morrison, "through this donor-funded program we are able to make the request on behalf of the family to help them through a very difficult time."

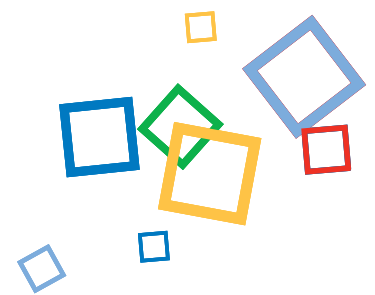
Last year, the Special Children's Fund helped with more than 525 requests for support. Caregivers only make requests on behalf of families after all other sources of funding have been explored.

Families benefit from the Special Children's Fund in many different ways. For some families, it's a one-time need related to parking, meals, medication or transportation and for other families, the need is greater and more long-term.

HOW HAS THE OWEN HART MEMORIAL FUND HELPED FAMILIES?

- Parking passes and grocery vouchers were provided to a low-income family with 4 children, while their 5-year-old was hospitalized for surgery. The father was on sick leave and unable to work, and had no income for a number of months.
- Parking passes and gas vouchers were provided to a single mother so she could bring her child to the hospital for testing and several clinic appointments. This mother is not able to work due to her own illness.
- Gas vouchers were provided to a family who needed to make daily trips from Canmore to Calgary for daily antibiotic IV treatments for their daughter; required for 3 weeks.
- A Red Deer family was provided with meal vouchers for 1 week. The parents had recently separated and the mother was sleeping at her son's bedside. With no car, she was not able to work at her low income job due to her son's acute onset of illness.
- A single mother of 3 was provided with meal vouchers for 4 days while her infant daughter was admitted. This mother had just left an abusive relationship and, with very limited funds, had to move from her home to another city for safety purposes.
- The mother of a patient admitted to the ICU was provided with meal vouchers for one week. Her child was transported from out of town via ambulance and she did not have time to prepare for the admission. This mother's other three children were cared for in their home town through friends from their church.

Donations to the Owen Hart Memorial Fund can be made at www.childrenshospital.ab.ca. Please indicate your donation is to be directed to the Owen Hart Memorial Fund.



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