

MEDIA RELEASE

Worth Every Penny: Outstanding Care Inspires Extraordinary Gift to KGH

KELOWNA, BC, November 1, 2018 – For nearly 50 years he collected his spare pennies. This past September, Joe lafrancesco decided it was time to donate his wheelbarrow full to a worthy cause. In total, he had collected 28,000 pennies which he and his wife Bianca topped up to make a \$1,000 donation to help build and operate JoeAnna’s House. The story was shared on the KGH Foundation’s Facebook page where so many people delighted in reading Joe’s story. Indeed, every penny counts.

Today, in addition to giving of his time, he reached out to provide a substantial contribution to impact the patients and family members passing through the doors of Kelowna General Hospital.

After a long career with the Canadian Pacific Railway, he and Bianca decided it was time to take all of that hard work and pay it forward with two significant gifts to the KGH Foundation totalling \$200,000 – half of the gift will go to support JoeAnna’s House, the other half has been dedicated to cancer care at KGH.

“This community has been a tremendous support to me for over 50 years,” shared Joe. “We really wanted to give something back.”

Joe began supporting JoeAnna’s House, a home away from home for the families of patients who must to travel to KGH for specialized care, by spearheading a fundraising New Year’s Eve dinner and dance hosted by the Kelowna Canadian Italian Club. His interest and support of the project has only grown since, and 2018 will wrap up with another New Year’s celebration in support of the project.



Joe lafrancesco and his wheelbarrow of pennies.

A consummate volunteer, Joe is well-known around Kelowna for his dedication to community and has actively participated in numerous clubs from Rotary, Knights of Columbus and Lions Clubs, to his COIN Coffee and the Kelowna Canadian Italian Club. He has also served as a member of Crime Stoppers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Kelowna Association and the Uptown Rutland Business Association.



Joe and his wife, Bianca, have made a gift of \$200,000 to JoeAnna's House and cancer care at Kelowna General Hospital.

Joe was nominated twice for the Fred Macklin Memorial Award for Man of the Year and even tried his hand at politics running for City Council three times. He also had an impact across Canada volunteering with the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa, helping with the grand opening of Pier 21 in Halifax, and serving on the National Congress of Italian Canadians both provincially and nationally. His commitment to our community and country is unparalleled.

Family – la famiglia - is a cornerstone in Italian culture and the lafrancescos' generosity will help to ensure that future patients have this essential support system nearby with the addition of JoeAnna's House.

"The staff at the hospital have always provided my family and me with great care and I'm pleased to honour their work and help provide the tools needed to do their job to the best of their ability," Joe continued. "I hope my gift will inspire others to consider their own impact within our community."



Artist rendering of JoeAnna's House, a home away from home on the KGH patient families.

"Joe and Bianca are the most warm, genuine people you could ever meet," says Chandel Schmidt, Director of Annual Giving for the KGH Foundation. "This gift is going to have a huge impact for generations to come. We are so grateful for their support."

The KGH Foundation is an independent, volunteer-driven charitable organization committed to enhancing the delivery of healthcare to the patients of Kelowna General Hospital and its associated facilities.

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