

Generous donation from the Irvines will help ease childhood pain

(HALIFAX) – Chronic pain is something that no child should ever experience, but unfortunately, many do. Anne Crowe knows this all too well. Her daughter, Andrea, now 24, spent much of her childhood at the IWK combating severe pain. That’s why Anne was excited to return to the Health Centre today for an important announcement from Mildred and Thomas Irvine.

“We want to make a difference to children like Andrea who have struggled with pain,” explained the Irvines, as they were recognized for their contribution to establish the Dr. Stewart Wenning Endowed Chair in Pediatric Pain Management at the IWK Health Centre. “We have every confidence that Dr. Allen Finley will make significant advances in managing childhood pain.”

As the inaugural recipient of the Wenning Chair, Dr. Finley, Medical Director of Pediatric Pain Management at the IWK Health Centre and Professor of Anaesthesia and Psychology at Dalhousie University, is an internationally renowned expert in pain management in developed and developing countries.



“We are going to create an innovative, specialized pain management network by uniting hospitals and clinicians across the region to ensure Maritime children receive the best care possible,” says Dr. Finley. “This generous gift from the Irvine’s will help the IWK become an international model in pain prevention and treatment.”

Dr. Finley works closely with a specialized team at the IWK’s Centre for Pediatric Pain Research and his focus is on advocating for improved pain management in children.

“Dr. Finley never gave up on Andrea and his research was key to alleviating her pain,” says Anne Crowe. “With this new Chair, I know he’s going to continue help countless other kids around the world.”

Andrea has psoriatic arthritis, a debilitating and painful condition that she has been coping with since she was 15 months old. She has endured more than 30 surgeries since she was four. In May 2000, Andrea was paralyzed from the breastbone down with Stiff Man’s Syndrome, causing her

to live in constant pain from non-stop muscle contractions.

The IWK Health Centre became her second home and her care team, including Dr. Finley, worked tirelessly to help find her relief.

The Irvines, from St. Stephen, New Brunswick are retired school teachers who have dedicated their lives to giving back to Maritime children and youth.

“We were inspired by the passion that our dear friend Dr. Stewart Wenning had for the IWK,” says the Irvines. “We are so pleased to establish this Chair in his memory so his legacy will live on at the Health Centre.”

The IWK has become a centre of excellence in research into pediatric pain management, which traces its roots back to Dr. Stewart Wenning, who was the first head of anaesthesia at the IWK. He dedicated his career to improving the surgical and anaesthesia experiences of young patients and their parents.

Under the guidance of Dr. Finley as the Wenning Chair, the IWK will reach out to hospitals, clinicians and families across the Maritimes with educational resources, continuous mentoring, a pain management hotline, staff exchanges and workshops, internet-based discussion boards, and care paths and standards. With this program, the IWK will be able to prevent or decrease pain, improve patient safety, and speed recovery – all resulting in a dramatic reduction of the suffering of children across the Maritimes.

The IWK Health Centre Foundation helped bring this endowment to fruition. The Foundation inspires and celebrates giving to support excellence in specialized care for Maritime families. United with its donors, the Foundation is committed to raising funds to support the areas of greatest need at the IWK, including the purchase of state-of-the-art medical equipment, innovative research and special programs.

Cutline for photo: The IWK Foundation honoured a New Brunswick family June 9 who are funding a Chair in Pediatric Pain Management at the IWK Health Centre. Retired educators Mildred and Thomas Irvine endowed the chair in honour of a friend and first head of anaesthesia at the IWK. The new chair is Dr. Allen Finley (on the right), pictured with (l-r) Mildred Irvine; Robbie Shaw, president of the IWK Health Centre Foundation; and Thomas Irvine.

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