



The Royal  
Children's  
Hospital  
Foundation

# THE **1870** SOCIETY TIMES

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Welcome to The 1870 Society Times, a newsletter dedicated to telling the inspirational stories behind gifts in Will at The Royal Children's Hospital (RCH).

Jacob Mibus. Photo by Jason Edwards, Herald Sun



Shelley Kline and Sue Hunt in 2019

## Message from Sue Hunt

Welcome to the third edition of the 1870 Society Times, a newsletter for those who are thinking about, or who have chosen to leave a gift in Will to the RCH.

For over 150 years, the RCH has been dedicated to creating a brighter future for sick children, and I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your commitment to the hospital. At the RCH Foundation, we believe an investment in the future of the RCH is a gift to children now and for generations to come.

In this edition, you will meet former RCH patient Jacob Mibus, and see how a bequest from his grandfather, Allen, has impacted the Orthotic and Prosthetic Department at the RCH. You will learn about how gifts in Will are supporting the Royal Children's Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust and the Chronic Illness Peer Support Program, and you will meet Shelley Kline who is setting up a scholarship endowment fund to honour her former clinician Professor Frank Billson AO. Finally, we reflect on the virtual 1870 Society event in July 2021 and

how philanthropy has impacted projects like the Stepped Care Approach to Developmental Care.

By naming the RCH Foundation as a beneficiary in your Will, you can create a lasting legacy. Your support means that the hospital will be able to continue ground breaking research to discover new ways to diagnose, treat and cure childhood illnesses. It will also be able to enhance services with the newest equipment and technological advancements, as well as provide wholistic patient care with services like music therapy.

*As an 1870 Society member myself, I am proud to be amongst the company of such committed philanthropists.*

Thank you again for your generous support.

**Sue Hunt**

Chief Executive Officer  
1870 Society member



# Generous gift ensures vibrant patient support network can continue

Being a young person with a chronic illness can be an extremely isolating and difficult experience. The Chronic Illness Peer Support Program (ChiPS) has created a vibrant patient network where members develop friendships and skills to deal with their lifelong illnesses. Thanks to the generosity of Colin Stephenson, many more young people will benefit and thrive in the ChiPS program.

Colin lived much of his life on a farm near Kyabram in regional Victoria with his wife Joan. The couple had always loved children, and although their only child sadly passed away days after birth, they enjoyed having their nieces and nephews stay on the property.

*"Colin was a wonderful, caring uncle, and when Joan passed away, we talked about who he'd like to leave his money to, and he said he wanted to help sick children at the RCH," said Leanne Stephenson, Colin's niece.*

When Colin sadly passed away in 2020, Leanne as his executor reached out to Fiona Greco, Planned Giving Coordinator at the RCH Foundation to discuss where Colin's gift could make an impact at the hospital.

"Colin was a country boy all his life, so I wanted to find a way to help country kids who need medical care or who have a chronic illness," said Leanne.

Fiona matched these wishes to the ChiPS program, which only exists thanks to philanthropic support from the community. The program offers young people from



across Victoria, affectionately known as Chippers, the opportunity to connect with each other and explore their illness experience through music, art, games and discussions in small group sessions. The program also includes organised social activities and biannual camps which provide Chippers with an opportunity to get outside and participate in activities that they normally wouldn't be able to do. Given his love for spending time outdoors with his own nieces and nephews, Leanne believes this is what Colin would've wanted to support.

Although the regular ChiPS programming has been disrupted by COVID-19, it's through the generosity of supporters like Colin that the Chippers remain connected through technology and regularly meet online, with the hope they will one day return to in-person meetings and camps.

"Colin wouldn't have liked any accolades about his gift, but he would've loved knowing his legacy was helping young people with chronic illness," said Leanne.

**"I am so grateful for the generosity of Colin and the support of his family for the program. It means so much to be a part of such an integral community at a time that can be so critical for young people at the RCH. As someone who lives in rural Victoria, support just like Colin's allows people like me to comfortably seek the support of the RCH ChiPS program."**

- Bree Tiana, Grateful Chipper

# A grandfather's generous bequest supports the Orthotics and Prosthetics Department

In all the years that Jacob Mibus was a patient at the RCH, he wore through or broke almost every single prosthesis made for him – even the unbreakable ones.

Between football, basketball and competing in athletics, Jacob constantly challenged the RCH Orthotic and Prosthetic Department to create something better, stronger or in Jacob's case, faster. In recognition of the support Jacob received, his grandfather Allen Lehmann, left a gift in his Will which is changing the lives of other patients at the hospital, allowing them to reach their potential just like Jacob has.

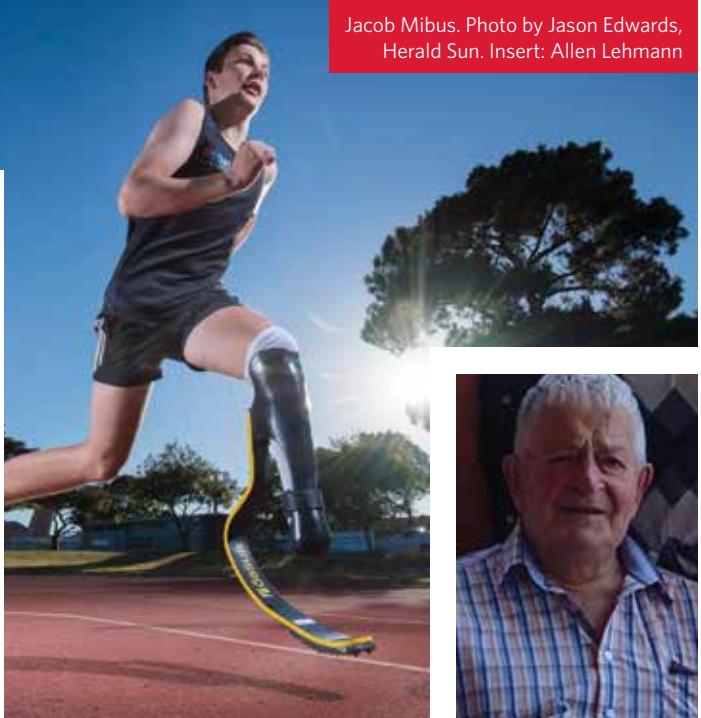
At just seven years old, Jacob was involved in a serious lawnmower accident and he was rushed to the RCH with a severed foot.

"After Jacob's accident, the doctors told us that if they tried to save his foot, he would be in pain for the rest of his life and face many more operations. The other option was to amputate and fit him with a prosthetic leg," said Kathy.

Jacob had his first prosthesis fitted shortly after, and he hasn't slowed down since.

*"Jacob's accident never stopped him being a normal, everyday kid. Passionate about athletics, he competed in primary school and high school, eventually becoming involved in State Level Athletics as a para-athlete, where he truly excelled," said Kathy.*

"Jacob has broken countless prosthetics playing sport, but that was never an issue for the team at the hospital. I remember one summer, he broke his foot playing basketball and the next day, the team were already creating a new one. That meant a lot not only to Jacob and us, but to my dad," said Kathy.



It was the wonderful care that the Mibus family received from staff at the RCH that lead Allen to leave a generous bequest to the RCH Orthotic and Prosthetic Department.

Kathy says she was not surprised when she found out her dad had left a gift in Will to the RCH alongside several other charities that supported Jacob.

*"Jacob and my dad were incredibly close, and I know he was very thankful for everything that the RCH did for Jacob," said Kathy.*

Rod Lawlor, Manager of the Department, said Allen's generous gift will make a big difference for patients with a limb difference.

"Part of Allen's bequest will be used to create detailed resources on what to expect for families whose child has just had, or who needs, an amputation, as well as children who have been born with a limb difference. The remaining funds will be used to advance our technological capabilities," said Rod.

While the Mibus family never imagined they would have such a close relationship with the hospital, they hope that Allen's bequest will support other patients and families.

*"Even though I wish we never had to go through what we did, I am grateful for the care that we received from the hospital, and I hope that other patients and their families will be impacted by dad's gift," said Kathy.*

Gifts in Wills, both large and small, make an extraordinary difference to the work at RCH. **By leaving a lasting legacy you are creating a brighter future for children.**



## A stepped approach to care

Throughout the year, 1870 Society members are invited to events to learn more about the impact of philanthropy at the RCH. The July event focused on Allied Health, where Bernadette O'Connor, Director of Allied Health spoke about the Stepped Care Approach to Developmental Care initiative, also known as Stepped Care, an innovative new model of triage for children with developmental concerns.

The Stepped Care project has been designed to streamline and coordinate care for patients who are referred with a concern about their development. The project works with clinicians both within the RCH and across the community. Launched in 2019, the program is made possible thanks to philanthropic funding including the generosity of bequest donors.

*"Over 3,000 children are referred to the RCH each year with developmental concerns, meaning concerns about their speech, behaviour, movement or learning. We found that the systems of referral and triage were not helping to easily identify or confirm if a child was experiencing developmental difficulties," said Bernadette.*

Bernadette explained that in the old system, children and their families would go down a complex pathway that meant it was not uncommon to take upwards of two years for the child to be connected to the required intervention services or even have their first appointment.

In comparison, the updated Stepped Care Approach means that any referrals to the hospital from either internal or external clinicians are funnelled through a central point to experienced clinicians, allowing a more streamlined approach.



The Stepped Care Team L-R: Cath Laird, Caroline Keating, Adrienne Fosang, Andie Bleicher, Sonia Marson and Suzie Bassingthwaite

The model uses a number of 'steps' that a young person may go through which include eligibility, interview and investigate, care conference and intake appointment.

"We ensure that any referral during the process is directed with purpose, meaning families may be redirected with additional information for the referring GP and family about where another appropriate service might be found for that child," said Bernadette.

Within two short years since the project's establishment, the Stepped Care team have already seen some promising results. As a result of the project, there has been improved rates of purposeful redirection to more appropriate local services, reduced waiting time in clinics that see children with developmental concerns, a reduction in the number of assessment appointments required with a paediatrician and a reduction in time taken to triage the referrals.

As a strong advocate for services that enhance the life prospects of children who experience disadvantage and developmental challenges, Bernadette says that initiatives and research like Stepped Care are made possible thanks to philanthropy like bequests and endowments.

*"I cannot overstate the significance of, and the difference that philanthropic donations have made to allied health services, and as such, the impact that Allied Health has had, and will continue to have in the future."*



Scan the QR code to watch the event online

# Establishing a vision for the future

When you first meet Shelley Kline, her incredible glasses immediately stand out. Forming a key part of her stylish and bold identity, her eyesight is something she's immensely grateful for, and she is committed to empowering children with eye conditions just like her.

This year Shelley has set up the Professor Frank Billson Research Scholarship Endowment Fund to support and prevent blindness in babies and children. This endowment the first ophthalmology fund in perpetuity at RCH.

Shelley Kline was eight years old when she was diagnosed with uveitis, a term used to describe a broad number of inflammatory diseases that produce swelling and redness within the eye, ultimately destroying eye tissue. What started innocuously as 'simply not feeling well', escalated to Shelley being referred to a number of specialists before an eye specialist eventually diagnosed her with the condition.

It was shortly following her diagnosis that Shelley was introduced to Professor Billson, or 'Prof' as she fondly refers to him, as he was one of the only specialists in Australia with expertise on uveitis.

Professor Frank Billson AO has had a distinguished career in ophthalmology which began in Melbourne. He has long standing ties with the RCH and was the Director of the Ophthalmology Department for seven years in the 1960's. The idea of early intervention and the benefits that early diagnosis and treatment could offer for children and their families was a major interest. During his time at the RCH, the hospital's expertise in paediatric ophthalmology became internationally recognised.

*"Professor Frank Billson has had such a profound impact on my life. He was a brilliant doctor; he always had such a good way of presenting the information and allowing me to make my own decisions with regards to my health," said Shelley.*



Shelley Kline introducing her family to Professor Frank Billson AO

"The reason I wanted to create this scholarship is to honour Professor Billson's contribution to the world of ophthalmology. I feel blessed to have been his patient for almost 40 years, and for the life-changing care he gave me. He also taught me one of the most invaluable lessons which is never to allow my medical condition to define me."

Three years ago, after a lifetime of treating her eye condition with steroids and medication, Shelley received the news that there was no more that could be done. With the guidance of Professor Billson, Shelley made the difficult decision to have her eye removed.

*"Throughout my whole life, whenever there have been complicated decisions to make about my eye, Prof has taken the time to research, empathise, be supportive and focus on the patient's choice – always," said Shelley.*

The Professor Frank Billson Research Scholarship will lead to improved outcomes for children both locally and internationally, including a growth in knowledge in the global paediatric ophthalmic community.

Shelley aims to raise over \$250,000 to establish the endowed fund, which will be managed by the RCH Foundation's Investment Committee. Interest will then be used to fund the annual scholarship. Shelley is adamant that she wants to fundraise and establish the scholarship during Professor Billson's lifetime.

"This is my way of honouring Professor Billson's legacy to medicine, and on a personal level, for me to say thank you for making a difference to children with eye problems."

To learn more about supporting Shelley's endowed fund or how to create your own strategic legacy, please contact **Ally Pekin**, Individual Giving Manager at [ally.pekin@rch.org.au](mailto:ally.pekin@rch.org.au) or **(03) 9345 6815**.



# Bequest leaves a lasting impact for cystic fibrosis patients

For as long as Christine Wigg can remember, her parents, Jean and Fred Upton were passionate about giving back to the community.

"My parents were both very generous people. After they relocated from Adelaide back to Melbourne in the early 70's, Mum started volunteering at the RCH and stayed on until the mid 90's," said Christine.

So, it was no surprise to Christine that Jean wanted to leave several bequests to organisations that were important to her and her late husband. One of these was the Royal Children's Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust (RCCFRT), a group that raise funds for vital research into cystic fibrosis (CF) – a disorder that Jean and Fred's great grandson Lachlan was diagnosed with at birth.

*"Lachie was born almost nine years ago; he and Jean actually share a birthday. He was diagnosed with CF shortly after birth which came as a shock to our family as we didn't know we were carriers of the gene," said Christine.*

CF is a life-threatening genetic disorder that severely affects lung function and digestion. While current research is allowing CF patients to live longer than ever, there is currently no cure and much more research is needed to look deeper into issues like the long-term effects of living with CF.

"After Lachie's diagnosis, we all did what we could to raise more awareness of CF and where possible, we donated to organisations who were funding valuable research around the condition which currently has no cure," Christine added.

Although Fred passed away before Lachlan was born, Jean spent a number of cherished years with her great grandson and made the decision to give a small bequest to the RCCFRT in her Will.

Christine was so touched by her mum's gift that she and her husband, Graham decided to match the donation to the RCCFRT.

*"While our impact isn't large, we hope it can make a difference to the RCCFRT. For us, philanthropy isn't about getting our name on a wall. It's about giving what we can to an organisation we care about, to allow them to continue meaningful work that will hopefully help other families in the future."*

Medical Chairman of the RCCFRT, Associate Professor Philip Robinson, said that Jean and Christine's donations will make a meaningful impact in their work in improving the lives of children with CF.

*"The generous donations from both Jean and Christine will benefit all CF patients and their families, both at the hospital and further afield as a result of our ongoing research," said A/Professor Robinson.*

# The 1870 Society online events

A warm thank you to everyone who has engaged with us throughout the year through our virtual events. While we aren't able to meet in person, our virtual webinars are an opportunity for you to learn more about your impact at the hospital.

## VIRTUAL IN CONVERSATION TRANSLATING SCIENCE INTO CARE MAY 2021

Hosted by Sue Hunt, this event centred on the impact of research at the RCH. The webinar featured presentations from Professor Sarah Ranganathan, Head of the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne and RCH Respiratory Specialist, and Jim Carroll, trustee of the Donald Ratcliffe and Phyllis McLeod Trust.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO  
WATCH THE PRESENTATION**  
[www.rchfoundation.org.au/science-into-care](http://www.rchfoundation.org.au/science-into-care)

## VIRTUAL IN CONVERSATION WITH ALLIED HEALTH JULY 2021

Hosted by Sue Hunt, this event included presentations from Bernadette O'Connor, Director of Allied Health and Rod Lawlor, Manager of the Orthotic and Prosthetic Department.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO  
WATCH THE PRESENTATION**  
[rchfoundation.org.au/1870-conversation-2021](http://rchfoundation.org.au/1870-conversation-2021)

## VIRTUAL IN CONVERSATION WITH ALLIED HEALTH SEPTEMBER 2021

Hosted by Sue Hunt, this event featured a thought-provoking discussion with one of our most inspiring new leaders, Professor David Eisenstat, Director of the Children's Cancer Centre at the RCH.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO  
WATCH THE PRESENTATION**  
[rchfoundation.org.au/1870-lunch-2021](http://rchfoundation.org.au/1870-lunch-2021)

**Scan the QR code to  
explore all RCH Foundation  
online events**



# Creating your gift in Will

After providing for your loved ones in your Will, you have the opportunity to consider the causes and charities that have special meaning to you and ask yourself: *what would I like my legacy to be?*

Together we can change the future of children's health by solving today's medical challenges and being better prepared for tomorrow's.

**If you plan to make a bequest, here are three reasons to let us know:**

1. By talking to us before you finalise your Will, we can check the wording and your intention for your gift. Bequests require the RCH Foundation's full legal name: *"The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation Limited as trustee for The Royal Children's Hospital Foundation No. 2 Trust (ABN 75 761 829 818)".* We can also help you to decide on the type of bequest that will be most effective in the future.
2. You can help the RCH plan for the future. Research takes long term planning and funding, and knowing that support is pledged now helps this. Telling us about your planned gift does not make it binding. We understand that circumstances change, so please just notify us if this happens.
3. The 1870 Society is our way of expressing thanks to all those who make a gift in their Will, with an option for your name to be publicly acknowledged in the hospital. Members are invited to the Annual Lunch and behind the scenes opportunities, including meeting world renowned clinicians and researchers. Privacy and confidentiality are always respected. You decide the frequency of contact with us and can also choose to remain anonymous.

If you have any questions or you would like more information about how to include a gift in Will please contact our **Gift in Wills Team** on **03 9345 5037** or **[giftinwill.foundation@rch.org.au](mailto:giftinwill.foundation@rch.org.au)**

