



Media Release

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Paying it forward, and then some

When J. Laurie Johnston was studying to be a pharmacist, he was worried he was going to have to drop out because he didn't have enough money for tuition. A family friend gave him \$200 - equivalent to \$2,800 today - with a condition: "Do this for someone else some day."

That day has come.

Today, Johnston announced a \$1 million gift to be split evenly between Misericordia and Riverview Health Centre Foundations.

"Misericordia Health Centre Foundation is delighted to be a recipient of this incredibly generous gift," said Charlie Burns, board chair, Misericordia Health Centre Foundation. "Laurie Johnston's commitment to our much-anticipated PRIME program will enable many seniors to continue to live independently in their own homes. This is what we call *The Future of Care*."

Norman Kasian, president and CEO of Riverview Health Centre, describes palliative care "as an approach to care that focuses on quality of life for those affected by progressive, life-threatening illness. The goal of palliative care is to control pain and other symptoms, support emotional, spiritual and cultural needs and maximize comfort of the patient as well as their family and friends. Riverview Health Centre does this very well; Mr. Johnston's gift will allow us to do more."

Johnston, a self-described child of the Depression, is still haunted by images of his mother feeding the homeless who knocked at his back door in Regina when he was growing up.

Johnston has always given as generously as his circumstances would allow, but wasn't convinced that was enough. About 35 years ago he decided to quietly build a special legacy fund.

When he reached his \$1 million goal, he began a search for a suitable charity. He found he couldn't choose just one, so Johnston chose two!

"I have put my trust in the PRIME program at Misericordia and the palliative care program at Riverview," said Johnston. "PRIME, a day health centre for seniors, is designed to keep an aging population healthy and in their own homes.

"Riverview's excellent palliative care program exemplifies something I have always believed in, a comfortable and dignified death."

Réal Cloutier, chief operating officer & vice president long-term care for the Winnipeg Health Region, said he was very pleased that through his donation, Mr. Johnston was recognizing the efforts and quality services provided through the two programs. "These are important initiatives that are proven to provide the kind of care Winnipeggers want and need as we prepare for the future."

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