

# “Lucky Stars” That Helped Save a Life Are Thanks to You

BY GRAHAM STRONG

It might be odd to describe anyone who's having a heart attack as “lucky”, but that was certainly the case for Doug Brown.

“The stars lined up for me that day,” Doug Brown said. “The timing, the resources that were here – everything. A few years earlier, it wouldn't have been that smooth.”

Founder and President of the Thunder Bay Letter Shop, Doug was loading freshly-printed brochures into his van when realized something wasn't right.

“The weirdest feeling came over my chest and my face,” Doug said. “It was almost like that tingly fear you get when you suddenly realize you're supposed to be somewhere. It came on really lightly, but within three minutes, I was getting concerned. I knew something was a lot more serious.”

Doug's wife Joleen, who was at the shop that day, rushed Doug to the Emergency Department at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Doug could feel himself going down fast.

“I could feel the compressions. I was going into a sweat. I said to myself, ‘Better get there quickly.’”

Staff at the desk knew immediately that Doug was having a heart attack and gave him two aspirin before he even had his Health Card out.

Within two hours of his first symptoms, he was rushed to the Cath Lab, Dr. Andrea MacDougall had inserted a stent to open his artery, and he was recovering in the ICU.



*Doug Brown feels he is lucky to be alive after having a heart attack. Thanks to the generosity of donors to the Northern Cardiac Fund, he was able to be treated here at home within hours. You can ensure we continue to have world-class cardiovascular services so patients like Doug can have critical, life-saving care here. Donate today at [healthsciencesfoundation.ca](http://healthsciencesfoundation.ca) or call 345-4673.*

“I had a 100% blockage, and I wasn't aware of it,” Doug said.

What makes Doug so lucky is the fact that we have cardiac services like angioplasty right here in Thunder Bay. Both of his parents had similar procedures years before, but had to be flown out to Hamilton. Thankfully, everything went well for them. But the tragic reality was, not everyone having a heart attack survived the trip.

Travelling hundreds of miles for treatment also makes it much harder on the patients and the family. Having angioplasty here in Thunder

Bay has saved lives and reduced the stress of thousands of patients and their families over the years – thanks in large part to our incredible donors. In other words, Doug's lucky stars are actually thanks to you.

However, some patients still have to be sent to Toronto for certain cardiac procedures. Right now, we are building a new cardiovascular program that will bring more and more of those services to Thunder Bay, so our patients will have to travel less and less for these life-saving procedures.

You can help us celebrate Heart Month this February by making your donation today to the Northern Cardiac Fund. Your generous gift will go directly towards funding local cardiovascular programs so that patients like Doug can get the care they need, right here in Thunder Bay.

You can make your donation online at [www.healthsciencesfoundation.ca](http://www.healthsciencesfoundation.ca) or by calling Lorna or Deb at the Donation Centre at (807) 345-4673. Thank you for giving our patients even more lucky stars!

## Are You Having a Heart Attack? Are You Sure?

Time and again, people feel the symptoms of a heart attack but they just don't realize it. A big part of that reason is because the symptoms can be different for different people. Often, they can be explained away by something else.

Doug Brown knows this all too well.

“There was never any pain,” Doug said. “But prior to my heart attack, in hindsight, I had some symptoms. When I went out for a walk, I would feel a few little spots of pressure in my chest. Other times, I'd feel a little bit of an ache in my arms. I know now that they were warning signs, but at the time I just dismissed it as something that happens as you get older.”

Not everyone has early warning signs of a heart attack. But some do – and it's not always painful. If you feel strangely tired, out of breath for no real reason, slight bits of pressure, aches in your arms or legs without strenuous exercise, don't just dismiss them. Talk to your doctor or primary care provider. If it's an emergency, go to your nearest Emergency Department.

It just may save your life.

## Celebrating the People who Make our Hospital Great

BY JORDAN VEZEAU

“We value employees because our people make our hospital great,” said Amanda Bjorn, Vice President, Human Resources at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Recognizing employees, professional staff, and volunteers for their dedication and hard work is a priority. “We recently hosted the third annual Employee Recognition Week, because we know how important it is to feel valued at work,” Bjorn explained.

The Hospital has a dedicated team that continually endeavours to provide excellent patient and family centred care, all while providing a crucial service to the city and region. Delivering quality care in an academic health sciences centre environment has its challenges. It is only through the steadfast devotion of our team that we have, continue to, and will reach our strategic goals and objectives. The Hospital is the largest employer in the city, with over 2,700 employees, 300 professional staff, and 500 volunteers.

To supplement existing reward and recognition efforts, in 2015 the Human Resources team began hosting an annual Employee Recognition Week to recognize, support, and cele-



*Some of this year's Walk the Talk winners gather for a photo for with Jean Bartkowiak, President and CEO (far left) and Amanda Bjorn, Vice President of Human Resources (far right). The Walk the Talk Awards recognizes Hospital team members for their exemplary performance in varying categories.*

brate the people who work at the Hospital. Activities include the Long Service reception, which highlights employees celebrating milestone years of service, the Walk the Talk Awards ceremony, which recognizes team members for their exemplary

performance in varying categories, on-site massages for staff, roaming carts for day, evening, and night staff, as well as daily trivia and prizes, all generously donated by businesses around the community.

The week of recognition and cele-

bration received a gracious nod from the Honourable Michael Gravelle. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and MPP for Thunder Bay – Superior North made a point of recognizing the value that the surrounding communities place

in the Hospital.

“Employees are the single most important part of health care. Our Employee Recognition Week gives us a formal channel to recognize and celebrate the contributions we appreciate every day,” said Bjorn.

## Piercings Have No Place in Operating Room

BY HEATHER VITA

Body piercings are a personal choice and one that has become much more popular recently.

However, show up with a piercing when you're scheduled for surgery and you won't be too popular – at least not with the team in the Operating Room at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. That's because piercings are a real safety issue for patients undergoing surgery.

Dawn Korol, Team Leader, Operating Room explained, “If piercings are left in, they can cause burns, airway issues, and even accidental removal upon changing the position of an anesthetized patient. We want our patients to have the safest surgical experience possible, and to ensure that happens, we need piercings removed.”

There are situations, however, where piercings haven't been removed prior to surgery – sometimes in emergency cases – and staff have now been provided with specialized equipment and training to remove piercings that may remain.

Funded through a Family CARE (Care Advancements Recommended by Employees) Grant thanks to donors to the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation and the Volunteer Association, the piercing removal equipment can be used to safely extract piercings. While staff in the Operating Room emphasized that patients are responsible for removing piercings before coming for surgery, they are happy to have the equipment needed to remove when



*Tabatha, from Creation Body Piercing, looks on as Registered Nurses, Nancy and James learn how to use newly purchased piercing removal equipment for the Operating Room, generously funded through the Family CARE (Care Advancements Recommended by Employees) Grant program.*

necessary.

Recently the team in the Operating Room learned about the different types of jewelry that may form a piercing, thanks to an education session led by Matt Bressmer, the Owner, Creation Body Piercing. With everything from captive bead rings to surface bars and stretchers for ears, he taught that there are multiple options that staff may encounter. Bressmer also showcased several glass retainers that could be used to safely keep the piercing from growing over while the regular jewelry has been removed.

He also stressed that some piercings are easier to remove than others – with nostril piercings being notoriously more difficult.

When asked if it was cost prohibi-

tive to have a piercing removed and reinserted after surgery he replied, “Absolutely not. We only charge \$5 to remove a piercing and usually about \$5 to re-insert it. The biggest cost from an initial piercing is the jewelry itself, so it's really not a big deal to remove it.” Bressmer did add that some piercings can be tougher to maintain if removed, but stressed, “It's more important to have a piercing removed than to leave it in if you're going for surgery.”

As the session concluded Korol added, “By having tools to remove piercings pre-operatively, we can provide the best possible care ensuring no injury. We are very grateful to be able to provide this service when required.”

# Missing:

Time to beat the odds.

CATH LAB C-ARM — Clearing the way for life to continue over 2,000 times a year.

**Your life may depend on it.**  
Fund vital medical equipment.

**DONATE**

**TODAY.**

Thunder Bay Regional  
Health Sciences  
Foundation

(807) 345-4673 | [healthsciencesfoundation.ca](http://healthsciencesfoundation.ca)

Ways to Give

[facebook.com/healthsciencesfoundation](http://facebook.com/healthsciencesfoundation)

[twitter.com/tbrhsf](http://twitter.com/tbrhsf)

Material has been provided by Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation and its partners.