

Family Member Profile – Donna Tack

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In September 2001, my then five-week-old son, Spencer, suffered a massive brain injury. The injury was caused by complications due to simple reflux and a tragic mistake at our local hospital. That night, Spencer was transferred to the ICU at BC's Children's Hospital.

After about three weeks in the ICU, we were told that Spencer's brain injury was so catastrophic that he would likely not survive. We were given the opportunity to go to Canuck Place Children's hospice for end of life care. We spent about four weeks at the hospice where Spencer stabilized enough that we were then able to transition home through Sunny Hill Health Centre. It was there I learned how to care for this incredibly complex child, and how to use all the technology that was now a part of our everyday lives.

We did finally make it home, though not for long. The first four years of Spencer's life were a constant battle. Numerous surgeries and even more frequent bouts of pneumonia had us spending up to two hundred days a year at Children's.

It was during this time that I learned of the Family Advisory Committee. I was approached by one of the staff on the group and asked if I would like to join. Those first couple of years, my attendance was, at best, sporadic. However, I was always welcomed, no matter how bad I looked or how many days without a shower I'd been! The other parents always seemed to know when you were 'in' as we'd say, and their quiet support and true understanding meant the world to me. My opinions and ideas were always valued and respected.

As Spencer's health improved, so did my attendance at the meetings. In 2005, I was asked to take on the role as co-chair and I gladly agreed. I still hold that position in the group. I am also a member of the Family advisory Committee at Sunny Hill and also hold a directors seat at my local Child development Centre.

Getting involved with the PiC has helped me have a voice at the hospital and to also try to represent the other families who may not otherwise be heard. I am so proud of all this exceptional group of people has been able to accomplish. We have gone from a small, "under the radar" parents group to a highly respected, valued part of the hospital's inner workings. We have made access to charts for families a reality. We sit on boards and subcommittees and lend the parents point of view to the health care providers and administrators that might otherwise be overlooked. We have found a way to recognize and acknowledge excellence in the practice of family centered care throughout the hospital through our Bravo Star and Family Centered Care wards. We strive to ensure that family centered care is the cornerstone of practice at BC Children's.



I am extremely proud to be a part of this group of exceptional people whose main focus is to make the hospital a better place for families.