

From candy striper to fundraising guru

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Suzette Strong Randall has just completed three months as Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation president.

The foundation helps find funding for the Ninth Line facility.

The newly minted administrator's 2007-08 challenge is to raise \$3.6 million.

The longtime York Region resident came here after about three years as a vice-president with the Sunnybrook Hospital Foundation. Before that, she held two senior positions with the York University Foundation.

An avid tennis player, neophyte golfer, seasoned traveller and staunch Toronto Maple Leafs fan, she lives in Aurora with daughter Emily and golden retriever Porter.

Q: You've devoted your career to fundraising. Who influenced you?

A: My parents are very philanthropic in terms of donating time. Mom was a tennis pro at the Thornhill Country Club and volunteered for the high school tennis team. Dad volunteered at Tennis Canada and at the United Way of Greater Toronto, where I started my career. Volunteerism always jumped out at me.

Q: Do you recall your first volunteer assignment?

A: I was a candy striper at York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill. I was 14 and helped out for three years.

Q: You have a formidable fundraising goal. What will the money be used for?

A: It is an exceedingly ambitious challenge because traditionally, the foundation raises about \$2 million per year. Two million is for ongoing capital and equipment. We need to replace and improve basic equipment. The new breast health cen-

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SUZETTE STRONG RANDALL

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tre, which opened the week I got here in June, will use \$1.1 million and \$500,000 is going to the radiation suite for x-ray and digital imaging.

Q: How do you raise funds?

A: The primary flow is from events such as the annual gala, golf tournament and Legacy run. We also have a planned giving program, where you can leave money in wills, and from private and corporate donations.

Q: Who are your biggest donors?

A: The De Gasperis family, through TACC Construction, gave \$1 million. Herman and Marya Grad, owners of the Hilton Suites in Markham, donated \$500,000. The Longo Family Foundation gave \$250,000. Private donors include Carmen Lewis, who gave \$250,000, and Tom and Irene Shadlock, who gave \$100,000.

Q: York Region has three major health centres. Is there competition for support?

A: I don't feel we're competing. We have defined communities around the hospitals. We recognize our respective health care expertise. We have collaborative programs where we discuss challenges and how to overcome them.

Q: Do you have leisure time and what do you do with it?

A: I spend a lot of time with my family. I'm a keen tennis player. I play competitively

at the Timberlane Athletic Club in Aurora. I'm learning to play golf. I enjoy travel. I'm a firm believer in vacations. I feel they're earned and well deserved.

Q: Who are your favourite tennis pros?

A: Roger Federer is an exceedingly good player and a nice man. He gives back to

the game. My favorite female is Jelena Jankovic. I just got back from the U.S. Open in New York and was at Wimbledon in England.

Q: Do you have a favourite medical movie or TV show?

A: I grew up watching M*A*S*H on TV. I like to watch Situation Critical; it's an ER reality show.

Q: What makes a successful fundraiser?

A: You have to believe in what you're raising money for. To me, health care is a no-brainer. If you haven't used a hospital, you know someone who has.

Visit www.msh.on.ca/foundations for information or to donate.



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Suzette Strong Randall is president of the Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation.




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