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## Hannah's challenge

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Submitted by Diane Wild, Senior Consultant, Communications

*With a goal of 5000 pledges across the province, Change Day BC (<http://changedaybc.ca/>) officially closed last week with more than 7500 promises to make a change for better health and better health care. This story on one of the youngest change advocates was originally published in the fall issue of Healthier You magazine (<http://news.fraserhealth.ca/News/October-2015/Healthier-You-magazine-Fall-issue.aspx>).*

When quality improvement consultant Catherine O'Donnell came home from work last May, she told her daughter Hannah about a new project she'd taken on: encouraging Fraser Health employees to commit to a positive change for health, for October's Change Day BC. She knew where she'd like to start and was excited to share her enthusiasm.

Turns out, she got off to a massive start through that chat with Hannah.

"I decided right away I wanted to pledge to promote the day and get 100 pledges," says the 11-year-old Surrey student.

Inspired by a movement that started in England, Change Day BC encourages people who work in health or social care to commit to an act of change that will improve care for patients or the system they work in. It also encourages members of the community to commit to a change that would improve their health.

Hannah's first convert on the way to blowing that goal out of the water was her friend Christina, who pledged to talk to her grandparents in Chinese about pledging to make a change for better health. Both girls walked around their cul de sac to get more pledges, and Hannah made posters for her neighbourhood. She also met with her principal and vice principal at Woodland Park Elementary, both of whom embraced the idea.

The two friends' goal was to get everyone in their school to make pledges related to healthy living. But Hannah didn't stop there. After an email exchange with Surrey Memorial Hospital's executive director Cathie Heritage, she challenged the hospital to match her school's pledges.

**Hannah:** I would be more than happy to challenge your staff to try and get more pledges than me. The thing is they're going to have to keep up – I'm on a roll! If your staff have more pledges than me, I'll hand out a \$25 gift voucher from my birthday money (which is a lot of money for a fifth grader), and I've convinced my mom to give a \$50 gift voucher as well. She says that's a lot of money for a Scottish person.

**Cathie:** I accept your challenge on behalf of Surrey Memorial Hospital. If you win I will personally contribute \$250 to your school for a healthy living project. What do you think? I would also be happy to speak to your principal if you want. Maybe I could come to your school and meet with you both. I think it might be exciting to bring you and a few of your classmates on a tour of the hospital. We could take some pictures and you could take them back to a school assembly. I think it is really important that the community understands how important healthy living is. We need your help to keep our community fit, healthy and happy!

**Hannah:** I love your offer and I bet my school will too. Now we are extra motivated to make this pledge happen. I just feel sad about taking that \$250 away from you.

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With a goal of 5,000 pledges across the province, Hannah and Cathie teamed up to rally their entire community to commit to a change. The challenge went beyond the school and hospital as Hannah and one of her classmates, Chanteya, presented their plan to the senior leadership of Fraser Health to spur each community in the region to try to get more pledges than Surrey.

Hannah alone racked up over 300 pledges from her circles within a month of starting her efforts, making her one of the top 10 contributors to Change Day BC amid a field that includes large health care organizations.

**Cathie:** We want this challenge to extend beyond our hospital's doors because we recognize the importance of prevention, and staying healthy. Much of Fraser Health's work is about trying to keep people out of the hospital and getting the support they need in their communities instead.

**Hannah:** It's everyone's chance to fix something in their lives and in the health care system. For example, like wearing a helmet, making healthy food choices and exercising daily. I want people's health to be better. You can't stop

accidents, but you can prevent lots of them.

**Cathie:** Just start doing it! It doesn't need to be complicated, and it shouldn't be. It can be something simple about your own health. Sometimes we create unrealistic expectations of ourselves. Even small changes can make a huge difference. Maybe it's packing your lunch, or taking 15 minutes a day to just rest and relax.

**Hannah:** People can make changes for themselves or for a better system.

**Cathie:** I was a nurse but it has been a long time since I cared directly for patients. About eight months ago, I spent an entire day on a hospital ward to better understand the challenges our frontline staff, like nurses and doctors, face today, especially at the patient's bedside. It was really a positive learning experience for me.

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Cathie calls Hannah an "amazing young woman," saying she and her mother Catherine are equally inspiring.

Says Cathie Heritage: "Any opportunity for Surrey Memorial Hospital to engage with our community is great. Children have so much influence with mom and dad and the choices the family makes. It's very powerful to have kids involved, making active choices about their own health."

Hannah herself makes the inspiring – and challenging – case for change: "If you make a pledge for healthier living, you can make the world a better place. More importantly, you don't want to be beaten by an 11-year-old."

## Vote for Hannah

Hannah is one of four finalists for the BC Patient Safety and Quality Council Everyday Champion Quality Award (<http://bcpsqc.ca/quality-awards/2016-everyday-champion-voting/>), for someone working in the health system who showed a passion and commitment for improving quality of care. The "Everyday Champion" saw a need for improvement, committed to change, led by example and inspired others. Voting closes November 8 (<http://bcpsqc.ca/quality-awards/2016-everyday-champion-voting/>).

## Comments

Warren Weisenberger

Well done Ladies! You are Amazing, Getting a Scottish woman to give \$50.00 is a feat in itself.

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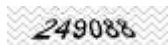
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