



The Reilly family got a scare last September when they're father, Shawn Reilly, had a heart attack. Now the family is sharing their story to benefit the Saint John Regional Hospital. From left, Aislinn, Shawn, Shawn Jr., Nuala and Katheryn Reilly. PHOTO: COLIN MCPHAIL/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

Hospital foundation launches revamped fundraising campaign

The Give campaign has fundraising goal of \$1.5 million

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SAINT JOHN • The last thing Shawn Reilly remembers before collapsing in the emergency room of the Saint John Regional Hospital was a pain in his chest.

The father of five, who was about to turn 40, woke up in the hospital five days later, struggling to survive after suffering a full cardiac arrest. After 17 "touch-and-go days" and months of recovery and rehabilitation, Reilly is back to health and sharing his story to benefit the hospital.

The Reilly family has become the face of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation's new-look fundraising program, The Give campaign, which was announced at the hospital on Wednesday.

The re-jigged campaign will shift the foundation's public focus from individual aspects of the hospital to a broader narrative of the facility and its staff. This year's fundraising goal, which has hovered around \$1 million in previous years, is \$1.5 million.

The Reillys would be first in line to say staff needs the community's support.

"The emergency room (staff) here were essentially super heroes," said Shawn Reilly on Wednesday, nine months after his heart attack.

"It was an event I shouldn't have lived through and, more importantly, it's an event that even had I lived through it I wouldn't have been able to keep my mental faculties and keep living life the way that I had before."

He said thanks to staff that's not the case today.

Nuala Reilly, Shawn's wife, said she was thankful for the staff that stayed with her while she watched paramedics perform CPR on her husband.

"It was utterly terrifying," said Nuala Reilly.

"If this had happened even anywhere else in the hospital besides the emergency room, he would have likely not survived."

During his recovery, Reilly was privy to all corners of the hospital, receiving treatment in various departments and taking part in programs, like the cardiac wellness program.

"I've been to most of the hospital at this point," Shawn Reilly said.

Jeff McAloon, president and CEO of the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation, said the story highlights the broader narrative the foundation is hoping to tell.

"It really brings it home. You can't help but choke up when you hear from them," he said on Wednesday.

"It's important for us to be connectors between the community and that great level of care, not just for one area but for all aspects of this hospital."

McAloon said the foundation will roll out specific funding projects for this year in the coming months, though they will fall into the foundation's five guiding pillars: capital equipment, mental health, research, education and patient comfort.

He said more patient stories will be made public this year, outlining the level of care provided by hospital staff.

"We need to, as a community, make sure that we're behind (the staff)," McAloon said.

"So, we as a community, need to get together and invest philanthropically to make sure staff have the best training and the best tools and have the best training around them so we can keep them here."

Dr. Michael Howlett, the clinical academic head of the department of emergency medicine, said donors should know their contributions allow the hospital to attract and retain medical professionals.

"Giving to our hospital Foundations is more than the purchase of one piece of equipment a year," Howlett said in a release. "Donor support allows medical staff to attend professional development training and to undertake world-class research that will positively impact patient care."