



# 2023 PHILANTHROPIC IMPACT REPORT





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# SUPPORTING CAUSES WE CARE ABOUT

Driven by a deep commitment to create a positive and lasting impact, all our philanthropic actions align with our mission to:

Protect, promote and improve the health and well-being of children and adolescents.

We are committed to supporting initiatives that:

- Provide personalized care and empathy-driven support.
- Reduce inequalities to improve access to health care and meet basic needs so that living conditions are fair for all.

## Increasing our involvement

We are proud to stand by our partners in their missions. Throughout 2023, we supported a multitude of initiatives that improved community health and well-being.

By actively participating in more events and engaging in collaborative projects, we also strengthened our connections with our valued partners.

As a testament to our commitment, we graciously offered our office space to our partner, Fondation Olo, enabling them to host their Annual General Meeting alongside their esteemed partners.





## Our commitment to our partners

At Blue Cross®, we've been dedicated to helping the communities we serve since our founding in 1942. We make a positive difference in people's lives through our caring and social initiatives.

In 2023, this dedication was illustrated by our employees' remarkable involvement and generosity. Not only did they take part in donation campaigns, but they also showed their willingness to get more involved by offering their time and support to our partners.

This commitment is also reflected at the management level, with our President and CEO, Sylvain Charbonneau, on the Board of Directors of Make-A-Wish | Rêves d'enfants, our partner since 1989.

## Continuing our commitment

In 2024, we have set forth the following objectives:

- Integrate philanthropy into our corporate culture.
- Engage our employees for maximum impact.
- Maintain support for our partners and uphold all commitments despite the prevailing economic situation.

# FULFILLING CHILDREN'S DREAMS

Make-A-Wish | Rêves d'enfants Canada **grants life-changing wishes to children facing serious illnesses.** Since 1989, Blue Cross has provided health coverage to children and their companions, lifting exclusions related to their pre-existing conditions. The impossible becomes possible, transforming fear, sadness and anxiety into confidence, joy and hope. **Granting wishes can significantly improve children's physical and mental health in the long run, allowing them to smile again.**

- 99% of parents said that their children were happier after having their wish come true.
- 97% of families reported an improvement in their child's mental health when their wish was fulfilled.
- According to 89% of health care workers, granting a wish can positively affect a child's physical health.
- 80% of children stated that fulfilling their wishes gave them the strength to fight serious illness.

In 2023, Make-A-Wish | Rêves d'enfants Canada granted 1,400 wishes, including 499 in Ontario and 248 in Quebec. Thanks to Blue Cross, 360 Ontario children and **161 Quebec children had their travel dreams come true.**

This year, Blue Cross participated in several impactful events:

## 48-Hour Ride:

A dedicated team of six cyclists rode in relays for 48 hours, aiming to fulfill the dreams of children facing serious illnesses. Numerous employees also volunteered their time and effort. As a result of this remarkable endeavour, approximately 300 children's wishes were granted.

## Trees of Joy:

Blue Cross teams sponsored a wish child in both Quebec and Ontario and decorated a tree in their honour. In Toronto, we supported the creation of a "Blue Zone," which featured entertaining activities for attending children. This heartwarming event granted the wishes of 90 children in Ontario approximately 20 children in Quebec.





Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

## PROVIDING TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES

The mission of CHU Sainte-Justine is **to improve the health of children, adolescents, and mothers in Quebec.**

Since 2014, Blue Cross has offered free travel insurance without pre-existing condition exclusions to young patients of CHU Sainte-Justine in hematology and oncology and since 2018, to those in neurology.

A total of **14 children travelled with Blue Cross travel insurance in 2023.**

## IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HEALTH IN QUEBEC

The CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation's mission is to engage the community and support Sainte-Justine in its pursuit of excellence and its commitment to **providing children and mothers world-class health care, both now and in the future.**

In 2023, **Blue Cross began supporting the Tout Doux project**, which aims to manage children's pain, anxiety, and trauma during medical procedures by:

- Training all staff at CHU Sainte-Justine in best practices related to care and pain management. Additionally, 15 teams from outside Sainte-Justine, representing over 260 physicians and health care professionals, participated in the basic Tout Doux training.
- Educating professionals and caregivers across Quebec. Health care professionals from more than 65 hospitals regularly seek advice from the Tout doux team on managing pain in children. This collaborative effort aims to enhance practices and improve outcomes.
- By becoming a key member of SKIP (Solutions for Kids in Pain) network.

Thanks to a donation from Québec Blue Cross, the first Certified Child Life Specialists (CCLS) was hired at CHU Sainte-Justine. The doctor promptly identifies patients who require assistance in managing pain and anxiety during hospital stays and medical procedures.

Since 2020, Blue Cross has sponsored the Tree of Lights, an initiative by the CHU Sainte-Justine Foundation. The Sainte-Justine Tree of Lights brings Christmas cheer to children and families spending the holidays in the hospital. It also supports the development of pediatric care for the future and enables the Social Services Department to focus on meeting parents' needs so they can focus on being there for their children.



Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

# BRINGING SMILES TO FACES

The Dr. Clown Foundation **brings joy to the most vulnerable people in our society.**

In pediatric hospitals, rehabilitation centres and specialized schools, therapeutic clowns engage with children of all ages, from babies who are just a few weeks old to young children and teenagers.

Through their presence and collaboration, therapeutic clowns humanize care by:

- Allowing the child and their family to enjoy a break.
- Providing comfort and friendship.
- Helping relieve pain caused by certain medical procedures and situations.
- Treating the person with respect and kindness during visits.

Since 2018, Blue Cross has supported therapeutic clown programs in child psychiatry. Their contributions to the endowment fund ensure the long-term viability of these essential programs.

**Over 63 days of visits between 2022 and 2023, a total of 701 significant encounters took place. During these interactions, the Foundation team had the privilege of meeting several young individuals receiving treatment in child psychiatry.**

*“During our last visit, the psychoeducator expressed his gratitude for our collaboration. He also emphasized that our presence and approach had a major impact on the kids. With us, some young people open up, confide in us, step outside their comfort zone, have fun, laugh, and make jokes.”*

*- Testimonial from a clown artist*





Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

# CREATING JOYFUL MOMENTS

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital **cares for kids with disabilities, kids needing rehabilitation after illness or trauma, and kids whose medical complexity requires a kind of care they can't get elsewhere.**

Through the use of unique techniques, including music and physical comedy, the Clowns are able to connect with patients, offering hospitalized children rare opportunities for play and laughter, self-expression and empowerment. Ongoing visits enable the clowns to forge strong, stable relationships with young patients and provide much-needed moments of joy, laughter and comfort for children with complex needs as well as those undergoing painful medical interventions as part of their rehabilitation process.

- The Therapeutic Clowns have worked individually with over 850 unique children/youth per year and additionally impact many others through the hallways, and events like vaccination clinics.
- **480 visits with the therapeutic clowns were made possible this year because of the support of Blue Cross.**

*"Every time the inpatient families hear that the Therapeutic Clowns are coming, they break out into smiles. The Clowns are a constant bright point in everyone's day. Even for the staff they are a sense of stress relief and good cheer! Thank you, guys, for everything you do! We all really appreciate it!"*

- Unit nurse

**Holland Bloorview**  
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital



Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

## OFFERING PERSONALIZED IN-HOME CARE

Nova Home Care is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to provide compassionate, high-quality, **personalized, in-home care to people who are ill or nearing the end of life and the families who support them.**

In 2019, Nova launched **the Blue Cross Home Palliative Care Mentorship Program.** As part of this program, home care nurses across the province have access to free and accredited training in:

- Improving the quality and accessibility of home care
- Providing patient and caregiver support

In 2023, **there were 100 participants in the Blue Cross Home Palliative Care Mentorship Program,** enabling **22,000 patients to benefit from the improved knowledge of their palliative care nurses.**

**NOVA**  
SOINS À DOMICILE ♦ HOME CARE





ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE  
DE MONTRÉAL

Présenté par  
 Hydro  
Québec

Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

## INCLUSION THROUGH MUSIC

The Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (OSM) is a world-renowned orchestra whose philanthropic mission is to **make classical music accessible to as many people as possible.**

Since 2006, Blue Cross has offered travel insurance to OSM musicians on their international tours.

Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

# BRINGING HEALTHY BABIES INTO THE WORLD

Through Fondation Olo, **families are given an equal chance to have healthy babies and develop healthy eating habits early in life.** Since 2013, Blue Cross has supported Fondation Olo's mission.

Fondation Olo intervenes in the crucial period of the first 1,000 days of a baby's life. In this way, every child has an equal opportunity to be born and develop healthily.

The **Olo follow-up program** helps pregnant women in need to eat well during pregnancy to ensure a healthy birth and helps parents promote healthy eating habits early in their child's life.

Olo's follow-up care helps:

- Mothers-to-be develop better eating habits and access healthy foods and prenatal multivitamins
- Reduce low-weight births and developmental delays
- Increase number of breastfeeding mothers and lower the incidence of postnatal depression
- Enhance parenting skills and parent-child attachment
- Reduce obesity and chronic diseases
- Improve academic success

**A total of 7,000 vulnerable pregnant women in Quebec benefit from Olo follow-up care every year.**





**upstartED**

Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

## EMPOWERING THE ADULTS OF TOMORROW

As a not-for-profit organization, UpstartED creates programs to promote the mental health and well-being of young people so they have an equal chance to achieve their potential. These programs aim to **empower teenagers in historically marginalized communities by enhancing their autonomy and self-confidence.**

The program allows them to:

- Explore their identity in a non-judgmental environment.
- Access tools and practices to help them regulate their emotions.
- Engage in meaningful relationships with peers and caring adults who invest in their success.
- Become changemakers in their own lives and communities by acquiring the required tools and mindset.

During the 2022–2023 school year:

- **752 students participated in the program.**
- More than 1,100 kits were distributed.
- 90% of students showed an improvement in empathy.
- 87% of participants demonstrated a strong sense of self-knowledge and expression.
- 87% of students exhibited increased innovative and critical thinking skills.

*"I lived through a lot growing up. I enjoyed writing about my life's journey because it was cool to put it into words. As I reflected on my course, I could see the highs and lows and learn from them. It was a bit difficult, but I found the exercises simple, and slowly, they helped me build my self-esteem."*

- 13-year-old student

Serving Communities by Bringing People Together

## INTERNATIONAL CHILDCARE

The SickKids Foundation encourages communities to invest in health and science advances **to improve the lives of children and their families in Canada and around the world.**

The Herbie Fund is a Foundation project that **allows children around the world to come to SickKids in Toronto for better care.**

The hospital's health staff:

- Provides child and family-centred care
- Creates innovative clinical and scientific advances
- Develops the next generation of child health experts

**In 2022, Blue Cross began offering travel insurance to parents of children travelling to Canada for life-changing medical care. As a result of this support, one family's child was able to receive quality care in Canada this year.**





# INVOLVING OUR EMPLOYEES

## Annual fundraising campaign

In our 31<sup>st</sup> year of supporting the joint national fundraising campaign by United Way and HealthPartners, our employees once again demonstrated their generosity in supporting our communities.

The funds raised will be allocated to:

- Ensuring the most vulnerable have access to essential community services by improving their living conditions.
- Building stronger and more equitable communities by creating lasting social changes.
- Enhancing the quality of life for people with chronic diseases and their families through personalized programs and services.
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle through awareness and prevention.

## Volunteering

**Throughout this year, our employees generously volunteered their time to support our communities.**

It is a privilege to collaborate with dedicated teams who share our passion for making a meaningful difference in our communities.



Wherever life may take you

