



# GREAT GRANT STORIES



## Green Shield Canada Foundation

Putting children's health on the map



Imagine a world where childhood diseases and their potential causes can be “seen” on a map—a world where the range of environmental variables are correlated—from geographic location and population density to access to green space, health care, and education—to take a truly comprehensive approach to childhood disease research and prevention.

### Sound out of this world?

Such a map is becoming possible – through the vision of Children's Health Foundation and the tech-savvy minds of scientists at the Children's Health Research Institute in London, Ontario—supported by the Green Shield Canada Foundation. Their project is to develop an **Atlas of Children's Health in Southwestern Ontario**, to identify the causes of prevalent childhood diseases and disorders in the region.



Photo credit: Shaun McGill

### 'Zooming in' on cause and effect...

The Green Shield Canada Foundation and the Children's Health Foundation funded the Children's Health Research Institute in leveraging advanced technology to integrate diverse data sets. The result is a digital geodatabase of social, economic, and environmental characteristics of Southwestern Ontario. The Children's Health Research Institute is now into the second phase of the project, using the geodatabase and sophisticated software to map health issues by patient home address/or incident

location and then 'zooming in' on potential causal factors by correlating environmental conditions. The capturing, storing, analyzing, managing, and presenting data linked to specific geographic locations in this way is unique to the Atlas.

### Linking the “who” and the “what” with the “where”... and finally, the “why”

The Atlas will help identify the relationships between environmental variables and prevalent childhood health conditions in Southwestern Ontario. This information will help to identify the clinical needs of children in


Continued on page 2



Philanthropic  
foundations  
Canada

Fondations  
philanthropiques  
Canada





Southwestern Ontario and existing gaps in servicing these needs. The project will not only enhance awareness regarding the potential impact of environmental issues on childhood diseases, it will also play an important part in preventing the conditions. The unique interrelation of data made possible by the Atlas will uncover new possibilities regarding causes of disease —and in turn, new prevention approaches.

**To infinity and beyond... broader applications and other populations**

There is a great range of future applications for the digital geodatabase and Atlas. The Children's Health Research Institute project will provide a template for similar work in other areas in Canada, which will add new perspectives on the influence of environmental factors. In addition, the Children's Health Research Institute plans to bring the Atlas into labs and boardrooms of health care professionals, scientists, policy makers and stakeholders via an interactive website, making the data easily accessible. What began as a regional project will have positive ripple effects worldwide, motivating the study of interventions to reduce

children's exposure to environmental factors that may influence health. Green Shield Canada's contribution has already realized a positive cost benefit as the project has already become the impetus for a follow-up project about how the environment influences physical activity, diet, and obesity among children.

**Fuelling innovation for lasting impact**

*"Thanks to the support of the Green Shield Canada Foundation, we have been able to provide the Children's Health Research Institute the funds necessary to assist in building what may be considered to be the single most comprehensive geodatabase ever to exist for environment and health research in Southwestern Ontario, and for that, we are truly grateful."* - Debbie Comuzzi, President & CEO, Children's Health Foundation.

*"One of our main goals is to support innovative programs with the potential for high impact, practical results that can lead to systemic change. So far, the Children's Health Foundation project is meeting this mandate head on."* - Steve Bradie, President and CEO, Green Shield Canada Foundation.

**Lessons Learned - Clear communication is a catalyst for clear communication...**

Throughout the funding arrangement, the Children's Health Foundation has demonstrated a solid understanding of the Green Shield Canada Foundation expectations and consistently delivered top quality communications. This has been attributed to clear expectations —being clear on the type and frequency of communication and deliverables we expected resulted in adherence to our requirements. For us, this underscored the importance of making sure the Foundation processes are easy to understand and follow. The ease of communication with Children's Health Foundation made monitoring and assessing the Children's Health Research Institute project smooth and effective.