



2022 Annual Impact Report

A YEAR OF INNOVATION

A message from our CEO and Chair

We would like to begin this Annual Report by expressing our sincere thanks to every member of the MedicAlert team who are unwavering in their commitment to finding new and innovative ways to manage and deliver high quality health information at a time of need. We would also like to share our thanks to the first responder community who rely on our data each day to ensure better outcomes for those who need MedicAlert. You are often the unsung people whose work lives at the intersection of public safety, health care and community-based services. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank our donors, the majority of whom are subscribers. Without your belief in our vision to ensure no one is alone in their time of need, we could not have advanced our programs and services in the way we did in 2022.

For MedicAlert, the 2022 year was one of many firsts in several decades. It was our first foray into significant technology advancements in 20 years. Our digital transformation modernized our services which enables us to keep our data more secure than ever and allows us to keep pace with the pivotal changes occurring in Canada's 9-1-1 services. Digital transformation isn't for the faint of heart, particularly when you are dealing with the most sacred of information, people's health data. But with careful planning and preparation we were able to transition billions of data points to a new system without losing any information. We acknowledge that changing systems can be challenging after so many years. So, we are thankful to our subscribers and their caregivers for the patience extended to us during the transition.



Research was also top of the agenda for MedicAlert in 2022. In fact, it was the first year in our 61-year history that MedicAlert embarked on research designed to understand the potential impact of the data we manage on behalf of Canadians. Two critical peer-reviewed research endeavours were completed in 2022.

The first, in partnership with the University of Guelph, was to identify the public value of our service. What we uncovered was nothing short of remarkable. In some cases, we were able to quantify our impact. This was true of our focus population – those living with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia. For every dollar MedicAlert spends on helping to serve those living with this condition, we return \$9.03 of social impact to our collective communities. That is one of the most significant returns on investment in the charitable community. We could not be prouder of this accomplishment.

The second was our research work with the School of Public Health at the University of Waterloo. As the organization that manages Canada’s National Wandering Registry, MedicAlert’s research focused on those living with dementia. This peer reviewed study revealed a litany of significant details about wandering behaviour in those living with dementia. From times of year where wandering is more prevalent to the mean time to first wandering instance, not only is this the first-of-its-kind of research in Canada, but it is also the first-of-its-kind in the world. As we continue our work with the University of Waterloo, our goal is to be able to provide care partners with the best information possible as well as the necessary tools to keep their loved one safe and reduce the number of wandering incidents across the country.

Continuing our innovation theme, our Programs team spent months delving into our work with children through our No Child Without Program®. Research taught us that despite the advancements school boards across Canada have made to develop safe and inclusive classrooms, parents of children with complex health needs are still fearful of sending their child to school in case an emergency arises. That’s where Students Assisting Friends Everywhere, or S.A.F.E., comes in. S.A.F.E. is brand new curriculum for children from junior kindergarten to grade six that gives them the tools they need to self-advocate and help peers understand and empathize. It also helps support teachers to adopt more inclusive approaches in the classroom.

While we are best known for our iconic bracelets, what we truly emphasized in 2022, is that the bracelet is just the beginning. Someone’s time of need isn’t always when an ambulance is called. MedicAlert’s data-rich environment is the key to unlocking innovative ideas, programs and services that can assist Canadians living with chronic health conditions at multiple points in their health journey. We are grateful to all who helped us unlock this potential and look forward to an exciting future.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Blair Bigham".

Blair Bigham
Chair, Board of Directors



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leslie McGill".

Leslie McGill
President & CEO

A Year of Investment - Project CIRCE

Digital transformation means different things to different organizations. For MedicAlert it meant the complete overhaul of all our technological systems – 13 of them, to be exact. The primary goals of this major investment were to ensure compliance with evolving privacy legislation across the country, to safeguard our subscribers' health information against ever-increasingly sophisticated cyber attacks, and to prepare ourselves for the major evolution of Canada's 9-1-1 system coming in the next few years.

The undertaking was significant with preparation taking nearly two years before the actual technology development took place. But the benefits to doing this critical work have been significant.

"This is the first significant rework of our technology systems in nearly 20 years," notes Clint Kimchand, Vice President of Operations. "We've been able to take advantage of the significant advances in technology infrastructure that have occurred over the past two decades. Today, we are operating on some of the most-cutting edge IT platforms. We have also built our system to ensure that we can continue to modernize it and add to it as new and important technologies emerge."

It's not often that we think of charities as needing sophisticated technology systems. However, given that MedicAlert manages one of the largest health information databases in Canada, collects hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations every year, runs a retail operation and a subscription service not to mention programs and research initiatives, it becomes easier to understand why investment in technology is critical.



“The majority of our technology transformation was funded through the generosity of our donors,” says President and CEO, Leslie McGill. “When we come out each year with our various fundraising campaigns, we always ensure people can direct their donation to a specific program or to provide a gift to support our greatest needs. In the past few years, our greatest need has been to fund the technology that allows us to continue our services to subscribers. We could not be more grateful for people’s generosity. Without those gifts, our options would have been limited.”

Where will MedicAlert take this technology investment in the next few years?

“We’re just beginning to explore the potential of this new system,” says Dr. Stefanie Tan, MedicAlert’s Associate Vice President of Research, Innovation and Programs. “For instance, creating a modern data structure has facilitated groundbreaking research in Alzheimer’s and dementia wandering. In turn, the research findings are being translated into new products and services for our subscribers. Prior to our digital transformation, this would not have been possible.”

While technology infrastructure may not be exciting, it is essential to the work we do at MedicAlert, and foundational to helping to protect lives in a health emergency. It also opens the possibility of expanding the kinds of services we offer where there are gaps in the healthcare and emergency response system.

“We are used to high tech evolution in the consumer space,” says McGill. “In health care and emergency response the advances have been slower. So, what people think is in place, may not necessarily be the case. It’s always been our mission to provide high quality health information at a time of need. How we do it is evolving and what is defined as a time of need is changing. We want to be at the forefront of this discussion, and investing in our technology is going to ensure that we are.”



A gift to herself and a gift to others: Sarah's story

Look past the purple hair, the peacocks, and the pigs in her backyard farm as she calls it, and you will find a respected Canadian military veteran who wears her MedicAlert ID as proudly as she wears any service medal.

Her name is Sarah.

Sarah first became a MedicAlert subscriber nearly 20 years ago. Then, in 2006, as Sarah was in the midst of pre-deployment training, she had a horrific accident. Wearing full military gear – an extra 80 pounds added to her relatively small frame – she jumped off the back of a truck. As she landed, she crushed her spine and her hips. In an instant, her military career was over, but her journey to recovery was just beginning.

After multiple surgeries, gains and setbacks, Sarah was ultimately diagnosed with Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS). POTS is a form of dysautonomia — a disorder of the autonomic nervous system typically caused by trauma. This branch of the nervous system regulates functions we don't consciously control, such as heart rate, blood pressure, sweating and body temperature. The key characteristics of POTS are the specific symptoms and the exaggerated increase in heart rate when standing. Sarah can collapse at any time and is at greater risk of a heart attack or stroke.



POTS can be life changing. It certainly was for Sarah. A single mom with a young son on the autism spectrum, Sarah faced more than health challenges. She faced a battery of worries. One of the biggest risks for people with POTS is falls due to fainting. Sarah was concerned about this because she wasn't sure who would be her voice if she happened to fall and hurt herself and was unable to speak.

It was Apollo, her 125 pound German Sheppard service dog, and MedicAlert to the rescue.

"I had a choice after my accident," says Sarah. "I could be bitter, or I could be better. I chose better."

Sarah likes to call herself a walking billboard. "I always have my MedicAlert ID on my wrist. I never take it off even in the shower where I am at a higher risk of collapsing since higher temperatures affect my condition. I also made a pouch for Apollo that he wears all the time. It says, 'my owner's MedicAlert information is inside' and that's where I put my wallet card that has all the details of my health conditions. I even had a dog tag made for Apollo that says that I am a MedicAlert subscriber. There is no way any first responder can miss this information! It's helped me on so many occasions."

Sarah's passion for MedicAlert and the peace-of-mind it gives to her has spilled over into other areas of her life. She teaches first aid and ensures that all her students are aware of MedicAlert and the need to look for a MedicAlert ID when they are checking someone's pulse.

She also is an active volunteer in her community of Kemptville, about 30 minutes south of Ottawa and has made MedicAlert part of her initiatives.

"I give suitcases to Children's Aid for kids moving into foster care," she says. "They suitcases give the kids a bit more dignity than the garbage bags that they usually use to take their belongings to their new homes. I fill the suitcases with little comforts like colouring books or teddy bears, and the necessities like toothbrushes, toothpaste, towels and, of course, MedicAlert."

Sarah's even collaborating with a friend to build something called the Invisible Injuries and Illness Initiative (Four Is for short). "To look at me, or other people with illnesses you can't see, it's hard for people to really understand the challenges we overcome on a daily basis. A lot of time people don't believe you, and they treat you differently. By helping spread awareness, my hope is to help create more empathy for people with invisible conditions. MedicAlert is one of the tools that helps us in this work."

For Sarah, having MedicAlert is a must. She notes that people who have health conditions can't afford to live with "what ifs."

"I'm not sure if people truly understand how affordable it is. When it comes to your health and well-being it is money well spent.

And for those who truly can't afford it, Sarah's philosophy is to pay it forward. "Every time I call to update my health information or renew my service, I donate so that someone else can have the benefit of MedicAlert. You will not find a subscriber that would not say it hasn't saved their life at some point. So, I think everyone should be able to have it."



Subscriber Story

Finding Security and Peace of Mind with MedicAlert: Joan's Journey

When Joan's husband Frank was diagnosed with dementia in 2006, her world took an unexpected turn. Unsure of what to expect from Frank's diagnosis, Joan sought guidance and support from the Alzheimer's Society. It was through her Alzheimer support group, she learned about MedicAlert, which she viewed as 'an insurance policy' for the future.

As Frank's dementia progressed, he began to wander. The unpredictability of these incidents left Joan in a state of panic, comparing it to the feeling of losing a child. "There's no warning—all of a sudden, he would be at home and the next minute, he was gone. It was the worst feeling. I didn't know what to do and where to begin," Joan explained.

One time, it became apparent just how crucial and lifesaving having a MedicAlert subscription was. Unbeknownst to Joan, Frank decided to drive from their hometown in Coboconk, Ontario to Toronto to visit their daughter. No one knew where he was, and concern gave way to fear. Joan reached out to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), providing them with her husband's MedicAlert ID number. Thankfully, the OPP was able to find him and bring him back home safely.

Joan realized that having MedicAlert was much more than an insurance policy. "MedicAlert provided me with peace of mind and a vital lifeline in a time of uncertainty. It was really reassuring, knowing that MedicAlert was here to help me," Joan expressed with gratitude.

Joan's experience led her to be an advocate for MedicAlert. She's recommended MedicAlert to friends, family, her Alzheimer's support groups and community, highlighting the importance of having a safety net in place.

Her dedication to advocating for MedicAlert has had a positive impact on many people. In particular, Joan recalls a fellow caregiver, who was concerned about her own husband's wandering. She followed Joan's advice and subscribed her husband to MedicAlert's Safe & Found Program. The woman was elated to learn about the invaluable protection having MedicAlert provided. "She had a sense of comfort knowing she has support if her husband wanders," Joan proudly stated.



Despite the emotional weight of her journey, Joan's experience with dementia and MedicAlert allows her to offer empathy and support to other caregivers. "I know what they're going through. If I can be an ear and provide recommendations to help make their lives easier, such as subscribing to MedicAlert, then I've done my job." MedicAlert subscriber. There is no way any first responder can miss this information! It's helped me on so many occasions."

S.A.F.E. Program

When a parent says goodbye to their child at the school gate, there is always a small sense of “what if?”. Will they be safe, understood, and supported during the day? Will they come bouncing out at the end of the day, healthy, happy and full of confidence?

For parents with children who have special needs or live with medical conditions, concerns loom much larger. In speaking with parents, we learned that having MedicAlert is not always enough to ensure the safety, wellness, and inclusion of their children. That’s why we created Students Assisting Friends Everywhere (S.A.F.E.).

Launched in March 2023, S.A.F.E. is a comprehensive curriculum for elementary schools in Ontario, developed in partnership with the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea), the organization responsible for designing the province’s health-based curriculum. It is part of MedicAlert’s No Child Without Program that has been protecting children from across Canada since 2008.

S.A.F.E. is designed to promote a safe and inclusive learning environment within the classroom, and addresses topics of belonging, physical and emotional safety (including mental health and social-emotional learning) and awareness of prevalent medical conditions that affect students.

To ensure we were on the right track, we began with an environmental scan of existing school-based resources to determine where gaps in topics and themes existed, and where content connections could be made. Once the concept of S.A.F.E. was solidified, focus groups with teachers, principals and parents were held to better inform the concept and resource development.



As of August 2023, 25% of Ontario’s 82 school boards have agreed to adopt S.A.F.E., as well as share the benefits of MedicAlert’s No Child Without Program with parents so they understand that they don’t have to navigate the uncertainties of managing their child’s health condition when they are away from home in a setting that can create different challenges.

Without the generous support of our donors, we would not have been able to make S.A.F.E. happen. Donor dollars not only funded the curriculum development, but also provide the ongoing funds for a dedicated program coordinator who ensures more schools get involved and more families are aware of resources available that go beyond what the school system is able to provide. When a child is in a S.A.F.E. school, parents can rest assured that teachers and students will instantly recognize a MedicAlert ID, know how to ask their friend how they can help, get a teacher when needed or simply ensure their friend is included and living their fullest experience in the classroom.

Our goal is to make S.A.F.E. available in every province over the next five years. Donor support will help make this a reality!

The 2022 MedicAlert Board of Directors

Officers of the Corporation

Dr. Blair Bigham – Chair

Leslie Quinton – Vice Chair

Alex MacBeath – Treasurer & Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Leslie McGill – Corporate Secretary, President & CEO (*ex-officio*)

Directors

Douglas Craig – Past Chair of the Board

Dr. Catherine Boivie – Chair, Digital Transformation Committee

Dr. Lisa Chillingworth-Watson – Director

Jonathan Game – Director

Danny Lew – Chair, Human Resources Committee (March to December)

Edward Odumodu – Director

Isabelle Oliva – Chair, Human Resources Committee (Jan/Feb)

Ruth Ramsden-Wood – Chair, Fundraising Committee

Sara Jane Snook – Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee

Dr. Ahmad Zbib – Director

Mission, Vision and Values

MISSION

To put every Canadian in a position to benefit from high-quality health information at time of need.

VISION

A world where no one is alone in their time of need.

VALUES

EXCELLENCE - We were founded to save lives and are responsible for excellence in everything we do. We believe in personal accountability and confidently taking bold actions to achieve our mission.

COLLABORATION - We multiply our social contribution through collaboration. We learn and innovate by listening to our members, health practitioners, first responders and other key partners. We pro-actively cooperate with all stakeholders because we know that together we can achieve more, faster.

KINDNESS - We are respectful, caring, considerate and friendly – striving to walk in the shoes of those we serve to make a difference every day.

DEDICATION - We are passionate about the important work we do. Integrity, initiative, professionalism and enthusiasm characterize the way we deliver our services. We take pride and satisfaction in the quality of what we do and offer.

TRUSTWORTHINESS - We are honest, reliable and dependable. Our clients can always count on us to follow through and to achieve positive outcomes.



+1 800-668-1507 | Local: 416.696.0267 | 895 Don Mills Road, Building #2, Suite #405, Toronto, ON M3C 1W3
Charitable Registration No. 10686 3293 RR0001