

Meet Dr. Donahue

By Staci Rae

In celebration of International Women's Day, we wanted to feature a local woman who is making a difference in a STEM-related field, areas of study that have historically been much more male-dominated. Let me introduce you to Dr. Paula Donahue, a general internist and Medical Director of the Chemotherapy Unit at STEGH from its inception in 1986 until her (semi) retirement in October of last year.

Dr. Donahue is no stranger to making her way in a male-dominated world: Her graduating class in medical school was only 20 percent female – low by today's standards, but that was actually higher than the female contingent in the previous year's class. Upon graduating and receiving her speciality in internal medicine, Dr. Donahue became the first female general internist to get her speciality in London. "It was an old boys' club," she says.

Dr. Donahue was asked to take the helm of the new cancer care clinic at St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital when it was set to open its doors, and it's clear that she was the perfect choice to run the clinic. "I have the personality for it. It doesn't scare me. I don't get depressed by it. I don't fear death," she says. She was up for the challenge, too: "I liked doing varied things. It's very interesting from a medical standpoint. It just suits me."

Perhaps the most rewarding part of running the unit for so long was the chance to really connect with people at their



Dr. Donahue (centre) and the Chemotherapy Unit team

"It is a serious privilege in life to get to know people, getting to know things about their lives."

most vulnerable: "It is a serious privilege in life to get to know people, getting to know things about their lives. You learn so much about human beings [caring for people with cancer] – how they cope, for example, how they surface from terrifying things."

Dr. Donahue is quick to point out that one of the other reasons for the satisfaction she received from her job for so many years is the rapport she formed with her team of nurses. "It just now struck me that we were all female in that unit," she says. "We fit together very well." Raising two young children while running the clinic wasn't easy, but it was this co-operation among her team that made it possible. When her husband brought their babies to the hospital so Paula could nurse them, the nurses didn't bat an eyelash. "Those were early days for doing those sorts of things," she says, "But the co-operation amongst a bunch of women who understand [made it possible]. We all knew what it felt like. We co-operated perfectly. I think this was an advantage of being women. If you needed to go home, you went home. Somebody covered. Somebody would pick up the pieces somehow."

Now there are four doctors working in the unit, and Dr. Donahue has stepped away from her role – mostly. "Four is enough. They can cover it. I decided to step out and let them run it their own way." Dr. Donahue still maintains her privileges at STEGH, however, and has offered to step in whenever the unit needs someone to cover them.

In addition to being an accomplished physician, Dr. Donahue is the mother of two grown children, a daughter who works in theatre technology in Toronto, and a son who lives in London and works as a programmer.

JACKPOT CITY
GAMING ENTERTAINMENT
ST. THOMAS

140 Edward Street
St. Thomas, Ontario
519-633-1984

www.jackpotcitygaming.ca

Download the "Jackpot City" App for Android or iPhone

Like Us on Facebook

Play Smart

GOOD FUN - GOOD GAMES - GOOD DRINKS - GOOD FOOD - GOOD ENTERTAINMENT

Must be 19 years of age or older to be served alcohol. Government issued photo identification may be required.