

The first **SASHA BELLA AWARD FOR INTERPROFESIONAL EXCELLENCE IN FAMILY-CENTRED CARE** is awarded to SickKids and Labatt Family Heart Centre social worker Ruta Niedra, MSW, RSW, currently on Transplant.

For the Giroux Family, "It's the simple things in life that truly make a difference and Ruta manages to instinctively hone in on the things that are important to every family (and we are all so different in so many ways that I don't know how she does it!)... Ruta has an incredible gift to be able to make every family feel special."

To a colleague, "Ruta is one of those unique people who can bring together the family and the medical team, making sure the conversation stays focused on the needs of the child. She is deeply trusted and valued by all ... and an invaluable resource to medical and nursing staff in the Cardiac Critical Care Unit. I have never seen Ruta ... decline to become deeply and personally involved. She exemplifies the highest level of professionalism in the way she provides empathy and advocacy while remaining grounded."

Another colleague shares that "Ruta Niedra is one of the most dedicated health professionals I have ever had the pleasure to work with in my thirty five years at the Hospital for Sick Children... Ruta goes far beyond her job description, for each and every family she works with, always finding and reinforcing their resilience and strengths...being paged by everyone, because everyone knows one can always count on her ... Often here late at night, coordinating support letters or hotel rooms ... and arranging transfers to out of town hospitals or homes. And Ruta is an incredibly generous mentor ... I have learned more from Ruta than from many of my past supervisors."

A third colleague: "As I enter my 15th year of work in the Heart Centre, I can think of few individuals who have been such a consistent presence in the lives of our patients and their families. Ruta is a "go-to" person ... and she supports staff just as compassionately as our patients and families.

A mom: "[my daughter] is a 16 year old who has had 2 heart transplants and 1 kidney transplant. When we arrived in February 1994, she was in ICU on a ventilator fighting for her life. I was going through a separation. Ruta was there to support me through HARD times. She helped me emotionally, to sort out financial matters, and she continued to help us through the years. Ruta devotes herself to her patients."

Congratulations Ruta!