

Grateful cardiac patient returns to the Institute after winning

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- Syd Gravel

Looking at Syd now, it is tough to imagine that just four years ago he was lying in a hospital bed, recovering from open heart surgery that had repaired a dangerously large aneurysm.

The operation required inserting a carbon fibre artery to replace his damaged upper aortic artery. His surgery was a tremendous success thanks to the Ottawa Heart Institute's surgeon, Dr. Munir Boodhwani and his team.



Top & bottom: The Gravels present a \$5,000 donation to the Foundation. Dr. Munir Boodhwani, Judy, Syd and Nurse Kathryn McLean meet again at the Institute celebrating wins and great health.

Syd, now at 71, has since gone on to win a Gold Medal in Powerlifting at the Police-Fire Can-Am Games in 2022, and a Silver Medal for Canada in Bench Press and Deadlift at the Police-Fire World Games in 2023.

He got to show off his prize medals to Dr. Munir Boodhwani during his recent visit back to the Institute, along with his spouse Judy, who is also a record holding Canadian powerlifting champion at 73 years of age.

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Eight months after surgery, he was able to return to the sport he loved – competitive powerlifting.

Almost two years later, Syd finished a 10-hour powerlifting marathon, during which time he lifted 111,600 lbs. This incredible effort raised \$5,000 for the Heart Institute.

And since then, he has performed many “strongman” feats in public.

Such as, pulling ambulances, old cars and tractors often as part of a local hospital fundraisers.

Syd shares, “Determining one’s own path to recovery is important. It has to be their own personal journey. The best we can offer someone going through such a journey is not what we think they should do, but what support we can offer for them to succeed. That’s what Dr. Boodhwani and his team did for me.”

The future is looking bright for this cardiac patient, as he is now training for the Can-Am Games in 2024 and the World Games in 2025.

Sylvio (Syd) A. Gravel, M.O.M.

Author of: 56 Seconds, How to Survive PTSD and Build Peer Support, and co-author of, Walk the Talk, and Slay the Toxic Dragon and recipient of the Order of Ottawa.