

Building for the Future

Community Updates



The Cowell Family

The Cowell Family POWERS UP Health Care in Richmond



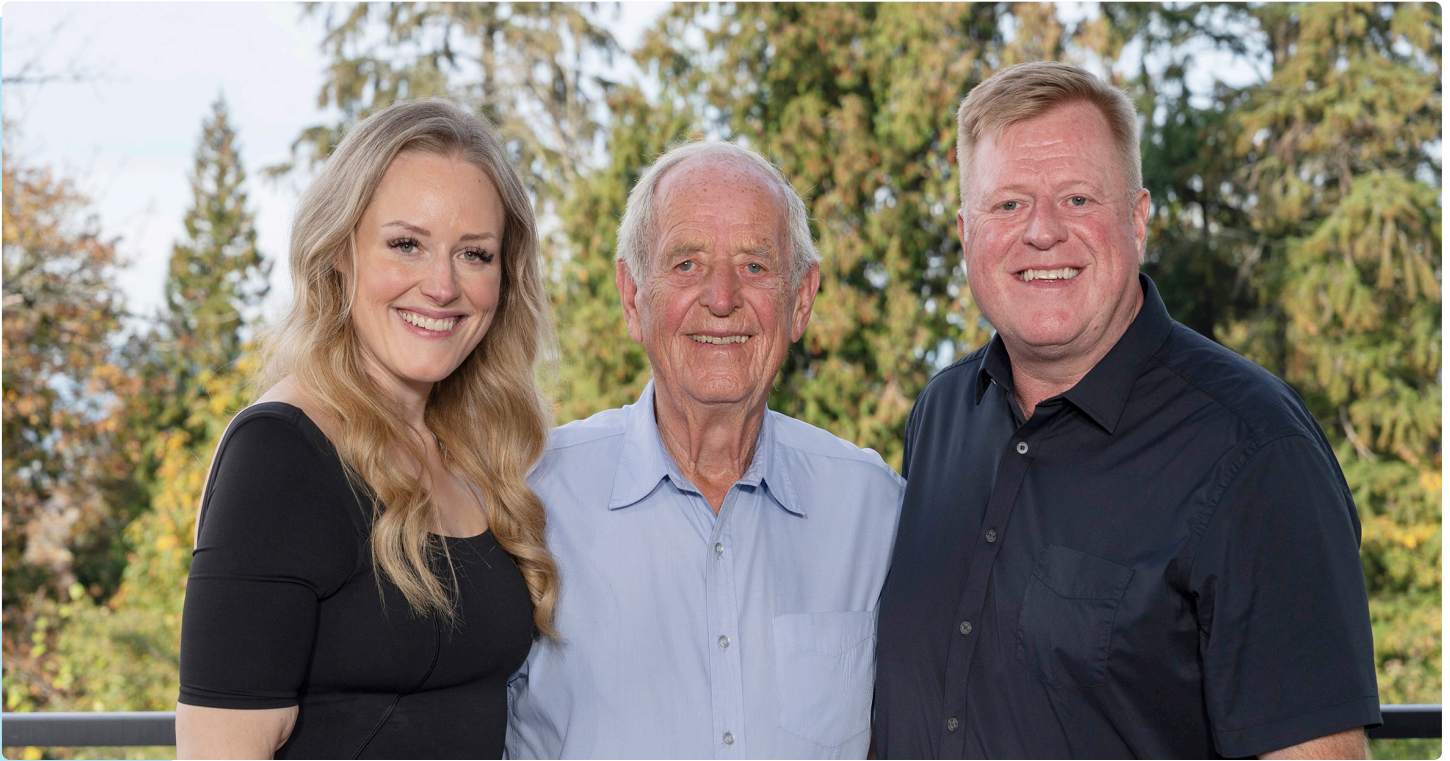
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Joyful Giving. Joyful Living.



May 2025

The Cowell Family POWERS UP Health Care in Richmond



From left to right: Kate Turnbull, Gary Cowell and Ryan Cowell

Father, business leader, and community-minded philanthropist, Gary Cowell has always been about working together and putting the people and the community first.

Upon graduating from the University of British Columbia, Gary started his career with a global technology business and spent time abroad in Europe, the United States, and all over Canada. But his affection for and connection with the Lower Mainland led him to the decision to root down in the place he valued most and build something of his own.

Gary opened the city's first Volkswagen car dealership on Westminster Highway just east of Number 3 Road. It was a one-car showroom with five service bays. The business began with one parts person, two service people and two salespeople. Then as the demand and population in Richmond grew, he went on to acquire the house next door to further grow the dealership.

But Gary knew bringing different dealerships together to work with each other would be far more constructive and customer-friendly and in 1985, Cowell Motors became a founding dealership at the Richmond Auto Mall—the first of its kind in Canada.

In the early 1990s, Gary's two sons—Rand and Ryan—joined the family business; and by the time his daughter—Kate—joined them, Cowell Motors had become known as the Cowell Auto Group. They expanded to sell not only Volkswagen vehicles, but also Audi, Land Rover and Jaguar. In 2021, after 54 years in automotive retailing, the Cowell family sold the business. At the time of sale, Cowell Auto Group was the longest running, consecutively-owned family automotive dealership in the Lower Mainland.

For Gary and the Cowell family, that legacy of foresight and leadership extends beyond the automotive business.

Strengthening their community and its people by improving the quality of and access to health care was equally important. Gary's travels around the world and exposure to different cultures instilled a strong sense of community spirit in him and reinforced his appreciation for the significance of supporting his own.

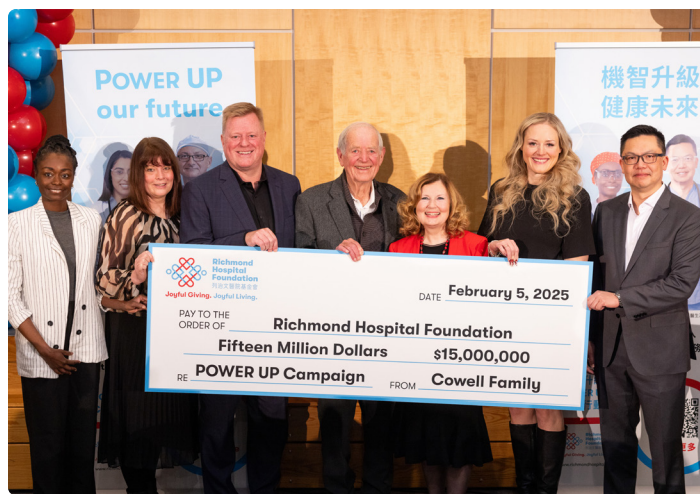
"Richmond is a community of family-oriented people who are close-knit," says Gary. "I want to recognize and support the basis from which my family and business thrived, and the best way I knew to do so was through enhancing health care for the families here. The Richmond Hospital and the valuable community health programs in Richmond greatly benefit the people and neighbouring communities."

Over the years, the family, along with their staff and their families, have received care at Richmond Hospital. Gary understands firsthand the importance of quality and responsive medical care and its profound impact on people's lives. He firmly believes that hospitals and their expert health care teams depend on community donations to ensure that equipment and innovative programs meet the evolving needs of patient care.

Gary Cowell and his family have long been committed to philanthropy and health care in Richmond.

"Supporting health care benefits everyone. We, my children and I, want to give back to the community in a way that would positively impact the people who live here," he says.

Most recently, their family continued their personal philanthropy with a \$15 million donation to launch Richmond Hospital Foundation's \$40 million POWER UP Campaign for the Yurkovich Family Pavilion, the new acute care tower at Richmond Hospital.



Cheque presentation with Cowell family and members of Richmond Hospital leadership and Richmond Hospital Foundation

Their donation will help provide more access and efficient, patient-centred care through technological efficiencies and advancements, including in the Emergency Department and Operating Rooms. "Our family is proud to make this donation as our way of saying thank you to all our past clients and staff," says Gary. "Our success in the automotive industry is due in large part to our hard-working staff and loyal customers from Richmond, and neighbouring communities. We hope other community-minded businesses and families who feel as we do will be encouraged to give, too. What better way to express our appreciation than to support a health care facility that will have a lasting impact on the entire community."

Enhancements and improvements in health care are only made possible thanks to the generous support of donors.



Scan QR code to learn more about the **POWER UP Campaign**

For Her Family and Yours, A Legacy Built on Love



“I opened my eyes, felt pain sear through my body, and couldn’t move. I was bed-bound—helpless.” That’s Lily Li’s first memory after waking from a coma following a devastating car accident in 2011.

As the eldest child in a modest family, Lily had always led with strength—working from a young age to support her parents, younger siblings, and later, her own children. The accident changed everything. It took her much persistence and determination to regain her mobility, relearning how to walk one step at a time.

As she found her way back to health, Lily’s world was shaken again. Shortly after their wedding anniversary, her late-husband, Derek, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She still remembers the extraordinary compassion shown by Dr. John Yun and the team at Richmond Hospital’s Cancer Care Clinic.

“Watching Derek suffer was heartbreaking,” she shares. “But the care team gave us moments of peace in his final days—time I will always treasure.”

In Derek’s memory, Lily donated all the condolence gifts to Richmond Hospital Foundation.

Years later, when it came time to plan her estate, Lily knew her first priority was to protect her children’s future. With the guidance of her financial advisor, she created an alter ego trust—a flexible estate plan that ensures her children are cared for while allowing her to extend her values beyond her lifetime.

Part of that trust includes a legacy gift to Richmond Hospital Foundation.

“Family has always been everything to me,” Lily says. “But over time, I realized we’re all part of a bigger family—our community. Giving back to the place that gave us care and dignity is the least I can do.”

Lily’s gift ensures that generations of families—just like hers—will continue to receive compassionate care when they need it most.

If you are interested in exploring how to create a lasting legacy, Endora Fan would be pleased to speak with you. She can be reached at legacy@richmondhospitalfoundation.com or 604.244.5473.



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