

## Pediatric leaps and bounds

LAUREN KRAMER

In every community, there are folks who frequently capture the spotlight for their work while others quietly get things done behind the scenes. In our Kibitz & Schmooze profile, we try to highlight members of our community who are doing admirable and mention-worthy work out of view of the general public. If you know of profile subjects who fit this description, please email [laurenkramer@sbaw.ca](mailto:laurenkramer@sbaw.ca).

We all love a quick turnaround, but when it involves a transition from illness to health, it's especially meaningful. That's one of the things Erik Swartz loves about his career as a pediatrician at Richmond Hospital, where he attends complicated deliveries, looks after preemies in the neonatal intensive care unit and sees outpatients at the Child Health Centre. "Children get sick very quickly, but they also recover very quickly," he notes quietly. "It's very gratifying, as a doctor, to see how quickly their health improves."

Swartz, 43, is a homegrown Vancouverite who attended Vancouver Talmud Torah, Eric Hamber Sec-

ondary and then studied pharmacology and medicine at the University of British Columbia. After graduating, he specialized in pediatricians in Edmonton and worked in that city until 2008.

It was a great time, he recalls wistfully. "Our friends there were like family, and the training I got there, the professional environment, was wonderful."

Swartz, always one to say an enthusiastic "yes!" when opportunity comes a-knocking, also had a weekly segment on Edmonton's *Global Morning News*, where he'd answer questions from parents worried about their kids' health. "For awhile, I was a C-list celebrity," he says with a laugh.

Family ties and a great job opportunity enticed him back to Vancouver, where he remains today with his wife and two daughters. At work, he wears a number of different hats. When he's not at Rich-



Erik Swartz

mond Hospital, you'll find him at B.C. Children's, where he works in the pediatric emergency department and attends inpatients at the clinical teaching units. He also heads pediatricians for Vancouver Coastal Health and Providence Health Care, a position that involves overseeing physicians in a wide geographic area —

from Lions Gate and St. Paul's hospitals to clinics further afield in Powell River and Bella Coola. "If a child comes into a hospital in Sechelt and there are issues, we troubleshoot what happened from an administrative point of view," he explains.

There are "big picture" guys and "small picture" guys in every field, but Swartz is both. He helped bring the Pediatric Early Warning System, PEWS, to the Richmond Hospital emergency room a few years ago. Children admitted to the hospital receive a PEWS score, which determines the level of monitoring and care they'll need. "It's our attempt at figuring out which children are going to deteriorate before that happens, so we can mitigate the risk," he explains. Swartz and his team were the first to use PEWS successfully in an ER setting in British Columbia and, possibly, in all of Canada.

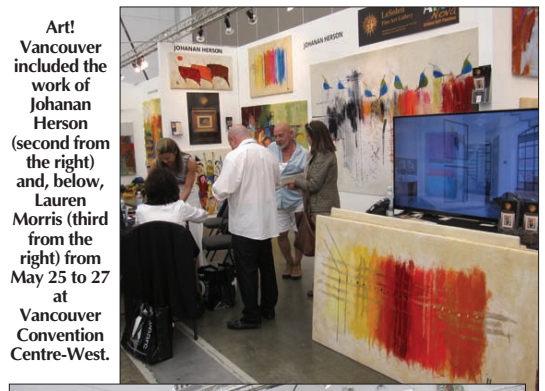
"In a hospital that is not used to looking after many children, the PEWS score is a number that clearly identifies how sick that kid is," he notes. "We assessed the confidence and knowledge levels of staff before we introduced PEWS and reassessed them after its introduction and, by comparing those results, we can see it's been a wild success. Because of that, the whole province is wanting to introduce it."

Swartz's work is his passion, and his dedication to improving care on a systemic level is remarkable. He decompresses from his days training for half-marathons, but says his life is filled with "aha moments" that make everything seem purposeful and worthwhile. "I'm often called out in the middle of the night when a baby is born with a low heart rate and isn't breathing," he reflects. "To do the appropriate things in five to 10 minutes and see the improvements, you feel really satisfied that a few minutes of your life changed the trajectory of another family's life forever." ■

Lauren Kramer, an award-winning writer and editor, lives in Richmond. To read her work online, visit [laurenkramer.net](http://laurenkramer.net).



Left: Artist Pnina Granirer signs copies of her book *Light Within the Shadows: An Artist's Memoir* at its May 25 launch at Lord Byng High School.



Art! Vancouver included the work of Johanan Herson (second from the right) and, below, Lauren Morris (third from the right) from May 25 to 27 at Vancouver Convention Centre-West.



Lior Noyman, left, Dan Cadassi and moderator Shula Klinger field questions from the audience after the June 5 screening of a documentary film capturing some of the memories Vancouverites have of the Six Day War.



Noam Vazana was joined by Itamar Erez (not seen in photo) at a Caravan World Rhythms performance at Frankie's Jazz Club June 7.

**BARD ON THE BEACH** SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL  
Season Sponsor **GOLDCORP** TICKETS FROM **\$21**

**Much Ado About Nothing**

RE/MAX

**The Winter's Tale**

VCCB

**The Merchant of Venice**

LONETREE

**The Two Gentlemen of Verona**

BlueShore

PLUS *Shylock* by Mark Leiren-Young

**On Stage Now!** Season Brochures at all outlets  
[bardonthebeach.org](http://bardonthebeach.org) • 604-739-0559