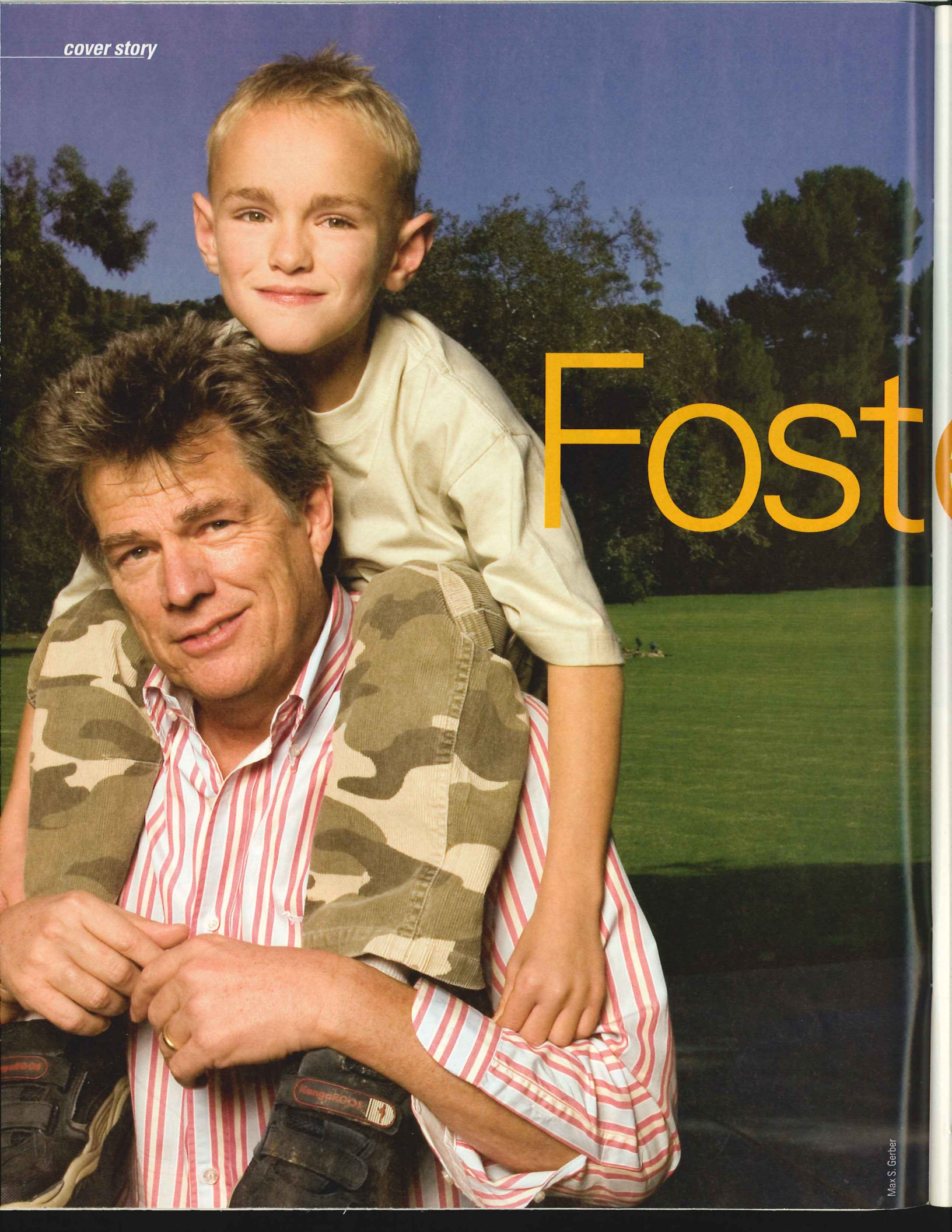


cover story

Foster



How a great pop
music producer found
the heart to help some
Okanagan little people
who needed a heart...
a kidney...a liver...

ering hope.

by Dona Sturmanis
with J. Paul Byrne & Karen Slivar

...and bless a few lucky
Valley residents with a
little night music,
with a little help from
his friends.

The fax chimes its arrival to the editorial department of *Okanagan Life*, landing with the familiar beep beep. I grab it and throw it in the editorial in basket – it's probably not important.

An upside-down view from behind the desk, however, reveals the upside down name "David Foster." This is not your routine facsimile.

I read on and learn that the brilliant music producer is coming to Kelowna to promote his David Foster Foundation, which helps the families of children who need organ transplants. In fact, the Foundation has spent \$3.5 million helping more than 214 families since it started in 1986, including more than 20 in the Okanagan. There is going to be a press conference at the Grand Okanagan during which Foster is going to meet some of the families and young organ recipients he's been helping.

Of course I'm thinking this requires more than routine coverage. In 1998, *Okanagan Life* ran a story about the Watson family from Vernon who were getting a kidney transplant for their child Tyler – a story so well-written and compassionate, it had ended up being reprinted in *Reader's Digest*. And then there is that realization that one of the world's great music producers is actually going to be within dialogue distance.... the kid from Victoria with music in his head who could tinkle the ivories, who headed to L.A. and became responsible for a good chunk of the popular music we've listened to since the early 70s. This is the man who has worked with some of the biggest acts of our time – Chicago, Celine Dion, Barbara Streisand – and Fostered some of the up-and-

comers such as vocalist Josh Groban (11 million records sold) and Vancouver's own Michael Bublé (3 million records sold). Foster is winner of 14 Grammy awards with 42 nominations and another four for Oscars.

He is a man proud to be from B.C. who returns to Victoria, his town of origin, on a regular basis to see his mom...he has the heart to help little people who need a heart...or a kidney...or a lung.

Of course, *Okanagan Life* publisher Paul Byrne is practically beside himself when I deliver the press release. He was very proud of "The Cleansing of Tyler" by Troy Berg in 1999, having devoted ten pages to it, so was naturally very interested in publishing another story about Foster's Foundation work. Paul is also a huge music fan and has considered Foster one of his heroes for the past 25 years.

A couple of hours later Paul has arranged for us to go to the Foster press conference at the Grand, and also to attend an upscale "awareness do" at Mission Hill Winery on the Westside. We will also have a private interview with the music man at the Grand prior to the press conference. >>>

Even enigmas give interviews in sweats. . .

Paul and I meet the Foundation's president Mike Ravenhill and board member Ian Tostenson in the lobby of the Grand Okanagan. David Foster is to meet us here as well.

Foster shows up in shorts, runners and a T-shirt, with a towel around his damp neck – he has been working out in the hotel's gym. It's good to know that even enigmas have to work up a sweat. He looks great – body trim and toned, face as boyish as ever, if perhaps a little fuller, signature dark hair now pleasantly peppered with silver.

"You don't mind if I do this in sweats, do you?" he asks us.

He could do this in a potato sack, I think to myself.

We have been granted a half-hour for our private interview with Foster, so we follow him to the suite where he is staying. It is a pleasant, typical Grand Okanagan suite, but certainly not as opulent as I would imagine someone like Foster being occupied by.

Foster needs a white shirt pressed for later in the evening. "Can we get this done here, or can I do it myself?" he asks Mike Ravenhill, who answers, "No problem. We'll get it done," and leaves the room to let us talk.

"I do press my own shirts, you know," says Foster, who settles into the couch and pleasantly regards us. I'd do it for him if he asked.

"I just have to make one phone call," he says. "I was watching the ticker tape in the gym and I saw that my friend Marvin Davis died. He is an oil billionaire from Colorado."

After speaking on the phone in soothing tones, Foster returns. "It's just a terrible situation. Davis has a 48-year-old daughter who expects to give birth to twins in the next couple of days..

They want me to play music at the funeral tomorrow. It's so sad, first he dies, then there's a funeral, and then she gives birth."

Marissa Baecker, *Okanagan Life* photographer, quietly enters the suite. The music legend begins to talk about how he first started the David Foster Foundation as Marissa shoots. >

Dona: What inspired the creation of the David Foster Foundation?

David: "It began with a great eye-opening moment in 1986. My mother had called me from Victoria and told me I should visit a little girl named Rachel Sharma from Vancouver, who had had a liver transplant, in a Los Angeles hospital. I asked her what she wanted more than anything in the world and she told me she wanted to see her sister.

"I paid for the \$300 airline ticket to fly out her sister. I saw the delight when they saw each other and the light went on. I wondered, what else don't they have? What else could I do?"

Foster has the precious moment on video but has never shown it to anyone.

Rachel died soon after her sister's visit.

Foster says he was really moved by the lengths families need to go to when their sick child goes on a transplant wait list.

"They move to be near the hospital where their child is. Often they have to quit their jobs and neither can work. They literally sell everything and go beyond zero. And then on top of that, the child suffers because of all the stress. And often, through

this, the families themselves break up.

"So you see, we found a giant hole in the system that the Foundation could fill in a beautiful way. Families in need could call us and we would pay the bills. That way, all they need to focus on is their child's well-being.

"The person they call is Lynne Mozley, the Foundation's only paid employee, who has been with us since the beginning, working out of the office which is in Victoria. She is mother, sister, father, and is on call day and night."

Dona: What is the purpose of this visit to Kelowna?

David: "Basically it is an awareness campaign for the work of the Foundation, but also to meet with the families we have helped in the Okanagan...to put faces to names. At first, 18 years ago, I knew all the families, but over time couldn't stay in touch because the numbers increased.

"Before Kelowna, I was in Abbotsford, Victoria and Prince George. It's been really great for me to sit with each and every one of the families.

Dona: How do you see the future of the Foundation?

David: "I wish we could spread our work across Canada instead of just B.C. We are starting a pilot program in Alberta. I could

see us going as far as Manitoba by the end of the decade."

Dona: How does the Foundation raise funds?

David: "I put on fundraisers. For example, I brought Andre Agassi and Dustin Hoffman to Victoria to play tennis. A few years ago, I also brought Julio Iglesias to Kelowna for a fundraiser.

"There is a good story attached to this. Julio and I were driving down some roads in the middle of nowhere in some orchards about 3 in the morning. Suddenly he had an urge to pick some fruit. So we stopped, jumped over a fence, raided an orchard and he really enjoyed it. I think they were apples....

"The costs at the Foundation used to be much higher because the patients had to travel so far to wait for their organ transplants such as Toronto and Pittsburg. Now the centres are much closer – Edmonton and Vancouver.

"It's very important to get the individual communities to help raise funds for their members who need this help."

> Mike Ravenhill of the Foundation comes back into the suite. "Sorry to interrupt David, but it's 3:17 and you have to meet the families at 3:30."

>>>



David Foster answers questions in his room at the Grand.

Foster with the local families. . .



Lynne Mozley (centre) greets Joyce Stowell and her two boys Colten and Jarod. Many of the families have referred to Mozley as "angel."

The side tables in the conference room at the Grand Okanagan are abundant with muffins, juices and coffee. Paul, Marissa and I enter, still star struck by our earlier encounter and impressed with Foster's approachability, as well as his genuine interest in the Foundation.

The only other media at this intimate event are Doris Furlot and a cameraman from CHBC, here to interview Foster and some of the families his foundation has helped for that evening's news. A few members and supporters of the David Foster Foundation are here as well as the families.

Lynne Mozley is present. She is the heart of the Foundation – a very pleasant blonde middle-aged woman with the permanent expression on her face of having spent many years being concerned with others.

"Sometimes a month will go by with no families calling, and sometimes there will be three in a week," she says. "Right now, there's a young lady in Toronto who's going to give

birth to a baby who needs a new heart."

Mozley's the one who gets the calls for financial help from the families of the children who need new organs. "When the family is in Toronto or Edmonton taking care of these children, they need money to buy groceries as well as entertainment such as going to a movie. We give it to them."

"I can't help not to be involved with these families," says Mozley. "I'm on the page 24/7 waiting for their calls."

The calls don't always come from the families to the Foundation. Sometimes they come from transplant coordinators at hospitals treating the young transplant patients.

Before her 18 years with the Foundation, Mozley owned a retail store, managed a curling centre, and was at one point a geological draftsman.

"I find this very rewarding," she says.

The Stowells, family of the late Carter, Lake Country

Joyce and Larry Stowell are here with their sons Colten, 10, Carter's twin, and Jarod, 6.

"Carter was always fun-loving, mischievous...he sounded like a chipmunk. He was sick two weeks before he was born...he needed a liver and bowel transplant," says Joyce.

"Carter was put on a transplant list," says Joyce. "Lynne did everything for us. There was no red tape."

For six years, the little boy had been hooked up to pumps and undergone numerous operations.

The family spent two months with Carter who was in a London, Ontario hospital waiting for his operation.

"Lynne from the Foundation phoned us. They seek you out it seems," says Larry Stowell, Carter's father.

The Foundation supplied financial support for whatever the family needed. The hospital

where Carter received his transplant had lots of other transplant patients and "nobody had anything like the David Foster Foundation," says Stowell.

"Even after the transplant, which took 17 hours, he had to have his spleen removed. He was still unable to eat."

Unfortunately, Carter passed away with his family by his side July 24, 2001, a day before his seventh birthday.

20-month-old Hannah Moore, daughter of Melissa, Kelowna

Hannah is a wee, dark-haired girl who looks like a porcelain doll. Her mother, Melissa, is only 19 years old, a single mother with a pale complexion and pleasant curve to her lips.

"We were sent out to Toronto when I was 35 weeks pregnant," she explains. "Hannah

>>>

Heart recipient Hannah (right) and a friend of the family (left).



Foster Foundation: Quick facts

The David Foster Foundation was founded in 1986 as a means to help the families of children needing organ transplants. It provides funding for non-medical expenses throughout the procedure, from initial assessments to postoperative check ups. The Foundation is a "last resort" organization helping those who have no other means of financial support to cover the non-medical expenses that arise when a child needs to be sent to transplant centres for assessment and surgery.

Here are just some of the services paid for by the Foundation:

Transportation to hospitals for assessment, surgery and postoperative care, often outside the province. Frequently when the donor is found the waiting child must be in surgery within hours. This means emergency flights for family members which are expensive.

Accommodation for families. This might entail lengthy stays for one or both parents and return trips for follow-up care. Meals, long distance calls and other expenses that may include mortgage/rent payments in some cases.

In addition, the Foundation provides liaison with agencies that provide counselling, childcare and other support services during this extremely stressful time.

In addition to financial support, the David Foster Foundation also provides emotional support to the families it helps.

Jarod and Colten Stowell.



had her heart transplant when she was two days old."

Hannah had been diagnosed with hypoplastic left heart syndrome before she was born.

"We spent seven months afterwards in Toronto for follow-up and there were no problems. The heart took well."

The Foundation paid for flights and food for both family and friends who came to support Melissa during this period.

"If I need anything now, I just call up Lynne," says Melissa. "They take care of everything. And Hannah's just awesome."

Sophia Pratico and family, Vernon

Little Sophia, with two major congenital heart defects, had to go to Toronto for her operation in December of 1999.

"She got her heart on Christmas Eve," says Sharon, her mother. "Nobody hands you a book and says this is how you are going to do it. Lynne was an absolute angel. She arranged flights, helped to pay our mortgage, helped when we were out there. And now pays for us to fly to Vancouver for follow-ups."

"Sophie, who will be six on October 2, has done amazingly well."

This couldn't be more obvious as the bespectacled little girl twirls around the room, laughing and leaping. She knows all of this is about her.

"It's very hard on the family," says Sharon. "Her father and I both had post-traumatic stress after it was all over. But we both look at her and we realize it was worth it. We wouldn't change a thing."

"It's an amazing foundation that has helped so many people."

Other young Okanagan organ recipients helped by the Foundation

Members of the late Dallas Sampert's family from Vernon were also present. We were so busy we didn't meet, but we reached Robin, Dallas's mother by phone two weeks later.

"It just happened like that," said Robin Sampert. Dallas was born with cystic fibrosis and one day in 1989 he was ill and in the hospital. Overnight, his liver started to bleed. Doctors operated but by the next day the liver shut down. Dallas was rushed to London, Ontario where he had two liver transplants. The first one didn't take.

The Foundation looked after all bills, food, airfare. They even arranged for a social worker. "Don't know what I'd done without them," says Sampert.

"They were fantastic. All you had to do was take care of your son."

Dallas passed away at age 22 of illness unrelated to liver transplant.

Unfortunately, Lynne Mozley cannot

contact Tyler and his family in time to invite them to meet David Foster.

There is a hushed flurry in the room: "David's coming."

He arrives, clad in black slacks and a primary blue shirt, tails out. He is jovial and relaxed. After a filmed interview with Doris Furlot for CHBC on the balcony above the foyer of the Grand, Foster enters the room and sits with each of the families, talking with them. He is clearly delighted to be here.



Heart recipient Sophia Pratico with her father.

Donations needed

Any donation will make a big difference and help us to continue our assistance to registered families. Cash, cheques, Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted at the Foundation office. Credit card donations can also be made online through the secure website at www.davidfosterfoundation.org. Donations are tax deductible and official tax receipts are issued.

Please call the David Foster Foundation office if you would like to make an annual donation, estate bequest or memorial gift and we will be pleased to assist with your choice.

Foundation contact information:

T: 250-475-1223

TF: 1-877-777-7675

F: 250-475-1193

140-3795 Carrey Road

Victoria, B.C. V8Z 6T8

www.davidfosterfoundation.org

Tyler: The youngest, smallest kidney transplant recipient in B.C. history



"The Cleansing of Tyler" by

Troy Berg appeared in the Fall 1998 issue of *Okanagan Life*.

"Two-year-old Tyler Watson is used to battling the odds," wrote Berg. Born with incurable kidney disease, their Vernon toddler has led a life fraught with pain, discomfort, constantly struggling to gain enough weight and strength to endure a life-saving kidney transplant, his only chance for long term survival."

On July 27, 1998, Tyler had his kidney transplant and became the youngest and smallest kidney transplant recipient in B.C.'s history.

Two-year old Tyler weighed 9.2 kilograms and fell short of the requisite 10 kilograms. The transplant donor was Tyler's dad, Corey Watson.

In March, 1996, before Tyler was born, doctors noticed that Tyler's urethra was blocked, preventing him from urinating. If left untreated, the kidney and bladder could dangerously enlarge so doctors relieved the bladder throughout the remainder of Renée Webber's pregnancy by passing a needle through her womb.

Premature birth was imminent. Tyler was born a month and a half early on July 4, 1996. Tests showed that Tyler's blocked urethra had caused cysts and deformities in his kidneys that were undeveloped and barely functioning.

Doctors inserted tubes into Tyler so he could undergo daily dialysis and feeding until he gained enough weight to be able to undergo a lifesaving kidney transplant.

Six weeks after receiving his transplant, Tyler underwent surgery to remove his dialysis and feeding tubes.

Today, Tyler is eight years old and doing "awesome," said mother Renée Webber. Like the body of all transplant recipients, Tyler's recognizes the transplant organ as a foreign body and his immune system fights against the transplant. He will be required to take anti-rejection medication the rest of his life.

This article went on to be printed in the *Reader's Digest*.

Troy Berg, the author, ran Odyssey Writing and Print Works, a professional copywriting, marketing and communications company in Kelowna, B.C.

— Karen Slivar

Tyler Watson, 8, and mother Renée Webber, October 28, 2004. "He's just awesome."



Max S. Gerber



Max S. Gerber



A little night music: Foster and friends **perform** **at Mission Hill** to promote Foundation awareness



Photos: Marissa Baecker

Clockwise from far left: David Foster performs his hits; Ian Tostenson presents Mission Hill's Anthony Von Mandel with a portrait of David Foster; Sophia Pratico speaks to the audience; Mayor Walter Gray and his wife with David Foster.

It is a magical, warm late September night with a very obvious moon presiding over a velvety Valley dusk. A few over 150 guests wander the stately grounds of Mission Hill Family Estate Winery, sipping wine and eating properly paired *hors'd oeuvres*. Many of those in attendance are influential local politicians including, of course, Kelowna mayor Walter Gray, MP Werner Schmidt, MLA Rick Thorpe, and MLA Sindi Hawkins, recently recovered from leukemia.

The dinner bell rings and we enter white tents to begin our dinner and watch the presentation. Between the promised performance by Foster and friends, the promised gourmet dinner prepared by Mission Hill's winery chef Michael Allemeier and staff, anticipation rides high.

The evening's presentation unfolds, as we begin to sip and sup. The emcee is the exuberant Linda Edgecombe.

Videos are shown highlighting Foster's career, the work of the Foundation, and Mission Hill Winery.

Mayor Gray says grace. It turns out that Gray's and Foster's fathers were friends during the dirty 30s in Victoria, Foster's city of origin.

Kelownian Ian Tostenson, Foster's longtime friend of 15 years, and organizer of this event, is also on the board of the Foundation. He gratefully thanks Anthony Von Mandel,

owner of the winery, for his gracious hosting of this evening, and then invites little Sophia Pratico to the stage. The young heart recipient is here with her family, as are the other families, from earlier in the afternoon, who have been helped by the Foundation. A large part of tonight's reason is to celebrate their fortitude and endurance.

Sophia Pratico tells Tostenson she wanted a hot dog for dinner, not the promised gourmet repast.

"So what did they give you?" asks Tostenson.

"A grilled cheese sandwich!" she chirps.

"It was better than chicken!"

The first performer is Greg Sibell, a new discovery of Foster's from Salmon Arm. "Don't play better than me, 'K?'" says Foster. This award-winning young man has composed a song about friendship for tonight's occasion, and accompanying himself on piano, he sings his tune in a delicious bluesy-jazzy fashion.

Foster, dapper in white shirt, black slacks and jacket, mounts the stage and makes a crack about wanting to buy a condo up at Predator Ridge, something for sure everyone in the Valley would be thrilled to see happen.

Emcee Edgecombe joins Foster to present a Yamaha keyboard to the Boys and Girls Club of Kelowna for their own use or to raffle. Paul and I smile at each other because earlier at the Grand Okanagan, Paul had suggested the Club

as an appropriate recipient. Foster plays a few bars of Aretha Franklin's "Respect" so Edgecombe can duet with him. She is delighted.

"I'd like you to move up closer to me," Foster announces to the audience as he settles in for his intimate performance. Paul leaves our table immediately and hugs another one close to the stage, sitting next to Sindi Hawkins.

His program is what might be termed a David Foster retrospective – a musical journey from the beginning. Foster really has been responsible for so many hits, major musical careers, and played with so many people, it boggles the mind. Yet, he is humble and thankful for all his success. It doesn't hurt to have a few good breaks, but it certainly helps to have a whole lot of talent.

For the next couple of hours, we are treated to a sweet musical sampling inspiring thoughts like "I didn't know that was your song" and "I remember that..." interspersed with extremely interesting tidbits involving encounters with the big names that anyone with a remote interest in pop music over the last 30 years promptly eat up. Anyone between 30 and 60 grew up on his stuff.

Remember the hit "Wildflower" from 1972? (She's a free and gentle child/ Let the rain fall down on her.) Foster wrote and performed that with his first wife BJ in a group called Skylark when he first moved to L.A.

While he was playing piano for the Rocky Horror Picture Show in Los Angeles, he got a call from George Harrison, who said, "I hear you're a pretty good piano player." Foster ended up playing on two of Harrison's albums and producing two of Paul McCartney's songs.

Remember this?" he chuckles as he tinkles the familiar theme from *The Young and the Restless*. "That was me." Of course, people joke about the series now as "The Old and the Listless."

Foster was the piano guy who played for Dolly Parton on her famous 1978 hit "Here You Come Again." He plays the familiar riff.

He won his first Grammy in 1979, for his work on Earth, Wind and Fire's "After the Love is Gone."

It is hard for Foster to replicate on piano the disco song "To Be Real" now repopularized by Mary J Blige. As the catchy song is sampled over the PA system, he tells us how much money it has made him over the last 25 years and calls it "vertical money for my ex-wife."

"Then in 1980 I become involved with the band Chicago. I'm 25. They're in a slump but have attitude. I tell them that we're going to write 13 new songs for their album. The songs they had were crap."

Among the new songs he wrote for them is the big hit "You're the Meaning of My Life." David plays an excerpt. He stayed with Chicago for three more albums, and was credited with turning their success around.

"Then I thought I was becoming a little too mainstream." The answer? Three albums with the Tubes, including the memorable "She's a Beauty/ One in a Million," which he plays a little of on the ivories.

A chunk of "Look What You've Done to Me" follows, demonstrating what he did with Boz Scaggs. "I sat there trying out one tune after another with him and he didn't like anything until he heard this. Then he jumped up and said, This is the one."

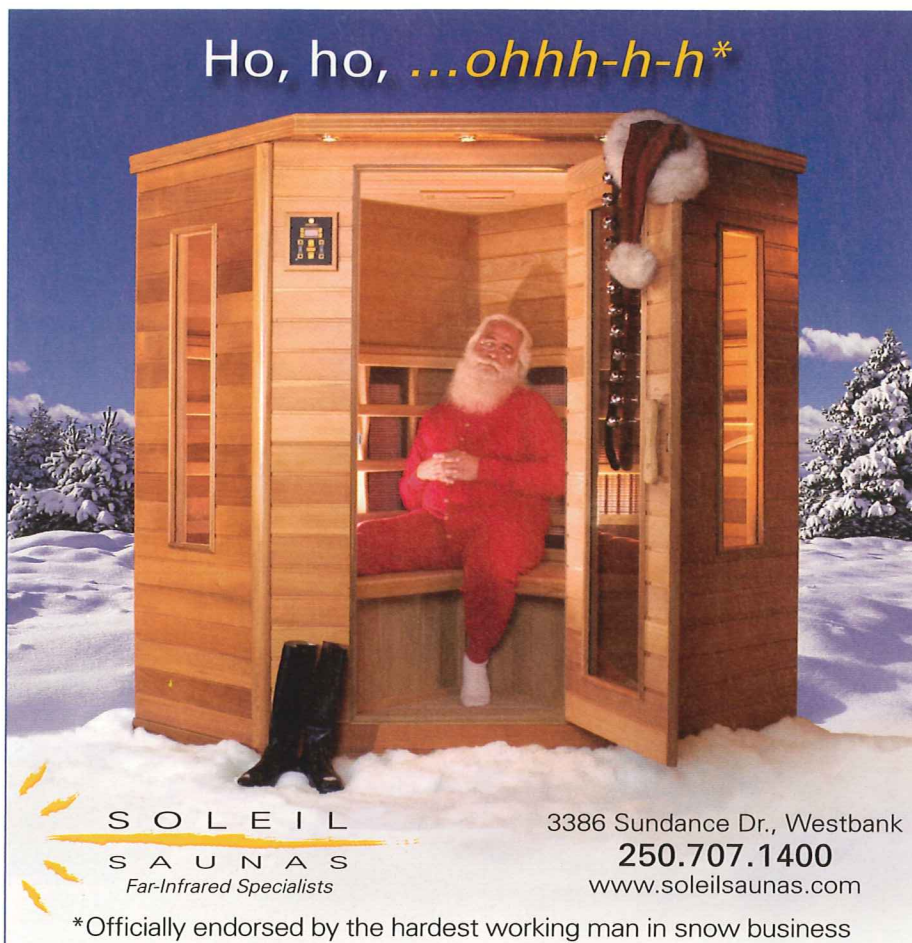
By this time in the evening, Foster is only at the early 80s part of his amazing career. He decides to speed it up by summarizing a little. He worked with Peter Cetera when he quit Chicago, and "with the three Kennys – Loggins, G and Rogers."

"Kenny Rogers and Sheena Easton fought like cats and dogs in the studio. I had to bring them in separately. Their song sounded like they were in love."

Diva Barbara Streisand wanted Foster to become involved with her Broadway album. Foster plays us an excerpt on the sound system from one of the selections. "She wanted something otherworldly." It is a little out of this world.

Foster relates how he took a song up to Streisand's house and was met at the door by Liz Taylor. "Well, hi," she said, and ushered

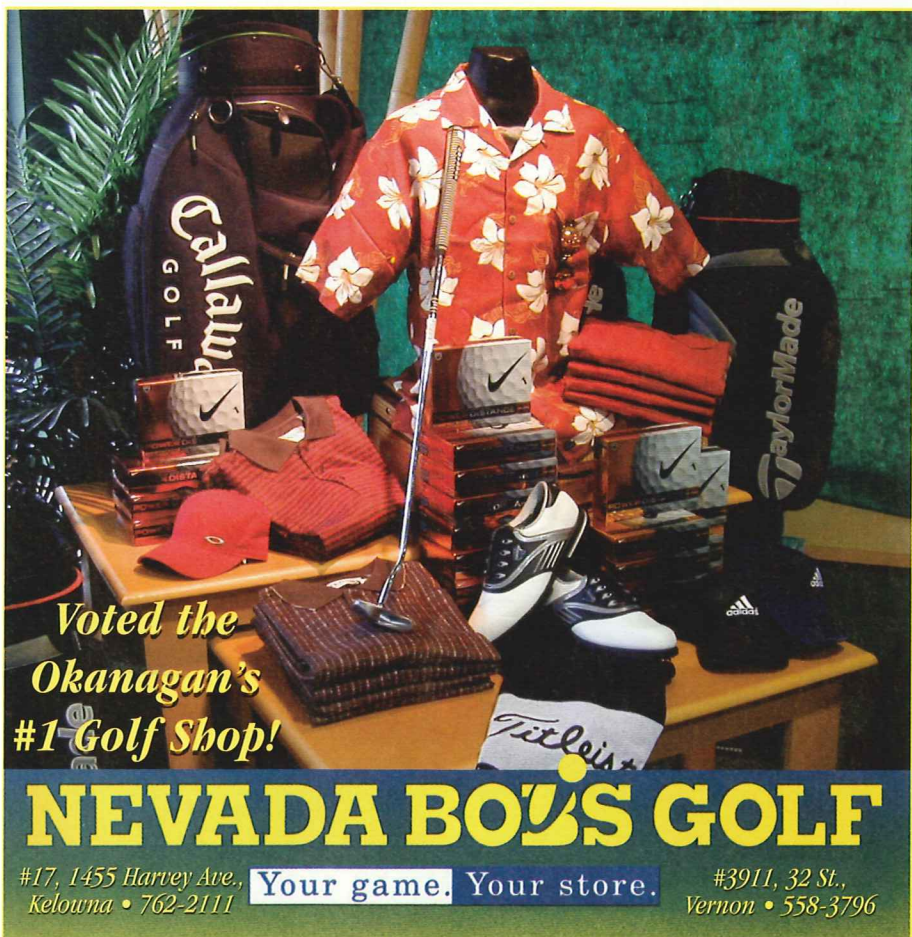
Ho, ho, ...ohhh-h-h*



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me in where Clint and other celebrities were sitting around. I thought this must mean I have arrived."

He worked with Streisand for 20 years: "We're friends, but she is hard to work with."

Foster also scored the theme for the movie *St. Elmo's Fire*, "which suggested an east coast fall, college kids idea." The director did not like the first version.

He based "Don't You Know that Tears are Not Enough," which he composed with Bryan Adams, on the rejected song. The movie director called back, said he reconsidered and

wanted the song after all. "If you snooze, you lose," laughs Foster. So Foster, inspired by *Man in Motion* Rick Hanson, wrote "Higher and Higher" for the movie.

In the late 80s, Foster made his prophetic visit to Montreal to discover the then unknown Celine Dion. The rest is history. "She's the highest selling female vocalist in history," he tells us, "175 million copies."

David Foster playing it up.



Marissa Baecker

Personal Foster facts:

Victoria: David Foster was born in Victoria, British Columbia a little over five decades ago but relocated to Los Angeles in 1971 where he has lived most of the time since. He has seven children, including five daughters and two step sons, ranging in ages from 18 to 34. He has a "small place in Victoria" and "goes there all the time." It's where his mother lives: "She's like Barbara Bush."

The Canadian American thing: Foster is a dual Canadian American citizen. "I've done well there because I'm a Canadian. The two cultures are so different... Americans take chances, Canadians don't. Canadians are frugal. Americans aren't. Canada is the greatest country to be from, and America is the greatest country to realize your potential."

The B.C. thing: Foster sees himself spending more time in B.C. in about five years because he has signed another five year recording contract in L.A.

The Okanagan thing: He thinks the Okanagan is "spectacular." He also thinks Kelowna "is a really happening place. There's a lot going on here."

The going-into-B.C. politics rumour: "I love B.C. I love where I'm from. I saw that it nose-dived in the 90s. I wonder sometimes if I could be of any help to B.C.? When the music thing for me is over, maybe I'll be some kind of ambassador for the province. That is the truth."

On his friend from the Okanagan, Ian Tostenson: "He is a wonderful guy who is a big thinker. I love him. We have known Ian and his wife Kathy for at least 15 years!"

On judging aspiring musical artists: "A professional opinion is no better than an amateur one."

High points of his career according to David:

- Winning his first Grammy which was for his work with Earth, Wind and Fire
- Working with Chicago
- Working with Celine Dion for 15 years
- Working with Whitney Houston on *The Bodyguard*
- Sweeping the Grammys with Natalie Cole
- Oscar moments
- The launching of Josh Groban and Michael Buble'
- His appearance on Oprah Winfrey in October – to introduce his latest protégée Renée Olsted ("like winning the lottery")

How he began working with Celine Dion:

"I was invited to come to Montreal and see this 17-year-old girl singing with her family in a tent in the rain. I told her she was coming to Los Angeles with me."

The musicians he most admires:

"Eric Clapton, Elton John, Kenny G., and Sting."

What he's most proud of:

"Being a Canadian."

Great Foster quotes:

- "When was the last time you were in a record store? People don't buy records in record stores anymore. They go to Target and Wal-Mart."
- "Oprah is so engaging. She looks at you as if you are the only one in the room and talks only to you. When I had dinner with her, I had Renée in the kitchen. I whipped her out. That was a Saturday night. By Monday, we got a call to be on the show."



Michael Bublé.

Colin James.

It was with Natalie Cole that he "cleaned up at the Grammys" he tells us and performs a little rendering of the hit "Unforgettable" in which the vocals of her late Dad Nat King Cole answer back to her own.

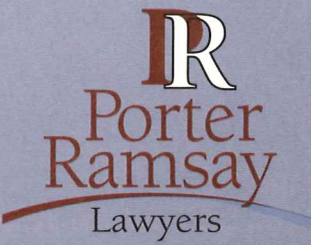
And then there was that "lunch" with Quincy Jones who told him he wanted him to be involved "in the most important project of my life." This turned out to be composing the music for the movie *The Bodyguard* starring Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner, producing that much loved, much hated song "I Will Always Love You" which is forever sung at talent competitions and karaoke bars. The soundtrack sold 36 million copies. Quincy was right. It was one of the most important projects of his life.

Foster tells us that he's mostly working with new talent now. Protégé Josh Groban, who appeared at Prospera Place September 2, has sold 11 million copies. Michael Bublé has reached 3 million. And Foster is "very excited" about his new discovery Renée Olsted, who appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show in early October.


Act Two


While Foster is performing, and the first four courses coming to a conclusion, we are aware of several people standing outside the tent in the dark. Our photographer Marissa Baecker walks over to our table. "Colin James is out there," she informs me. We had been told earlier there might be some "surprises" during Foster's performance. Foster beckons James into the tent and on to the stage. Accompanied by Foster on piano, the Regina-born six time Juno award winning vocalist sings two smooth jazzy type tunes, followed by a raunchy Willie Dixon blues number on which he accompanies himself on guitar. The boyishly charming James compliments Foster on his foundation work and Foster thanks James profusely for flying to Kelowna just for the evening.

The next surprise act turns out to be Foster's protégée Michael Bublé. For those not familiar with Bublé, he might be described as a crooner and likes to sing classic songs. He belts out "Come Fly with Me," "For Once in My Life" with Foster accompanying him on piano. "We're at the Holiday Inn now," jokes Foster. Bublé then tops off the evening by impersonating Dean Martin and Elvis Presley. Little Sophia Pratico dances the night away, happy she's alive. We are, all of us, happy, too. ■




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