

U of G Receives \$1.5 Million to Enhance Food Literacy Research

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Health educator Lisa Tang (centre) discusses reading food labels with the Harrison-Wong family

The University of Guelph has received a \$1.5-million gift to promote food literacy and help raise a healthier generation less prone to chronic disease.

The donation comes from The Helderleigh Foundation, an organization advocating food literacy among Canadian children and families that is a strategic partner of the [Guelph Family Health Study \(GFHS\)](#).

This funding will support the The Helderleigh Family Food Literacy Research Program within the GFHS. The long-term U of G research project currently involves more than 300 local families with preschool-aged children and aims to reduce disease risk.

“The importance of helping children and families develop the knowledge, practical skills and confidence to build healthy eating habits early in life cannot be overstated,” said Gwen Chapman, dean of the College of Social and Applied Human Sciences.

“Thanks to this gift, and the support and resources this relationship provides, the Guelph Family Health Study will be able to increase its focus on improving food literacy of families and children in our community.”



Started in 2014, the GFHS uses evidence-based knowledge to develop health strategies for families with young children. Study team members visit participating families to help set realistic goals for healthful diet, exercise, sleep habits, screen time and meal routines.

The Helderleigh Foundation gift, to be delivered over five years, will allow the research team to focus further on food literacy and allow the study to expand to include more families.



Prof. David Ma and Jess Haines,
co-directors of the Guelph Family
Health Study

“The Helderleigh Foundation’s gift aims to ensure that knowledge gained through the GFHS research is translated into real change in health care and public health practices,” said GFHS co-directors David Ma and Jess Haines, both professors in U of G’s Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition.

“It will support research, knowledge mobilization, and facilitate further collaboration between academics, researchers and health practitioners.”

Already, GFHS researchers have leveraged the gift to build new linkages to support food literacy among families in the Guelph area through the recently awarded \$10-million Guelph-Wellington Smart Cities Challenge. The GFHS will play a role in the nutrition stream of the project to support the overall vision: Our Food Future, Canada’s first circular food economy.

The gift will also fund three new Helderleigh Foundation Family Food Literacy Graduate Scholarships, worth \$22,000 each. The scholarships will be awarded to competitive graduate students to conduct food literacy research and knowledge mobilization projects.

Several stipends from this strategic partnership will also support undergraduate students involved in GFHS food literacy research.

In a joint statement, Llewellyn and Susan Smith from The Helderleigh Foundation said: “The outcome of this program is to determine the most effective ways families with young children may improve their food literacy knowledge, habits and behaviours, now and in the future.”