

Peregrine falcons come home to roost at Etobicoke General Hospital

Patients, visitors and local residents have been eagerly watching the skies around Etobicoke General Hospital this summer as a family of peregrine falcons have taken up residence behind the blue 'H' sign on the east side of the building at roof level.

Parent falcons Hurricane and Chessie have nested at the hospital site for many years and returned again to raise a family. This summer, they welcomed four new hatchlings to their family: two males and two females.

The peregrine falcon is an endangered species, which the Ministry of Natural Resources tracks with leg bands. In June, the Ministry was on-site at the hospital to determine the sex of each hatchling and band them for identification purposes. At that point, the hospital decided to hold a contest for staff to officially name each of the chicks.

Osler staff flexed their creative muscles and submitted more than 200 names, which was narrowed down to eight possibilities before being put to a vote. Osler staff and Twitter followers were asked to help choose the names of the four peregrine falcon chicks. The two males have been named Maverick and Apollo while the females have been given the monikers Blizzard and Aura.

'Patients and visitors of the hospital are treated to a show each summer as the parent falcons, often followed by their young, fly around the hospital building and perch on the nearby hydro wires,' said William Osler Health System Vice-President of Development and Information Technology Ann Ford. 'We are excited to host these falcons as they raise the newest members of their family and are pleased that our staff and online community could take part in naming an endangered species.'

While all of the chicks had successfully fledged and were learning to fly, Apollo suffered a serious wing injury that could not be treated. He was put to sleep by a veterinarian July 4. Falcons rely heavily on their flight ability to hunt and rarely survive in the wild when it is compromised. Apollo was Osler's first falcon loss since Etobicoke General became a foster site for the birds in 2006.