Over 700 individuals will be recognized for their service at St. Joseph’s including Dr. Frank Prato who has dedicated his career to the advancement of medical imaging and is one of this year’s longest serving recipients. It started at the tender age of ten, when the son of hard-working Italian immigrants, Frank Prato recognized his affinity for science. When he thinks back, Dr. Prato recalls the influential teachers who helped shape his curiosity. "I have always had an interest in the medical sciences," says Dr. Prato. “I had a very inspiring Grade 5 science teacher and I can remember being fascinated with the experiments done in that class. By the time I was eleven, I was reading books about genetics and knew that I had a keen interest in math and science.” Fortunately for St. Joseph’s Health Care London (St. Joseph’s), that curious little boy would dedicate his career to the imaging program at Lawson Health Research Institute (Lawson) - propelling it to become the largest and most successful biomedical imaging research program in Canada. Over the course of his career, Dr. Prato has become a visionary, mentor and leader who has made Lawson a national and international leader. Among Dr. Prato's landmark discoveries was working into how magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can be used to view the extent of permanent heart muscle damage caused by a heart attack – a method now used extensively throughout the world.

"For me the most extraordinary moment is when you realize you have discovered something that you know no one else in the world knows about. To know that your discovery explains something that has been a mystery," says Dr. Prato.

Dr. Prato is being recognized for 45 years of service as a part of St. Joseph’s Service Recognition Program. The program is a celebration of the dedication and commitment of our staff, physicians and volunteers. In the month of November, more than 700 recipients are being recognized for reaching career milestones with St. Joseph’s. In 2012, Dr. Prato was instrumental in acquiring Canada's first whole body PET/MRI for Lawson and St. Joseph's. The machine is now being used by researchers to help improve diagnosis and treatment of such major health challenges as early detection of heart complications in breast cancer patients, early diagnosis of dementia, early diagnosis and treatment of mental illness and early diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer. He was also the main influencer in bringing the first MRI machine into Canada in 1982.

“St. Joseph's has always been the supportive environment, it was a partnership that made it possible,” says Dr. Prato. “There is no better place to be for the kind of medical imaging I wish to do, and for the collaborations I need to accomplish what I believe is important.”

As Dr. Prato looks back on his career, he admits that pinpointing a specific highlight is tricky. “It’s a lot of years to look back on,” laughs Dr. Prato. “To have dreams that would someday be of benefit to people and to the community has been very rewarding for me. Something that could not have been achieved without the support I have had over the years, I have been privileged to work with outstanding people and incredible resources.”

St. Joseph’s congratulates all those marking milestones this year – from five to 45. The hard work of all those who provide service to St. Joseph’s helps the organization reach new heights and fulfil its mission to help people live life to their fullest.