



Complex care, Simple comforts

# care connection



## HELP... Parent relief is on its way

**A** lone...no family...no friends...no money...  
A mother with a house-bound, asthmatic child...a new refugee mother of twins...a mother weakened and ill from a caesarian...a single mom with a colicky baby...a physically handicapped single parent with a recent concussion...

You can hear the cries for help...for some relief. Many Toronto parents are under stress, isolated with no friends or family nearby, and no funds to purchase help. The parents need an extra pair of hands or a few hours break from the intense needs of children to attend appointments or other necessary business.

VHA Home HealthCare's trained staff provide that pair of hands and caring assistance through a pilot service funded by the City of Toronto called the Parent Relief Program. The program is now finishing its pilot year and reaction has been uniformly positive. Typical client comments include: "Since I don't have any family support close by, the Parent Relief Program felt like a family to me. It was very, very helpful" and "This program helped me to survive." Referral sources are thrilled to find skilled, warm childcare and homemaking for their isolated, low-income clients.

The Parent Relief Program is quite small (2500 funded hours per year) and there seems to be

an unlimited number of families in need. VHA is only able to offer about 30 hours of assistance to any one family in order to help as many families as possible. Both client and referral source feedback consistently pleads for an increase in hours of service and extension of the program. Moving into the second year of service provision, finding additional sources of private, governmental or charitable support for parent relief programs is a priority.



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# Strategic growth and continuous improvement

## VHA's 2005-2007 Strategic Plan

In the fall of 2004, VHA's Board of Directors and management set out to establish our goals and strategic priorities for the next three-year period, in the process confirming our vision, mission and values. (see side bar) In doing so, VHA's recent growth was acknowledged along with its impact on our infrastructure to support the growth. In the last year, VHA grew rapidly — both in service volumes and geography — primarily

through securing new CCAC (Community Care Access Centre) nursing and personal support contracts in the GTA and in southwestern Ontario. The strategic plan had to ensure that a robust infrastructure is in place to support current and future growth.

We also recognized that VHA Home HealthCare continues to operate in a

challenging and constantly changing environment, e.g.,

- a rapidly aging population;
- a more ethnically diverse client population requiring culturally competent care;
- rising health care costs;
- a growing appetite for greater accountability and evidence-based practices;
- rapidly changing technology to support operations and service delivery; and
- shorter acute care stays along with a trend towards ambulatory and outpatient care which are increasing the complexity and acuity of home care clients.

### Human Resources

To attract and retain a motivated workforce that has the skills, knowledge and competencies to support current operations and the flexibility and creativity to support growth and change.

**Priorities:** *Training and Development; Recruitment; Employee Relations; Work-Life Balance; Policies and Procedures; Health & Safety; HR Information Systems.*

### Quality and Risk Management

To continually improve our quality and risk management programs in order to facilitate informed decision-making and assist in achieving excellence in our service delivery and internal operations.

**Priorities:** *Accreditation; Program and Service Evaluation; Monitoring Incidents; Client Surveys; Subcontractor Management; Legislative/Regulatory Compliance; Performance Monitoring.*

### Programs and Services

To achieve a high standard of service excellence by anticipating and responding to diverse client and community needs.

**Priorities:** *Evidence Based Practice; Innovation; Information Systems; Client Satisfaction; Service Integration; Performance Standards.*

## Our Goals to



## Better Serve You

### Research, Development and Industry Leadership

To be widely recognized as a leader in Ontario's homecare sector through our research, information sharing, advocacy, collaboration, and business development activities, as well as our service excellence.

**Priorities:** *New Business Analysis and Development; Information Sharing; Research; Collaboration; External Relations.*

Significantly, the political environment has changed as well. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care intends to transform the health system through creation of 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), or service areas, across the province. In addition, the Health Minister has established an independent review of the competitive bidding process used by Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) to select service providers and a related moratorium on releasing any new tenders (except for a designated few) for a six-month period.

The 2005-2007 strategic plan that emerged from our planning process will guide us through the changing

external landscape and enable us to emerge at the end of the next planning cycle a stronger, ever more quality driven and dynamic organization. The strategic plan builds on our strengths and core competencies while enabling us to be flexible enough to manage our growth and respond to the opportunities and changes that will emerge over the next three years. The plan focuses on maximizing our ability to provide high quality complex care and simple comforts to recipients of home and

community health support services.

The plan identifies six strategic pillars (see below left). Within each pillar, key priorities and performance measures have been established to focus our efforts over the next three years. The goal and priorities identified for each strategic pillar reflect VHA's commitment to our vision, mission and values, and balance future growth with internal capacity-building. The six goals and the priorities are set out in the diagram.

### Internal Operations/IT

To establish reliable, flexible, cost-effective and efficient operational systems and processes to support current operations and future growth.

**Priorities:** *Policies and Procedures; Records Management; Management Information Systems; Technology; Property Management; Branch Operations; and Contract Management.*

### Financial Performance

To be financially stable with diversified revenue sources and adequate reserves to ensure short and long-term viability.

**Priorities:** *Annual Budget Process; Accountability; Financial Management Training; Financial Reporting; Building Reserves; Treasury Management.*

## VHA HOME HEALTHCARE VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

### VISION

To be recognized as the best provider of home and community health support services in the province.

### MISSION

To make a positive impact on every life we touch by providing complex care and simple comforts.

### VALUES

- Client focused services responsive to individual and family needs and preferences, respectful of diversity and delivered with competence and sensitivity.
- A positive organizational culture that values the contributions of its diverse workforce and fosters excellence through accessible supervision, consultation and professional development.
- Continuous quality improvement through ongoing evaluation with the aim of exceeding standards of care.
- Cooperation and collaboration with our community partners and other stakeholders.
- Advocacy in identifying service needs and effecting positive system change.

As a charitable not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, we all share a commitment to manage our resources with fiscal responsibility, to adhere to ethical practices in all our operations and to ensure, as we are able, that the most vulnerable in our community have access to our services.

ANNOUNCING....

# VHA'S 80<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY BASH

Our 2005 AGM is reserved for VHA's 80th birthday celebration. Join us for music and foods of the 20's and on...every decade of VHA's life. We will be celebrating on May 9, 2005.

## ...AND THE NEW "HEROES IN THE HOME" AWARD

To commemorate VHA's 80th birthday and to honour our non-professional partners in care, at the AGM VHA will be announcing the recipient of the first annual Heroes in the Home Caregiver Award. Each year VHA will select a family member/friend whose caregiving has significantly enhanced the quality of life of their loved one or friend and allowed them to live at home in safety and dignity.



Bildungsgradausgabe **literacy issue** Edición de la Instrucción **edizione di literacy** **Reader Response Corner** Edición de la Instrucción **edición de la Instrucción**

*Reacting to the Summer 2004 issue of Community Care Connection and its article related to "health illiteracy", this expert makes the distinction between "low literacy" and "illiteracy."*

My organization, ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation, has as it's primary mandate the promotion of the adult literacy issue in Canada... because the literacy issue in Canada is often not understood or even believed, we are very careful about how we explain the issue. For example we try never to use the word "illiteracy" as few Canadians fit into this category (can't read or write anything at all.) We describe adults as having "low literacy skills."

In 1994 Statistics Canada tested a representative sample of 5,560 Canadians aged sixteen or older in their homes for reading comprehension, number calculations and the ability to use documents such as bus schedules. These Canadians had French or English as their first language, so ESL was not a factor in this study. The study indicated that 22% were classified as.... "Non-readers who have serious difficulty in dealing with any printed material."

A further 26% were classified as ..... "Poor readers who can deal only with printed material containing no complex tasks." .... So this is not the same as.....

"estimates of illiteracy ranging from just under 20% to over 35% of the adult population" ..... as stated in the VHA newsletter. The word "illiteracy" in your context as *opposed to "low literacy"* makes this statement incorrect.

Unfortunately three separate issues related to literacy and health often get lumped together - literacy levels, English/French language fluency, and clear language. They are linked but they are each a distinct challenge.

Keep up the great work at VHA. You folks provide a wonderful service!!!

*From Christine Featherstone, President, ABC Canada Literacy Foundation (For further information, see their website at [www.abc-canada.org](http://www.abc-canada.org).)*

Thank you for your helpful comments.

*We encourage our readers to send comments and reactions to the editor: [jklopp@vha.ca](mailto:jklopp@vha.ca).*





# VHA's nurses now serve North York residents



**W**e are pleased to announce that we are now providing North York CCAC clients with both personal support and nursing services. This past summer VHA Home HealthCare was awarded a large nursing contract by North York CCAC in the recent RFP process. As a historic provider of personal support and homemaking services in North York, VHA is very familiar with the local community, its diverse population, unique challenges, and its many local resources. VHA's dedicated nurses are now among those resources.

## Updates

**O**ur Fall 2002 newsletter featured Dr. Mark Nowaczynski, "The Doctor Behind the Lens". His photographic work depicting his homebound clients has become an effective advocacy tool for homecare itself. Now the National Film Board will soon be releasing an hour long documentary entitled "House Calls", examining how Dr. Mark Nowaczynski is struggling to improve our home care delivery system through his medical practice and his photographs. Three of his clients are featured in this very moving film.

A recent article about Dr. Nowaczynski and the film appeared on the cover of the Sept 15, 2004 issue of the National Review of Medicine (see link).

[www.nationalreviewofmedicine.com/issue/2004\\_09\\_15/feature01\\_16.html](http://www.nationalreviewofmedicine.com/issue/2004_09_15/feature01_16.html)

To arrange for a public screening at an event, contact Sue Mander at [s.mander@nfb.ca](mailto:s.mander@nfb.ca). The NFB will be releasing the film for sale to the general public in mid-January 2005.

It can be purchased from the National Film Board on their website, [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca), or by calling 1-800-267-7710.



**Did you know** that all previous VHA newsletters and related bibliographies are available on our website at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)?

## We welcome your support

**MEMBERSHIP** VHA welcomes new members. Consistent with our not-for-profit tradition and to help us be the best we can be, we encourage members of the communities we serve to participate in VHA's governance. VHA members are entitled to vote at our Annual General Meeting and are provided with ongoing information about our operations and developing issues in the field of in-home services in Ontario. VHA members may also decide to become more involved by participating in the work of our Board and/or its committees. There is nominal membership fee of \$ 25.00 (which can be waived in special circumstances).

For more information we invite you to contact Patricia Triantafilou at (416) 482-4617 or [patricia@vha.ca](mailto:patricia@vha.ca)

**DONATION** Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare will make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need of care and support in your community. Donations are welcome at anytime and can be mailed, made by phone (credit card contribution) and or in person at our 170 Merton Street office. You may also want to consider making a "tribute gift" in honour of a loved one or special friend.

To our 2004 donors, our sincere thanks for your generosity.

### IF YOU

have any comments or suggestions regarding our newsletter, please feel free to contact the editor of

COMMUNITY  
**care**  
connection

Joy Klopp

at (416) 482-8782 or 1-888-314-6622  
or visit our web site at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)

## Offering complex care and simple comforts since 1925

### VHA SERVICES

- ✓ Adult and Elder Care
- ✓ Child and Family Care
- ✓ Respite or Caregiver/Family Relief
- ✓ Palliative Care
- ✓ Mental Health Support
- ✓ Foot Care
- ✓ Attendant Care
- ✓ Extreme Cleaning
- ✓ Information and Referral Services
- ✓ Supplementary Staffing in care facilities
- ✓ Supportive Housing

### VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF

- ✓ Registered nurses/registered practical nurses
- ✓ Personal support workers/homemakers
- ✓ Client service coordinators/supervisors
- ✓ Other skilled professionals as required

VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of the United Way of Greater Toronto and a contracted provider for all five Toronto Community Care Access Centres, the Durham Access to Care, the CCAC of York Region, Chatham/Kent and Sarnia-Lambton CCACs, the City of Toronto's Homemakers and Nurses Services program and the Regional Municipality of Durham.

*All services can be made available in your own home, in hospital or in a long-term care facility.*

Community Care Connection is available electronically. If you'd like to cut down on the paper landing on your desk and be able to share the newsletter with your colleagues by a click of the mouse, just send your email address to [jklopp@vha.ca](mailto:jklopp@vha.ca).

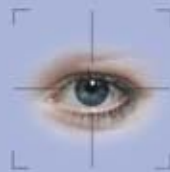


For more information, please call us at

**(416) 489-2500**

**or 1 (888) 314-6622**

or visit our web site at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)



## Eye On QUALITY

### • Quality remains front and centre at VHA

Examples of the many quality improvement initiatives ongoing at VHA include:

1. an enhanced personal support care planning process;
2. an enhanced staff safety project;
3. a customer service improvement project;
4. implementation of a new integrated IT system; and
5. an enhanced client satisfaction survey system.

### • Continuous learning at VHA is critical to our success

Good/better/best/evidenced-based practices are everywhere these days and can be interpreted in different ways. To help staff gain a better understanding of what is meant by the term 'best practices' and how it applies to our work in home care, an educational session was hosted this fall by VHA's Quality & Risk Management Committee. The session "Best Practices: What are they and what do they mean to me!" was both well-attended and well-received. We were fortunate to have an excellent guest presenter, Cynthia Majewski, Executive Director of the Quality Healthcare Network, of which VHA is a member organization.

### • CCHSA recognizes VHA for a 'Good Practice'

In its accreditation surveys of health care organizations across Canada, the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) recognizes 'Good Practices'. A 'good practice' is a noteworthy practice carried out by an organization and is related to the accreditation standards. While strengths are recognized for what they contribute to the organization, 'good practices' are notable for what they contribute to the field.

VHA's establishment of Adams House was recognized as a 'good practice' as it shows how VHA anticipates and responds to the community's changing needs. In response to community mental health and supportive housing needs, VHA purchased property and established a transitional residence, Adams House, in partnership with COTA, another not-for-profit organization, and with funding support from local government and the United Way. (See the article on Adams House in the Fall 2002 issue of this newsletter at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca).) The Adams House initiative will be entered into a national database by CCHSA that will be accessible to all health care organizations that want to look at examples of 'good practices' in the Canadian health care field.