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## Message from the President and CEO

It's been another action-packed quarter at VHA, moving forward both our mission *of creating possibilities for more independence* and our strategic plan's mandate to be *more attuned, more connected* and to offer *more inspired solutions* that will help us deliver truly spectacular care.

To that end, our Client Choice Awards (that honour VHA staff/service provider excellence) connected us to the voices and opinions of those we serve. With nearly 400 nominations from clients, family members and colleagues for this year's awards, selecting a handful of winners was a challenging task. But with so many clients and families involved in nominations for the first time ever, it was a challenge we were delighted to overcome! Clearly VHA clients and families are eager to share their great stories of spectacular care. Watch our amazing winners and their great relationships with clients and families at [bit.ly/clientchoicewinners](http://bit.ly/clientchoicewinners). We hope that you're as inspired by these remarkable relationships as we were.



And speaking of inspirational, the 10th anniversary of VHA's Heart of Home Care Award was once again overflowing with emotion. This year's event was made extra special because we got a chance to sit down and dine with all three winners and many of the nominees beforehand at the "Take a Break Caregiving Lunch," which from all accounts was a great opportunity for these remarkable caregivers to do just that. The chats I had with winners and the nominees confirmed my long-held belief that society and our health care system need to be doing more to support these true heroes of home care.

Thanks again to our Presenting Sponsors—Teak Printing and Telus—and to our Community Sponsors—Pace Consulting and Standard Life for making the luncheon and event possible. If you haven't yet, I urge you to watch the incredible videos of our three winners at [bit.ly/Heart2015](http://bit.ly/Heart2015).

It's hard to believe that VHA has been serving Ontarians for nine decades but it's true. Who would have thought back in 1925 that our humble crew of 14 housekeepers would grow into a formidable team of more than 2,000 professionals? VHA's founder, Barbara Blackstock-Cody, was clearly a visionary of her time who paved the way for a modern day VHA. We're sure you'll agree once you've read Five Reasons to Love VHA's Founder Barbara Blackstock-Cody. We hope you enjoy our latest edition as we celebrate our legacy of innovation and look forward to our future of possibilities!

## Celebrating the True Heroes of Home Care

VHA's Heart of Home Care Winners Now in its 10th year, VHA's Heart of Home Care Award recognizes the extraordinary efforts of family caregivers throughout Ontario who go above and beyond the call of duty to provide a loved one who is disabled, elderly, or chronically ill, with the support needed to live at home with independence.



"This year's winners remind us that caregiving is a demanding job not often recognized by the outside world," notes President and CEO of VHA, Carol Annett. "The Heart of Home Care Award is VHA's small way of saying 'thank you' to these extraordinary caregivers and also hopefully draws attention to the need for more family caregiver support," says Annett. "They are the backbone of the health care system."



CityTV was also on hand to cover this year's event and winners.



The afternoon included an insightful discussion, *Caregiving in the 21st Century*, moderated by Nancy Wilson, former CBC news anchor.



For the 10th anniversary of the event, VHA hosted a luncheon for all nominees prior to the award presentation.

To watch the videos of these amazing winners visit: [bit.ly/Heart2015](http://bit.ly/Heart2015)

## A Real-Life Version of "The Notebook"



Fred, a retired farmer, is a loving husband and caregiver to his wife of 64 years, Elizabeth, who was diagnosed with dementia five years ago. Now 85 years old, Fred has devoted his life to caring for his wife, managing almost all of Elizabeth's personal and medical needs. Instead of looking into long-term care for his wife, Fred decided home was the best place for Elizabeth. He gets a break when Elizabeth attends VON's Adult Day Program four days a week. Fred is also helped out by a volunteer who visits the home. Fred admits there are challenges to caregiving but adds, "Elizabeth is the love of my life and I wouldn't think of changing anything."

## 52 Years of Incredible Care



Dora has been a full-time caregiver for her son Kevin for the past 52 years. Kevin was diagnosed at an early age with Fibrodysplasia Ossificans Progressiva (FOP). FOP is a rare disorder in which muscle and connective tissues, such as tendons and ligaments, are gradually replaced by bone (or become ossified), which constrains movement. Years of FOP have left Kevin with limited mobility—he is unable to sit and must either stand or lie down. Despite these challenges and her age (Dora is now 86) she knows that home is the best place for Kevin. "It hit me pretty hard at first," says Dora. "But I thought 'well if this is the way it's going to be, you got to get on with it and do the best

you can!”

## A Winning Battle



Joanne is not only a single working mom of two, she is also a full-time caregiver to her 14-year-old-son Christopher, who was diagnosed with dystonic cerebral palsy, a rare form of cerebral palsy caused by damage to the basal ganglia in the brain caused by lack of oxygen at birth. For the past 14 years, Joanne has been Christopher's rock and supporter, advocating for what she knows is best for Christopher. “It's almost like joining a war. You fight for every little thing,” says Joanne. “But when they work and you see your child do things that they said never would happen. It's the best feeling in the world!”

Thanks to our generous sponsors:



## Five Reasons to Love VHA's Founder Barbara Blackstock-Cody

### 1. She loved learning.

Barbara Blackstock-Cody came from a very wealthy, traditional family. Because her mother insisted the youngest daughters stay close to home, Barbara and her sisters weren't allowed to go to school. Missing out on a childhood education became her greatest regret, so she jumped at the chance of formal learning when World War I erupted. Barbara trained as a wartime nurse and, because of her great skill, her instructor suggested she pursue more training in London. As part of the London Hospital, Barbara did her nursing field work in the city's slums while also training in midwifery.

After the war she studied Public Health Nursing at the University of Toronto where she was among the first class of graduates in 1921. Barbara Blackstock-Cody embraced learning and became a tireless supporter of educating women in nursing and public service.



### 2. She was a Toronto trailblazer.

Barbara would not settle for a traditional Victorian woman's life. She defied her mother's protests to become a nurse—an “unsuitable” profession for a woman





of her stature at the time—and became a key figure in the field. She was:

- President of the Toronto branch of the Florence Nightingale International Fund
- Secretary of the Infant Home
- Founding President of the Visiting Homemakers Association
- Chairman of the Child Welfare Council in Toronto
- Executive Member of the National Council of Women in Canada
- Vice-President of the Local Council of Women

She led critical reforms in social welfare and public health, and received the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship in 1977.

### 3. She was environmentally friendly before it was cool.

After graduating from U of T's public health program, Barbara asked to be put to work and was assigned the eastern half of the city. She made her rounds on her bicycle. Her love of cycling continued throughout her life. During the Second World War, as wife of the President of the University of Toronto, Barbara was regularly seen riding her bicycle to campus dressed in her fine hat and gloves to attend distinguished university events—because “I always do,” she said. Her penchant for cycling even made the pages of the *Globe and Mail*!

### 4. She would have made you eat your veggies.

Barbara Blackstock-Cody made the clear connection between good nutrition and health as early as 1930. She was a vocal advocate for better family nutrition. At that time, Toronto had higher infant and maternal mortality rates than many other cities. Barbara recognized that poor nutrition was an issue affecting families of every income. She publicly expressed concern that community health was not part of the training that dietitians received in university and championed the need to include nutrition specialists as part of the services of the Visiting Homemakers Association.

### 5. Her natural sense of compassion endures.

As a young child, Barbara regularly joined her grandfather, distiller John Gooderham (of Gooderham and Worts) on his visits to Toronto General Hospital, where he had made a sizable donation. A naturally compassionate girl, perhaps these visits sparked her desire to dedicate her life to the care and service of others. She was a feisty champion of early childhood education, women's rights and the need for social work to improve the lives of children and families. Energetic, smart and charming, she had a natural ability to stand her ground while still respecting others.



Barbara strongly believed that good nutrition was vital for families' overall wellbeing.





Despite her high social rank, Barbara was a tireless advocate for improved social and health conditions for all.

As wife of the President of University of Toronto (U of T) Barbara made Globe and Mail headlines for cycling to U of T events.

## Accolades for VHA

- In May, VHA Home HealthCare took home first prize for “Best Event Video” for our Heart of Home Care Award video series created with Flash Frame Digital Media. Issued by PR Daily, the award beat out several international submissions. “Everything comes together in these videos, from the subtle music bed, to the sensitive editing” notes PR Daily’s website.
- The winning streak continued in June when VHA captured “Best Booth” at the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centre’s annual conference. Thanks to all those delegates who stopped by at our booth to take a selfie in space or underwater and who voted for us! To see all the great selfies, visit our facebook page at [facebook.com/vhahomehealthcare](https://facebook.com/vhahomehealthcare)



## VHA’s 2015 Client Choice Award Winners

Congratulations to all our 2015 Client Choice Award Winners and to our clients and families (nearly 400 of them) for making this year’s awards such a stunning success. To view the profiles of each winner, don’t forget to visit [bitly/clientchoicewinners](http://bitly/clientchoicewinners).





## Eye on Quality

VHA designed the Integrated Palliative Care Team Model to support palliative care clients and their families by improving collaboration and communication. Funded by VHA's Ideas to Innovation Fund, which provides seed funding for innovative quality improvement projects, the model was implemented in the Central CCAC area. The interprofessional team included occupational therapists, nurses, personal support workers and care supervisors, community care coordinators and a single team coordinator. The key features of the pilot project included (a) protected time for team meetings among the service providers and care coordinators to discuss specific clients, (b) facilitation from the team coordinator to share information and experiences, and (c) a shared health record in the home.

Participants considered the interprofessional initiative successful in bringing previously isolated practitioners together to work in collaborative ways focused on individual clients and families. During interviews with team members four key themes for success emerged: identification of a "common goal for palliative care," "learning from and about team members," the need for "emotional support" and "a facilitator of team process." The findings from this pilot study, combined with other evidence on interprofessional palliative care, suggest three key strategies for encouraging success among interprofessional palliative care teams.

1. Additional resources devoted to providing the time and space for service providers to share experiences on providing palliative services in the home.
2. The establishment of a team leader with a mandate to empower each health care provider to demonstrate his or her value to the team.
3. Sharing emotions during meetings builds trust among team members and forms the foundation for interprofessional success. It also helps them work together to develop strategies to better cope with the personal strain of providing palliative care.

The full report can be found in the Journal of Interprofessional Care. (Shaw J, Glenns B, Kierney C, McKay SM. Interprofessional Team Building in Palliative Home Health Care: A Theoretically Informed Pilot Evaluation. Journal of Interprofessional Care (in press))

## SIM-one Grant to Help Improve Skills and Client Experience

VHA Home HealthCare is delighted to announce it has been awarded a SIM-one grant. SIM-one is a government funded agency that has developed a simulation-based continuing interprofessional development program providing a realistic client experience with a focus on dementia, delirium and depression. It is completed on the



computer either individually or as a team. It aims to provide support to PSWs to identify common signs, risks and strategies when dealing with clients who have similar symptoms. "We're really excited about this new project, especially since VHA is the only home health care agency taking part. This means we can help tailor it to better serve our clients," says Dr. Sandra McKay, who spearheaded the initiative.



*Dr. Sandra McKay, VHA  
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