

This is a season of celebration, and for many, a time to reflect back on what has been accomplished in 2012. As we look back on the last few months at VHA, we have a lot to celebrate. This fall was a particularly busy one – one full of pleasant surprises, new contracts and hard-earned accolades to celebrate.



VHA kicked off our journey to obtain recognition from the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) as a **Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO)**. This is a three-year process that will see VHA staff and service providers implement and evaluate various RNAO best practice guidelines. We are very excited to be underway and to further demonstrate VHA's commitment to excellence in home care.

Early in the fall we received exciting news that two VHA initiatives – our “Simple Comforts Fund” and “Ideas to Action/Innovation Fund” – would be recognized Leading Practices by Accreditation Canada. You can check out the details of these VHA programs on the Accreditation Canada website.

On the subject of Accreditation Canada, I am delighted to report that **VHA's accreditation** site survey this November was a big success. We achieved a tremendous feat: meeting 100% of Accreditation Canada's required standards, and received “Exemplary Standing”. The accreditation process is a



VHA staff and service providers remembered clients who passed this year by adding their names to a Tree of Life at each office.

rigorous one as surveyors measure every aspect of our operations against a range of indicators. In their assessment report, our surveyors commended VHA's competent, compassionate and committed workforce – a sentiment I couldn't agree with more!

VHA was also on the giving end of accolades this fall – issuing our first **Head Start scholarships** to 21 children of VHA staff heading off to universities, colleges and trade institutes.

In November, we held another activity-filled United Way campaign, and spotted more moustaches than usual around the office as several staff also participated in Movember to raise awareness and funds for men's health issues. That month, we also held our annual memorial service to honour clients who have passed away in the last year. It is a beautiful event, led by Karen Faith, VHA's Clinical Ethics Consultant, which gives staff and service providers an opportunity to explore the unique issues of grief and loss they experience.

As you read through this issue, I think you'll agree that this has indeed been a busy season worth celebrating at VHA. As the year winds down and we enter another season of celebration, I would like to take a moment to thank you for all of your support and partnership and to extend to you and your families, on behalf of all of us at VHA, warmest wishes for a joyous holiday and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Going for Gold

For more than 85 years, our focus at VHA has been to provide the gold standard in quality services for our clients—so much so that **delivering spectacular care with a commitment to continuous quality improvement** are first among our list of core beliefs. With recent changes to the home care service landscape, this focus is critical to our operations now more than ever.

In February, the Province released its *Action Plan for Health Care*. The plan places increased emphasis on *quality improvement, client satisfaction, innovation and value for money*. The action plan significantly affects the province's Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) and, as a service provider organization that receives many client referrals from CCACs, it affects VHA as well. This year, VHA and other care providers have been in discussions with the CCACs to plan the way forward.

On October 1, 2012, the CCACs established new contracts with VHA and all other service provider organizations. A new contract management framework aligned with these contracts is also being developed. Currently, our performance is being monitored against all contract standards and five specific indicators: overall client satisfaction, client satisfaction regarding continuity of service, the home care organization's referral acceptance rate, missed visits, and timely submission of discharge reports. The CCACs will use these indicators, and others that will be added over time that measure client outcomes, to direct clients to organizations that demonstrate very high quality service.

This is an exciting new landscape for VHA. We have been preparing our service providers and support staff for the new model over the last year with a focus on being **more innovative** and **more client driven** so that we consistently perform to the CCAC's highest standards. We call it "Going for Gold", and it is our operating objective every day.

Through education workshops, rigorous monitoring of our performance, identifying our strengths, sharing best practices across teams, and flagging potential challenges, VHA staff have been working together to support consistently exceptional performance for our clients. We are proud that many of our teams already showed strong performance across these five indicators and others, but that is not enough. We want to keep the momentum going toward even greater excellence so that everyone is achieving the gold standard that our clients deserve and our CCAC partners expect.



VHA Wins Diamond Jubilee Medal

Carol Annett, CEO and President of VHA Home HealthCare, was recognized this fall with a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal. The medal commemorates the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's reign by celebrating individuals who have dedicated themselves to family, community and country, just as she has. It is fitting then that Carol's medal was awarded in recognition of VHA's Heart of Home Care Award. Since 2005, our Heart of Home Care Award has honoured the outstanding efforts of family caregivers, and the tireless devotion they display to their loved ones, often in very difficult circumstances. The Heart of Home Care Award not only recognizes these inspiring individuals, it also shines a light on the need for greater supports for caregivers and individuals who wish to remain in their homes.

This Jubilee Medal, while awarded to an individual, is truly a recognition of VHA as a whole and the efforts of all of our staff and service providers to strengthen our communities in partnership with clients and their caregivers.

Reclaiming Independence

At VHA we strive to create possibilities for more independence for our clients every day. This can be through small but significant changes to a client's routine or environment, or dramatic changes that have a positive impact on their quality of life. Tanya's* story is a compelling example of the latter.

In 2009, Tanya underwent a successful operation to fix the shunt that had been placed in her brain a few years earlier, which had become blocked. While recovering in hospital, she tripped and suffered significant brain damage. Two additional falls further complicated the injury, which affects Tanya's motor skills, short-term memory, vision, speech, problem-solving skills and balance. As a result, she spent three years in hospital, where she was entirely dependent on hospital staff for her care.

Earlier this year, VHA began working with the hospital and community team to move Tanya into her own home. "There was lots of pre-planning involved," says Andrea David, Manager of Client Services with VHA. "We worked together with the hospital team and the CCAC to do things like conduct safety assessments of the potential home and make sure the space was conducive to supporting her."

At the beginning of September, Tanya moved into her own apartment, and a key focus since then has been finding opportunities for her to achieve more independence. Tanya has support from a VHA team of nurses, personal support workers (PSWs) and occupational therapists who are with her 24 hours a day. She also works with an independent speech therapist.

Originally, Tanya's condition suggested that she would need transfer equipment (a Hoyer lift) to get out of bed, however VHA staff and service providers have successfully taught her how to transfer herself, with their guidance, using a saskapole for support. Our PSWs tend to her personal care, and also help her perform range-of-motion exercises, such as stretching her arms and legs. With encouragement from the PSWs, she is able to do the exercises herself.

VHA staff support has also given Tanya's parents greater independence and peace of mind. "They know they have a team they can rely on," says Andrea. "We do grocery shopping for Tanya, for example, which leaves them free to do what they need to do. The family was able to go on vacation for the first time in years," she adds.

With encouragement from the VHA team, Tanya has the opportunity to test her abilities in a supervised environment that is her own, and where her safety and care are paramount. Her care team has started taking her down to her building's exercise facilities, where she has begun to use the sports equipment to further her rehabilitation. In the short time that she has been living independently, Tanya's range of motion has improved dramatically and she is saying words more clearly than ever. She's a clear example of how the right kind of support can foster independence.

*Not her real name.



New Volunteer Program in Dorset Park

VHA's Volunteer Program is now available at the Dorset Park Community Hub in Scarborough. Dorset Park is the fifth of eight Toronto Community Hubs launched to address 13 Priority Neighbourhoods identified by the United Way. We are excited to be a part of this shared community space and will be offering neighbourhood residents rewarding opportunities to help out with local community support programs. VHA will also offer support groups for families participating in our parent relief program and host job and volunteer fairs as needed.

Roseanna Wirt, Volunteer Coordinator, VHA Home HealthCare, leads our volunteer program at Dorset Park Community Hub.

Eye on Quality

VHA Achieves Accreditation with Exemplary Standing

The results are in! In VHA's November 2012 Accreditation Canada survey, VHA was awarded accreditation with "Exemplary Standing". We are pleased to announce that VHA met 100% of Accreditation Canada's standards for quality and safety. This is familiar territory for us, as we also met 100% of the standards in our last survey in 2009. But we did not rest on our laurels. We continued to work toward quality improvements after 2009, as we still do now, because we know that we can always be better than we are today. Here are some examples of the commendations in our surveyor's report:

Integrated Quality Management—quotes from the survey report speak volumes:

- "an atmosphere of strong quality improvement permeates the entire organization from the board down to all front line staff"
- "commitment to quality is matched only by their commitment to risk management"
- "they are commended for their openness to learn from mistakes"

Human Capital—The surveyors commented that VHA has a very comprehensive education program for employees and a commendable practice of promoting from within. It was noted that staff consistently communicated their passion for their work and satisfaction with working for VHA.

Physical Environment—Our vigorous and committed Occupational Health and Safety Committee was lauded for how it helps ensure a safe working environment in the offices, and even more importantly, out in the community where care is provided in a variety of settings.

Principle-Based Care and Decision Making—Surveyors noted that VHA has a demonstrated commitment to providing ethics training and education to staff and service providers, and was commended for not only having an Ethics Committee but also a Research Ethics Board.

Planning and Service Design—Surveyors found clear evidence of VHA's strong connection to the community from the CEO to front line staff.

Governance—We were commended for achieving a very positive integration of the Rehab Solutions Division at the board level. The board was also commended for its deep commitment to providing needed services, and its strong social community reinvestment practices.

Communication—VHA's excellent Strategic Communications Plan was observed to be clearly based on the organization's three strategic pillars, and surveyors noted our comprehensive yet user-friendly Crisis Communications/Media Plan.

Emergency Preparedness—VHA received praise for our vibrant and inclusive Emergency Management Program Committee, systems to respond to internal and external emergencies and excellent e-learning modules.

As always, VHA learned a lot, both in the process of preparing for the accreditation survey and from the survey itself. Our surveyors provided us with thoughtful feedback and suggestions for continuing on our quality improvement path.



In their winning contest video, VHA Personal Support Coordinators spoofed the popular "Gangnam Style" with their song celebrating VHA's core beliefs. The contest was part of VHA's accreditation preparation.

Breaking News and Updates

VHA gives young scholars a Head Start

This September, VHA awarded its first Head Start Scholarships to 21 inspiring students pursuing their higher education goals. The Head Start Scholarship program was launched to support sons and daughters of VHA staff and service providers who are continuing their full-time or part-time post-secondary studies at an accredited college, university or trade school.

Through the new program, we allocated \$1,500 scholarships to recipients selected on the basis of their academic achievement, community involvement/volunteer activities and financial need. We received 45 applications from students in total. These outlined a range of impressive accomplishments and interests, while also demonstrating a universal commitment to values that strengthen our communities.

The applicants wrote passionately about their volunteer involvement in schools, churches, their community and even overseas to address such issues as mental illness, hunger, children's education, at-risk youth and environmental challenges. One recipient's comment, "I learned that there is power in one person and that I can make a difference," exemplified the value that these students attached to giving back to the community.

The selection committee faced some difficult decisions with the impressive group of candidates before them and we are pleased to congratulate our inaugural Head Start Scholars.

Ariana Abdul
Adejumoke Adeshina
Aisha Afrah
Stacey Bien-Aime
Jeahlisa Bridgeman
Long Cheng
Tasha Davidson

Jocelyne Lamarche
Monique Mitchell
Jes Muli
Ruth Nara
Lisa Ogbomo
Sylvia Pinsonneault
Jocelyn Reaume

Sahar Salimi-Mosavi
Margaret Shanks
Morgan Suggitt
Manuel Villatoro
Terah Wong
Sarah Yu
Mary Zhang



Tasha Davidson



Jocelyne Lamarche



Morgan Suggitt



Mary Zhang



VHA staff pose at our BPSO Champions workshop on August 14.

over the next three years VHA teams will implement selected RNAO best practice guidelines and then evaluate them on improving client care and patient outcomes.

To date, we have two pilots underway in Durham and Sarnia. Our Durham West and Sarnia teams have each selected two aspects of the RNAO's Assessment and Management of Stage I to IV Pressure Ulcers Best Practice Guideline to ensure best practices, and best care for their clients.

VHA Spotlights Best Practices

VHA's journey to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO) has begun! We officially launched our candidacy for BPSO recognition by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) during the week of August 15 -22 with workshops, guest speakers and presentations in our Toronto, Sarnia, Chatham, London, Ottawa and Durham locations.

The BPSO process seeks to make a positive impact on patient care through evidence-based practice. As a BPSO candidate,





Creating More Independence



VHA Home HealthCare has no corporate or other affiliation with VHA Health & Home Support, also known as VHA Ottawa. VHA Health & Home Support can be reached through their website at www.vhaottawa.ca.



Visit our website at www.vha.ca

All of our services are available in your own home, at school, in hospital or in a long-term care facility.

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
- Consultation and Education

VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF/ SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Dietitians
- Occupational Therapists
- Personal Support Workers/Homemakers
- Physiotherapists
- Registered Nurses/Registered Practical Nurses
- Social Workers
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Client Service Coordinators/Supervisors



VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of United Way Toronto and a contracted provider with Toronto Central, Central, Central East, Central West, South West, Mississauga Halton, Champlain, and Erie St. Clair CCACs, the City of Toronto's Homemakers and Nurses Services program and the Regional Municipality of Durham.

We welcome your support!

Membership

VHA welcomes new associate members and encourages people in the community to get involved with VHA. Our membership fee of \$25 can be waived in special circumstances. Please contact Patricia Triantafilou at 416.489.2500 or patricia@vha.ca.

Donation

Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need. Donations are welcome online, by mail, phone or in person. Our sincerest thanks for your generosity.

Comments or Suggestions? Contact the interim editor of Community Care Connection

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