

Message from the President and CEO

Carol Annett ~ CEO & President, VHA Home HealthCare

Sharing the Journey

Henry Ford once said, “Coming together is a beginning; staying together is progress; working together is success.” At VHA, we have passed the beginning and progress milestones in our Client Voice journey and we are ready to meet success head on.

“Nothing about me without me”—the phrase used to recognize that people who receive care should have a say in it—has been a guiding principle for us since 2013. In our quest to provide more client- and family-centred care, we have taken deliberate steps to transform how we listen to and collaborate with our clients and their families.

Our goal is to build a culture that seeks the voice of clients and their families at every stage and in every aspect of our organization. I’m excited by our progress. Our Client and Carer Advisory Council has made invaluable contributions to the materials we share with clients, our recruitment activities, and our processes.

Our Client Voice journey continues with the introduction of a VHA Client Voice Liaison. Stacey Ryan, who is profiled on page 4, will help us listen to more clients and families, and identify opportunities to meaningfully engage them in our work. We are excited to welcome her to VHA.

Each year around this time VHA shines a light on family and friend caregivers so their stories may be heard more broadly. On April 25, our Heart of Home Care Award ceremony honoured three caregivers—Fiona Conely, Mona Ismail and Suzanne Retter—who have gone above and beyond to help a chronically ill, elderly or disabled love one live with dignity at home.



The ceremony is always uplifting but this year’s had a special energy. From the new venue, Telus House in downtown Toronto, to a roof-raising performance by Juno award-winning singer Jully Black, it was moving, inspiring and celebratory. Many thanks to our sponsors on page 3 for helping to elevate this year’s event.

Our winners—and indeed all caregivers—are triumphs of the human spirit. I encourage you to watch and listen to our winners’ stories at www.bit.ly/2016HeartVideos, and to share them. We intend to continue to shine a light on the invaluable role caregivers play and we are confident our health care system will move closer to creating the critical supports they need.

Enclosed with this newsletter is our latest **annual report**. It celebrates the unique bonds forged through home care and our commitment to continued spectacular care for years to come.

Looking ahead, we are preparing for our review by Accreditation Canada. This team effort will ensure our processes and services truly reflect the highest quality, VHA’s values, and commitment to deliver what matters most to our clients and their families. I look forward to sharing this journey with you in future issues.



2016 Heart of Home Care Awards an Uplifting Celebration

This April, three more outstanding family and friend caregivers joined the list of winners of VHA's Heart of Home Care Award. Suzanne Retter of Oshawa, Fiona Conely of Scarborough and Memoona (Mona) Ismail of Toronto received this year's award, which recognizes individuals who go to extraordinary lengths to care for a friend or family member who is disabled, elderly, or chronically ill, so they can live at home with more independence.



Left to Right - Suzanne, Mona, Fiona.

The winners, several nominees, and their friends and family were treated to a special pre-ceremony luncheon with VHA staff and the award sponsors. For many of the caregivers, it was a rare opportunity to enjoy a relaxing afternoon away from the demands of caregiving.

"We know that caregiving is an all-consuming job with lots of challenges," says Carol Annett, President and CEO of VHA Home HealthCare. "Every year I'm astounded and uplifted by the stories and the lengths



Carol Annett speaks to attendees at the award luncheon for winners and nominees.

the winners and nominees go to to help their loved ones remain at home. It is important to us to give these unsung heroes a very special and memorable day."

To that end, Telus invited VHA to host the Heart of Home Care Award ceremony in its impressive venue in downtown Toronto.

Attendees also enjoyed a rousing acoustic performance by Juno Award-winning singer Jully Black. Jully's story of her mother's long-term caregiving journey reminded us that caregivers affect so many lives. Her powerful vocals set a celebratory tone and brought everyone to their feet dancing and clapping.



Singer Jully Black.

"The feedback we received on the event was resoundingly positive," says Carol. "By telling these incredible stories in an environment of positivity and celebration, we honour the individual caregivers and draw greater attention to broader caregiver issues and the need for more respite and supports. Everyone left with a song in their heart and a greater appreciation for the time, compassion, patience and love inherent in every caregiver story."

We are pleased to share profiles of the winners of the 2016 Heart of Home Care Awards here. You can also see their video stories at www.bit.ly/2016HeartVideos.

Suzanne Retter - Winner, Caregiver to an Adult

Sponsored by **Telus**

Suzanne, a real estate agent was recognized for the exceptional care she gave to her friend Bert. Suzanne met Bert online in the “seeking friendship only” listings. Their shared interest in photography and Bert’s “magnetic personality” helped them bond instantly. The pair took several road trips together, exploring and photographing the vast, beautiful landscapes of Ontario. Sadly, after six years of friendship, Bert was diagnosed with stage four cancer. With limited finances and no family in Canada, Bert, an immigrant from Tobago, had few options. Suzanne didn’t hesitate; she offered Bert a room in her home, put her career on hold, and spent several months helping Bert live out his last days as comfortably and happily as possible. Suzanne simply felt “it was the human thing to do,” but VHA nurse and nominator Jill Lindo felt differently. “Suzanne is truly an amazing woman,” Lindo says.



Suzanne and friend.

Fiona Conely - Winner, Caregiver to a Child (over 18)

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When Fiona’s son Jason was only four months old, she learned that he had cerebral palsy. Then her mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and Fiona lost a major support. She was left with the incredibly difficult task of caring for a son with a disability and a mother whose health and mental faculties were rapidly declining. But despite the odds against a young, single mother with limited education, Fiona persevered. She returned to school to complete her high school diploma, overcame depression and took training courses that helped her to land a job at a charitable clothing bank that supports people with addiction issues. “She is the living embodiment of service to others which I think most of us are missing



Fiona and her friends.

in our life today,” says her friend and nominator, Madelynn Cooper. Two decades on, Fiona has managed to create a happy, hopeful life for both herself and for Jason.

Memoona (Mona) Ismail - Winner, Caregiver to an Adult

Sponsored by **Teak Printing**

After learning her father-in-law Moosa—a former soccer player originally from South Africa—had Alzheimer’s disease, Mona put her own catering career on hold to become a full-time caregiver. “Because of my culture and my faith, it’s my honour to care for my elders,” Mona says. Despite Moosa’s failing faculties, the care Mona provided strengthened their bond. She played music and kept Moosa’s brain stimulated with puzzles and crosswords and took on the role of “nurse” at home. At the hospital she was a strong advocate for her father-in-law with medical staff who were sometimes dismissive. Despite the challenges of caregiving, Mona is truly upbeat. “I have a mother-in-law who has now started with early dementia, so that’s where I’m going to get all my experience (from Moosa) now to pass on to her,” says Mona. “She’s the best,” notes Fatima Ismail, Mona’s mother-in-law, with a smile.



Mona with Teak Printing owner Don Hardy, and her husband Fareed.

Thank you to our wonderful sponsors for making the 2016 Heart of Home Care Awards such a success:

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VHA Welcomes Client Voice Liaison



Stacey Ryan is getting plenty of practice perfecting her elevator pitch. Her first days as VHA Home HealthCare's first Client Voice Liaison have been a flurry of meetings with managers and team leaders across the organization to explain how her liaison role will support them to meaningfully bring clients and family into their work.

As Client Voice Liaison, Stacey will coordinate connections between VHA staff, clients and family members. By talking to point-of-care staff and the people they serve, she will help VHA's clients and families understand the value their perspective can bring to our work, and invite them to engage in Client Voice opportunities. At the same time, she will maintain regular contact with VHA program leaders to stay abreast of new opportunities to incorporate the client and family voice into everything we do.

The Client Voice Liaison position grew out of conversations around the table at VHA's Client Voice Steering Committee meetings and our extensive research into Client Voice best practices. Having a full-time liaison was a long-term goal for VHA as we establish a foundation of readiness for the culture shift. Initially, VHA's volunteer coordinator conducted liaison activities one day a week, but interest from both staff and clients was high and it quickly became evident that a full-time position was required.

Stacey is well qualified for the role. She was a caregiver to her daughter, Sadler, for many years, which is how she first became acquainted with VHA. "The care was fantastic," she says. Around the time that Sadler passed away, she was invited to join VHA's Client Voice Advisory Council, the group of clients and family that provides key insights into what relationships can look like for VHA in terms of client involvement.

"Having been a caregiver for 17 years and received services from VHA, I think my unique perspective will help me closely relate to clients and their stories," Stacey says. "It will help me encourage them to become Client Voice volunteer partners, which will encourage the entire VHA organization continue to move towards client- and family-centered care."

"VHA has always been interested in hearing from our clients and families," says Barbara Cawley, VHA's vice president of client services. "We have done a good job of surveying clients, conducting quality calls, follow-up visits, etc. But these activities are all after the fact. Stacey will be key to bringing in the client and family voice right from the start, as we design initiatives."

Stacey observes that enthusiasm among VHA staff is incredibly high and is overwhelmed by the positivity and support from families and clients of VHA. In many ways, the enthusiasm is her biggest challenge. "There are so many requests for involvement from everyone. It's sometimes challenging to balance all of them and identify which clients would be best for quick projects."

She is committed, however, to helping VHA build a robust Client Voice program. "It's inspiring to work with such dedicated people who only want to make things better and help someone. I'm excited to build a foundation and future around engaging our clients and matching them with projects. [Everyone is] totally on board with everything I have planned."

While Stacey plans for a busy year ahead, Barbara too is seeing more activity on her plate as external interest in VHA's Client Voice initiatives grows. "We have been approached by other home care and health service organizations within and outside of Ontario—organizations that recognize the challenge of incorporating the client voice when your clients don't come to a specific building for service. We have also been invited to give a variety of presentations about our Client Voice initiatives and we're excited to share our insights," she says.

We have had tremendous success over the last three years shifting the culture at VHA toward recognizing the value of the client and family voice. But there is still more to do. VHA staff and service providers are inspired by the potential for deeper, richer connections with our clients that will strengthen our ability to deliver more spectacular care.



Eye on Quality

VHA is ramping up for our 2016 Accreditation Survey!

VHA is preparing for its sixth accreditation survey with Accreditation Canada, a major quality improvement initiative. VHA achieved 100% of Accreditation Canada's standards of excellence in our previous two surveys. We nonetheless continually work to improve quality at VHA. Surveyors will be on site in November 2016 and we're confident we'll maintain our exemplary status.

We have identified strengths and opportunities for improvement in our patient safety culture. This information arose out of the required Accreditation Canada survey, completed by point of care employees in 2015. Soon we'll be re-administering the Worklife Pulse survey to assess VHA's work life from the employees' perspective. A number of improvement initiatives were also implemented over the past few years including:

- The 'beyond engagement' leadership program that focuses on what matters most to staff and service providers and is provided by Juice Inc.
- VHA Spark!, an online platform for staff and service providers to submit, vote and comment on quality improvement ideas, allowing their voice to be heard and responded to by leadership

- Enhanced efforts to recognize staff and service providers for outstanding job performance

The Worklife Pulse survey was last done in 2014 and the 2016 survey findings will indicate how effective our improvement efforts have been and where further improvement may be needed.

What's New for 2016?

As a Canadian and international health care accreditation body, Accreditation Canada is "in a unique position to lead, support and accelerate the implementation of a client- and family-centred care approach." The standards have a significantly increased focus on client- and family-centered care. VHA is well-positioned to meet the new and revised standards that require input, partnership and collaboration with clients and families. Our Client and Family Voice initiative, started in 2013, has greatly expanded collaboration with VHA's client/families and VHA has already experienced substantial benefits from these partnerships (see article on page 4).

VHA Wins Communications Department of the Year!



The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) – Toronto has awarded VHA Home HealthCare with its 2016 Ovation Award of Distinction in the category of Not-for-Profit Communications Department of the Year. The prestigious award celebrates excellence in communications and the power to capture people's attention, imagination and hearts.

"We are extremely excited by the award," says Pamela Stoikopoulos, Senior Communications and Public Relations Manager. "We are a small

team but we accomplish a lot because we work very well together—pushing and supporting one another to create materials that are faithful to VHA's mission and vision. It's great to have that important teamwork recognized."



Creating More Independence

30 Soudan Avenue, Suite 600, Toronto, ON M4S 1V6



A DIVISION OF VHA HOME HEALTHCARE



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 at home, school, in hospital or a long-term care facility.

VHA PROVIDES:

- 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/Nurse Practitioners
- Social Workers
- Rehab Assistants
- 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 416.482.4617 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 editor of Community Care Connection

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