



Creating More Independence



2014 Annual Report

Reflecting client & family wishes



*Attract what you expect,  
Reflect what you desire,  
Become what you respect,  
Mirror what you admire.  
Unknown*

# Reflecting client & family wishes

## Message from the President and Board Chair

2014 was a year when VHA Home HealthCare's work on reflecting the client and family voice in everything we do moved out of the abstract and very clearly became a focused component of VHA's "big picture."

Welcoming clients and families into the fold offers incredible potential for quality improvements and helps ensure that our services and processes truly mirror client and family wishes, capturing our core belief that our care must be *client-driven because what matters most to clients and families is what counts*. But gleaning insights from those we are here to serve also holds the potential to magnify every wrinkle, every imperfection and every flaw under bright fluorescent lights! Without risk though, there is no reward. With client and family input, we are taking significant steps forward to continue to provide high quality care to those we serve.

While bringing clients and families on board is common in institutional settings, it is mostly uncharted territory in home and community care. So while we learned from others in constructing the fundamentals for successful integration, we continue to carve out a custom-made framework that suits the unique needs of our sector and organization. In 2014, this included: recruiting for our Client and Carer Advisory Council; recording the experiences of clients and family members for VHA's own training purposes; interviewing clients and family members to glean the qualities we should be looking for when recruiting; and presenting our ongoing work, successes and learning at Accreditation Canada's annual conference.

We also finalized our exciting new 2015-2020 strategic plan in late 2014. We happily realized, however, that much is already underway to help us achieve our new strategic directions of:

- Becoming **More Attuned** to client, caregiver and partner voices to help us deliver on our mission of *creating possibilities for more independence*, empowering people to make informed care decisions for themselves and their families.
- Building on exciting relationships to be **More Connected** to not only assure our relevance in a rapidly evolving health care system, but also to impel VHA to break new ground in research and development of integrated solutions that reflect the needs of the community.
- Realizing **More Inspired Solutions** by tapping into the energy and expertise of our staff, service providers and tech-savvy partners to drive best practices, improve the client experience, and deliver equitable, sustainable solutions for Ontarians.

To that end, VHA's three-year journey as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization® (BPSO) candidate kept the delivery of evidenced-based care front and centre. This Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) sponsored program is

rigorous, but, as we approached the finish line towards full designation, we're proud of our results. We look forward to the ongoing trek as a designate that ultimately helps us deliver on our core belief of providing care that is *spectacular and continuously focused on quality improvement and safety*.

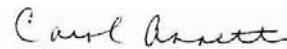
Our staff and service providers also took centre stage in 2014. From an industry perspective, this included the Ontario government's positive step of rolling out the first of a three-year PSW wage enhancement funding strategy. PSWs play a critical role in keeping people at home and it is high time their efforts were acknowledged and valued in this way.

Our quest to make our care even more spectacular included a major technological investment with the introduction of VHA Spark!, software developed by Soapbox Inc. that allows ALL staff and service providers to share innovative ideas—for both client and workplace improvements—with the entire organization. More importantly, it includes a system that allows colleagues to vote on the ideas and, once the vote threshold is reached, assigns action steps to be taken by the most appropriate leader. Just as we've worked hard to listen to the voices of our clients and families, VHA Spark! ensures every part of our workforce has an opportunity to be heard.

The successful completion of the Mobility Plus project rollout—which provides PSWs with electronic mobile devices further enhanced the flow of communication between clients, PSWs and the support staff in our customer service centre. It is outlined in greater detail in *Mobility Plus—A VHA Success Story* on page 18. After a fruitful pilot in 2013, Picalere—software currently used by nurses to track progress on clients’ wounds, was also rolled out in 2014 to our Fairview clinic and will gradually expand to include all treatment types at the clinic. Each of these steps, and the lessons they provide, help move VHA closer to our ultimate goal of a complete electronic health record.

The continued success of these projects and our services would not be achievable without the ongoing support of our partners, funders, donors and referral sources who inspire us to reach higher and do better. For their time and energy we at VHA are indebted. We’d also like to thank our spectacular staff, service providers and volunteers—including VHA’s board of directors—for their commitment, insights and passion that help us continue to realize our mission of **creating possibilities for more independence.**

As we move to 2015 and to celebrating a remarkable 90 years in providing community care, we do so knowing that we will honour our legendary past by looking forward to a future of possibilities. It’s a future that continues to honestly reflect our clients’ needs, abilities and desires so that how they choose to receive care, live and die is their decision and theirs alone.



Carol Annett  
President and CEO



Adwoa K. Buahene  
Board Chair



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VHA Home HealthCare



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# Facts and figures 2014

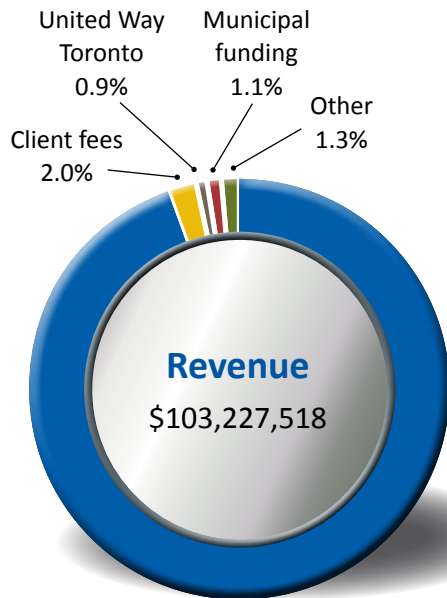
In 2014, VHA Home HealthCare's **2,128 staff and service providers** delivered **2,364,746 units of service** to **86,650 clients** admitted to care where and when they needed it.

We provided **5,340 hours of parent relief** and **76,638 hours of charitable community support services to clients in need**. Our service volunteers gave of their talents and enthusiasm to the tune of **6,044 hours of volunteer service**.

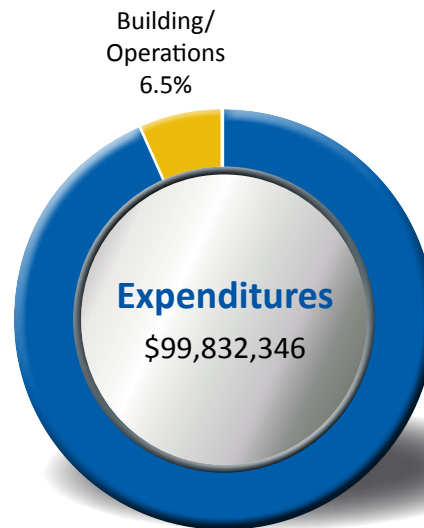
**429 Extreme Cleaning clients** received support to stay safe in their homes – and **30 tenants** with severe mental illness received shelter and support at Adams House, transitional housing for people at risk of homelessness.

VHA staff and service providers had access to over **\$200,000 from our Simple Comforts fund and Ideas to Action/Innovation Fund** to provide clients with extra items they needed and to kickstart new projects to support more efficient and spectacular care.

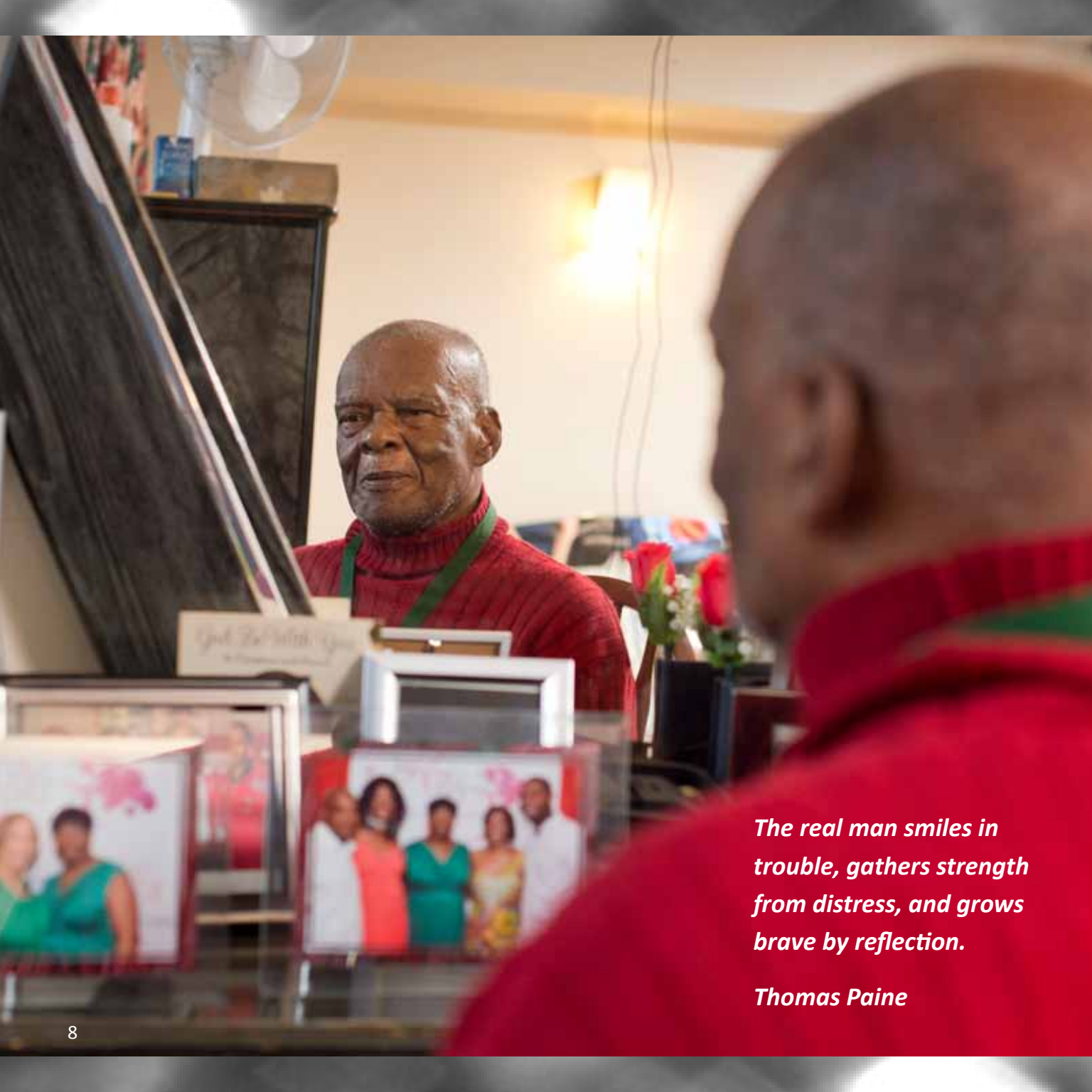
VHA also delivered **30,261 hours of staff training** this year.



Community Care  
Access Centres  
94.7%



Salaries, benefits &  
purchased services  
93.5%



*The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength from distress, and grows brave by reflection.*

*Thomas Paine*



# Highlights

- Honoured the challenging and inspiring journeys of our **2014 Heart of Home Care Award** winners: Pamela Andrews, Kazumi and David Alsemgeest, Joyce Nunn and Vicky Willis for their unwavering commitment to caring for an ill loved one. The event also hosted a presentation on technology and dementia by Dr. Alex Mihailidis.
- Set VHA's future path after working diligently on our strategic plan. The result is an ambitious **2015 - 2020 Strategic Plan** that puts client and family wants, needs and insights at the centre of VHA's vision.
- Successfully recruited client and family partners to join our newly-minted **Client and Carer Advisory Council**.
- Brought clients and family members on board for numerous improvement projects to provide their feedback, and offer suggestions to ensure VHA staff and service providers get a fulsome understanding of the client and/or family perspective.
- Successfully piloted two innovative **Volunteer Hoarding Support Programs** in London (funded by the federal New Horizons for Seniors program) and Toronto which are now permanent programs. The programs volunteers receive comprehensive training from a VHA Occupational Therapist with expertise in hoarding. Once trained the volunteers conduct home visits, helping clients to sort through and discard items while being sensitive to feelings of stress and anxiety the process can evoke.
- Successfully passed our **United Way Review**, which resulted in VHA being placed on the five-year tier review – the highest possible standing.
- Celebrated the dedicated and spectacular care of our long service award recipients: 116 with five years of service, 102 with 10 years, 28 with 15 years, 25 with 20 years, two with 25 and one worker with an amazing 35 years of outstanding service.



*Hold up a mirror and ask yourself what you are capable of doing, and what you really care about. Then take the initiative - don't wait for someone else to ask you to act.*

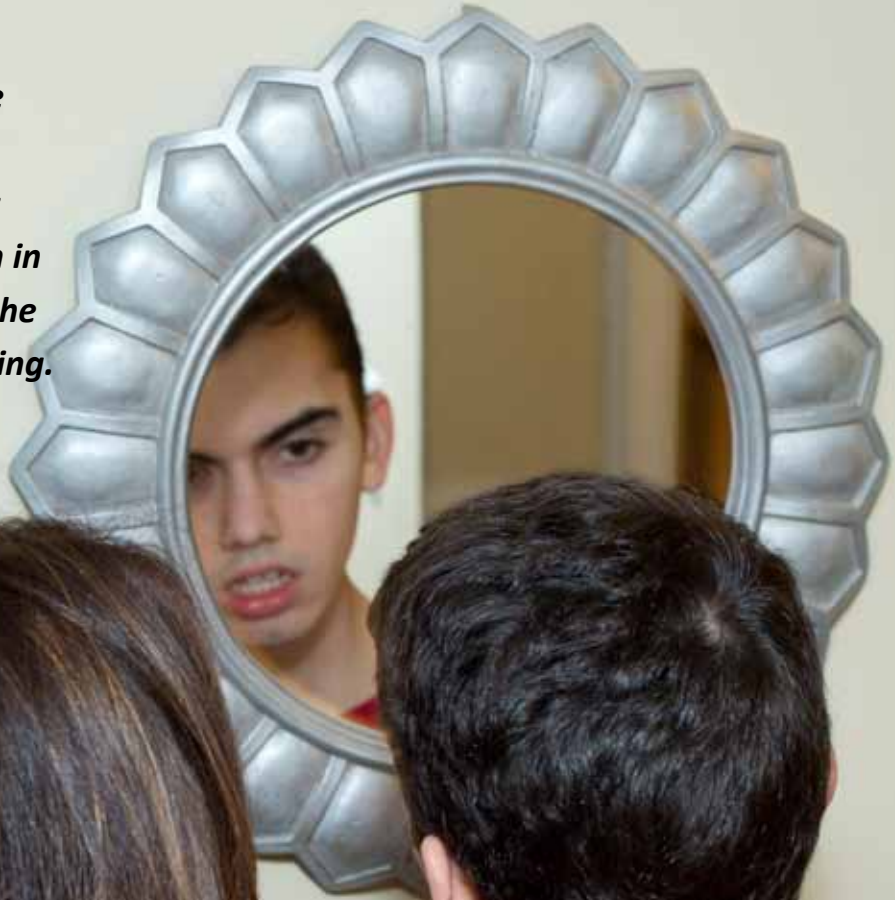
*Sylvia Earle*

# Sharing and caring

- In consultations with over 40 community agency representatives, identified a service gap and expanded our **Extreme Cleaning program** to Ottawa in the fall of 2014.
- Offered four eight-week group sessions of our **Baby and Toddler Rehab Therapy program** in Toronto. The program is designed to support children with low muscle tone and also helps their parents, who often feel isolated by their child's condition, connect with each other in a relaxed and fun environment.
- Delivered **Ring and Reach** telephone and online seminars at no cost to caregivers across Canada on some of the most pressing issues caregivers face, including advance care planning, dealing with difficult behavior, hoarding and self-care for caregivers.
- In partnership with Community & Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS), participated in a project to help seniors, who have issues with clutter management or are diagnosed as a hoarder, to remain in their homes.
- Awarded 20, \$1,500 **Head Start Scholarships** to children of VHA staff and service providers towards their post-secondary education. Grant recipients' specializations are diverse and include programs such as: physical therapy, culinary management, new media studies, nursing, electrical engineering, criminology and business management.
- Partnered with Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital to offer an enhanced orientation program supporting the New Graduate Guarantee (NGG) and Internationally Educated Nurse Initiative (IENI) for the Child and Family Program.
- Piloted **VHA Voice** – a newsletter that shares tips, information and updates with VHA clients and their caregivers. The newsletter was inspired by the suggestion of a caregiver and its content and design had input from clients and caregivers.
- Received \$75,000 from the City of Toronto to support much needed renovations at Adams House. The residence is owned by VHA and houses people with severe mental health challenges who are at risk of institutionalization or homelessness.

***A healthy social life is found only, when in the mirror of each soul the whole community finds its reflection, and when in the whole community the virtue of each one is living.***

***Rudolf Steiner***



# Learning and innovating

- Launched **VHA Spark!** An idea-generating software tool designed to give all of our over 2,000 staff and service providers an equal voice in quality improvements both for clients and our teams. By the close of 2014 (only three months after launching) VHA Spark! had 668 users and 29 ideas implemented, in progress or under consideration.
- Completed training and rollout of **Mobility Plus**—a project that introduced mobile devices to over 1,000 Personal Support Workers. The devices have enhanced communication between the office and field and increased client satisfaction (see page 18 for more).
- Successfully implemented **Pixalere** – a mobile electronic tool that allows our clinic nurses to use a tablet or laptop to chart wound care online.
- Received \$250,000 in funding from the City of Toronto to continue and expand our **Extreme Cleaning Services**. Also received a new grant to lead the creation of a Hoarding Support Services Network.
- Provided staff with **30,261 hours** of education and training including orientation, training at the Dorothy Wylie Institute and the **Juice: Beyond Engagement** strategy which has benefitted 1,443 staff and service providers.
- Launched **Work\$mart** – a simple and straightforward education funding support program for VHA employees to help them achieve their educational goals.
- As part of its commitment to evidence-based best practice and quality care, VHA's nursing teams participated in an Annual Advanced Competencies/Best Practice Review at George Brown College. Using the school's simulation labs with specialized equipment and lifelike models, nurses demonstrated their competence in varying practice requirements.
- Expanded VHA's new **Personal Support model** to our Central East Team and eastern portion of Toronto Central. The model includes the expertise of PSW Coaches—more seasoned Personal Support Workers—to help their colleagues uncover solutions and gain peer support.
- Completed VHA's second **Late Career Nursing initiative** focused on supporting documentation standards and health literacy.
- Expanded our Customer Service Centre work-at-home program, improving our ability to respond to callers and coordinate care, particularly in the early morning hours, peak times and emergency situations.



*There are two ways of spreading  
light: to be the candle or the  
mirror that reflects it.*

*Edith Wharton*

# Reaching out

- Participated in 51 external presentations, publications and poster displays, including:
  - Accreditation Canada, Quality Conference – *Medication Reconciliation in Home Care: Sharing Our Process and Strategies.*
  - Ontario Community Support Association Conference – *Making Performance Measurement Work for You: Take Charge and Continually Improve* as well as *Changing the Client Experience - One Conversation at a Time.*
  - National Community Health Nurses Conference – *Knowledge Mobilization: Transforming Client Centred Care from concept to teachable, observable and measurable behavior: One home health care organization's experience, Use of Low-Fidelity Simulation to Evaluate Advanced Practice Competencies in Home Health Nursing, as well as Improving Access to Professional Development Opportunities for Late Career Nurses in Not-for-Profit Organizations: The Community Experience.*
  - Canadian Home Care Association – *Client and Family Centred Care, Nursing Competency Review, Client Voice, and Found on Floor – Multi-Incident Analysis.*
  - Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists Conference – *You've Graduated Now What?*
  - RNAO/BPSO Knowledge Exchange – *Student Research @ VHA Home HealthCare: Two Carrots with One Trowel.*
- Published journal article in Physiotherapy Canada on *Self-Management Goal Setting: Identifying the practice patterns of Community Based Physical Therapists.*
- Featured in a record number of media outlets including: CityTV, The Toronto Sun, The Kingston Whig-Standard and the London Free Press.
- Profiled our four amazing Heart of Home Care Award winners in a series of three-minute videos that premiered at the ceremony and garnered more than 6,000 views on Youtube.



# 2014 Heart of Home Care Award Winners

Recognized for the incredible love, dedication and positivity they bring to caregiving, 2014's Heart of Home Care Award winners are pure inspiration. For the first time, these incredible "love stories" were captured on film for the world to see. Needless to say we are all left awestruck by their resiliency and ability to find light where others see darkness. Visit [www.vha.ca/heart](http://www.vha.ca/heart) to view their remarkable stories.



## Pamela Andrews

"I was not prepared at all for Aidan," Pamela says. "There was no indication that there would be any trouble with him."

But when Pamela gave birth to her son Aidan in 2004, he had to be resuscitated. A few days later, he was diagnosed with cerebral palsy, severe brain injuries and seizures.

The doctors told Pamela that Aidan wouldn't live long once he was removed from life support. Despite her uncertainty, Pamela made the unimaginable decision to take him off it. That was 10 years ago—Aidan proved the doctors wrong.

"The way she looks after him is amazing," says Safiye Sharmaake, a PSW at VHA who nominated Pamela for the award. "She is completely devoted to her children."

## Kazumi and David Alsemgeest

In 2007, Kazumi and David Alsemgeest moved to London, Ontario from Japan to raise their three energetic children. But before they could live out their dream, devastating news hit: in 2010, their second son Rey was diagnosed with Batten Disease, a rare and fatal degenerative disorder of the nervous system. Six months later came even more heartbreak—their daughter Mei also has the disease. Despite their grief, Kazumi and David remain Rey and Mei's rock, caring for their family's physical needs while grappling with their own emotional turmoil remarkably well.



"The level of care we have to give them, we've grown into it so it feels like it's natural to us," David says.

Shortly after they **received the award Rey passed away**. In his mother's words: *"Rey is loved by so many – we couldn't imagine. We are deeply sad and miss him already but I know that Rey is now free to run..."*



## Joyce Nunn

Michael Sean Gardner had ambitions of becoming a mechanical engineer until a terrible car accident not only shattered his pelvis, but his dreams. The accident left him in a coma for three months and with extensive brain damage. His mother Joyce faced two choices: give up hope or fight for her son's recovery. She chose the latter. While doctors said Michael would never walk again, Joyce had a different opinion.

Joyce gave up her job as a teacher to be Michael's primary caregiver for 14 years. Joyce's role has evolved from caregiver to life coach and cheerleader.

With her unwavering commitment, she has never left his side. "Joyce never gave up for a moment," says Sharon Romashyna, who, along with Joyce's daughter Janet, nominated her for the award. "Her faith and belief in her son and family has carried her through. She and Michael continue to be inspirations to all they know and love."



## Vicky Willis

After moving to Gananoque, Jeff and Vicky were looking forward to starting an exciting new chapter in their lives replete with a beautiful house overlooking the St Lawrence River. But soon after the move, colleagues began noticing changes in Jeff's behaviour.



He started missing meetings, failed some tests and, most importantly, seemed completely unfazed by these events. Soon Jeff, who was only 47 at the time, was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia.

Vicky – who has no other family in town – became Jeff's primary caregiver. Not only did she look after the household but also oversaw Jeff's day-to-day well-being.

For four years, she provided about 155 hours of care a week — including bathing, shaving, preparing meals, dealing with incontinence and finding creative ways to keep Jeff from wandering – with breaks provided by a personal support worker just a few hours a week.

Vicki Poffley, Executive Director at the Alzheimer Society of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington (ASKFLA) was one of Vicky's nominators: "She takes every day as it comes and faces the challenges that come her way. For lack of a better word, she is quite simply a caregiving rock star!"

Sponsored by:



# Mobility Plus— A VHA success story

In the spring of 2013 VHA began a journey to provide Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and office staff with:

- **A quick and simple way to sign in/out of visits**
- **Easy access to client and scheduling information**
- **Better communication with the office and with other providers**
- **Reduced administration around the follow up of unconfirmed visits**

Our success would be measured by reducing missed visits, call time, and unconfirmed visits. The pilot project included a team from the office and twenty PSWs. We involved all PSWs in device selection and held focus groups with the pilot team to learn from our trial.



By March 2014 we had over 900 PSWs on Mobility Plus and today we have over 1,100 mobility plus users including shift nurses.

The results are that missed visits have been reduced by more than half, unconfirmed visits dropped 85%, and staff calls decreased 20%. Overall staff enjoy using the mobile phone—a Blackberry Z10—and feel they have more information about the client before they visit and better communication with supervisors and office staff. One PSW noted, *“It is very efficient to communicate through quick and easy emails.”*

## Vision:

Accessible, quality care for all who need it

## Mission:

Creating possibilities for more independence

## Core Beliefs:

Our care must be:

**Client-driven**, because what matters most to clients and families is what counts

**Spectacular** and continuously focused on quality improvement and safety

**Integrated and collaborative** to unearth innovative answers to complex challenges

**Inclusive and committed** to serving the most vulnerable in our communities

**Inspired and creative**, delivered by a skilled team that has tremendous heart

## Board of Directors

**Adwoa K. Buahene**, Board Chair

John Macfarlane – Past Board Chair

Jeff Litwin

Harold Lenfesty

Joseph Mayer

Zeeva Millman

Cheryl McGrath

Paul Moroney

Tomi Nieminen

James Robertson

Diane Savage

Ann Weir

Catherine Wiley

*As a charitable not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, VHA is committed to:*

- **Valuing and supporting our staff and care providers**
- **Fiscal responsibility**
- **Ethical practices in all our operations**
- **Driving positive change in community support and home health care**

*Thank you...to all our community partners, funders, volunteers and donors. With your support, we're creating possibilities for more independence every day.*



Creating More Independence

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**United Way**  
Member Agency



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](http://www.vhaottawa.ca).

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