

## Winter 2016-2017

Issue 37

### Message from the President and CEO

Carol Annett ~ CEO & President, VHA Home HealthCare

#### A Season of Superlatives

As another calendar year comes to a close, I am pleased to say that it is ending on a high note for VHA Home HealthCare. The past few months have seen a series of exciting activities that celebrate our ongoing work. Words like “exemplary”, “ground-breaking” and “transformative” spring to mind. And each success positions us to make terrific strides in our mission to deliver spectacular care in the New Year.



In late November, VHA welcomed surveyors from Accreditation Canada to our Toronto offices. Their periodic review of our organization is an opportunity for us to take an exhaustive look at where and how VHA can improve itself and our client care. As one of our tongue-in-cheek internal messages said, who wouldn't want to do gap analyses on over 500 standards and criteria?

I am so pleased that VHA has been accredited for another four years with Exemplary Status. Achieving this milestone not only marks the third consecutive time we have reached the highest of national standards, it also demonstrates our ongoing commitment to providing safe, high-quality health services.

This quarter, we also hosted a royal delegation from Norway to exchange knowledge about health care and technological advances. Internally, we continued our progress on VHA's electronic medical records initiative. And our much-needed Playdate program got some high-profile coverage in the news. You can read more about these and other activities in this issue.

None of our success would be possible without the determined, committed and enthusiastic efforts of our staff, service

providers and volunteers, and the valued support of our partners and funders. The holidays are a time to enjoy family and community and appreciate the many gifts we have in our lives. Each of you is part of VHA's community circle, and we are ever so grateful for the gift of your support. Thank you, and Happy New Year.

#### Spectacular Spirit Surprise!

Back by popular demand, this December we surprised select clients and staff who needed a holiday “pick-me-up.” Visit [www.vha.ca/spectacular](http://www.vha.ca/spectacular) to watch these one-minute gifts of cheer!



*We surprised Janet and Bill with a holiday deer and gift cards to help them celebrate a remarkable 75 years of marriage.*

Newsletter brought to you by

**VHA Home HealthCare**  
Creating More Independence  
[www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)

## VHA Playdate Gives Kids a Chance to be Kids

It's Saturday afternoon, and in the halls of a Scarborough school you can hear the sound of laughter and song radiating from the gym. About a dozen children are taking part in VHA's Playdate, a pilot program that serves children with complex medical needs who have cognitive delay and/or are wheelchair dependent.

"Play is an integral part of childhood," says Caroline Hunter, Regional Manager of Client Services at VHA. "But because these children have complex medical needs, they spend a lot of their time at doctors' appointments and having tests and procedures done. Playdate is a chance for them to just be kids and have fun in a safe environment."

The concept was developed by family caregivers with the dual goals of offering a stimulating program for children and young adults with special needs and giving their parents an opportunity for much-needed relief and relaxation. Led by VHA staff and service providers, the participants, who range in age from 4 to 25 years, have a blast with music, art and other social, fun activities. Parents, meanwhile, rest assured that their children are supervised and receiving support from trained nurses and Personal Support Workers.

Initial feedback—from both the kids' smiling faces and parental interviews—has been overwhelmingly positive. "On the weekends they (my kids) like to get out," noted one mother whose children were



*Children with special needs share laughs at VHA's Playdate in November.*

part of the pilot. "At Playdate we feel comfortable because it is professional and safe. They are familiar and accepting and they fit in. You aren't worried about people's reactions – you can relax and feel comfortable."

The Playdate program ran as a free pilot for six weeks in October and November. Despite its overwhelming success, we haven't yet secured long-term funding to keep the program running. While VHA applies for grants and looks for other opportunities for continued support, we are also soliciting donations through our website [www.vha.ca/playdate](http://www.vha.ca/playdate) to keep the program going. The page also links to a CTV news story on the program. Our goal is to secure funding to run—at minimum—another six-week program in the New Year to give children on our wait list a chance to participate.

## Moving Forward with EMRI

Our Electronic Medical Record Initiative (EMRI) rollout is moving forward at a pace. Across the province, all new adult nursing clients of VHA (except palliative care) are being managed through the web-based application. EMRI gives these service providers immediate access to health information and the ability to complete and enhance their required documentation right in the client's home. Nursing staff and clients alike are benefitting from the efficiency, accountability transparency and safety the electronic medical records system offers. We asked nurses using EMRI to tell us "six word stories" about its benefits. The results (some listed in the box at right) were powerful.

We're excited to develop and roll out EMRI to child and family nursing clients as well as rehab service providers in 2017. Stay tuned for more updates!



### Six-Word Stories on EMRI

"Access to information one click away" - NK  
 "Finally, I'm nursing, not deciphering scribbles!" - JN  
 "Technology gives health care super powers" - MA  
 "Helps me communicate with nonverbal clients" - ZA



## London Community Foundation Funds VHA Hoarding Initiative

The effort to address the challenges posed by hoarding in London, Ontario got a big boost in November with the announcement that the London Community Foundation awarded VHA Home HealthCare a \$186,000 Community Vitality Grant to support the London/Middlesex County Hoarding Support Services Network.

“This grant is an incredible start to provide the much needed support to address the issue of hoarding in the community,” notes Cheryl Perera, VHA’s Director of New Ventures and Community Programs. Although VHA is the grant recipient, the network will be a collaborative effort between VHA, London and Middlesex Housing Corporation, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Middlesex, Middlesex London EMS and the London Police.

“We know that more than 500 cases of hoarding have been identified in the greater London area,” explains Perera. “By combining our resources and expertise we will be able to develop a better system to help people with hoarding behaviours.”

Hoarding is a diagnosed mental health disorder, the effects of which can be devastating and cause social, emotional and safety challenges. In the coming

months, the network will be offering training and consultation to people trying to better manage their hoarding behaviours. “The Community Vitality Grant will not only help us put critical systems into place, but will also allow us to roll up our sleeves and provide hands-on support to clients,” says Perera.

A similar network led by VHA in Toronto has successfully supported people to avoid eviction and homelessness. “The results can be transformative,” notes Perera. “This initiative will likely do the same for clients in London, where there are very limited resources to help people with chronic disorganization and hoarding issues. This funding is a vital step.”



*With funding support from London Community Foundation, more people in the region will receive support to declutter and avoid continued hoarding behaviours.*

## Role-Play Recruitment

At VHA, we understand that spectacular care starts with our staff and service providers. With more than 1,100 personal support workers (PSWs) providing a range of in-home care services to a diverse client base, it is critical that we place the right people in this important position. The work requires a range of soft skills, which are the most difficult to assess in a typical recruitment process.

VHA’s Human Resources team recently collaborated with clients, supervisors and service co-ordinators to pilot a “circuit interview”



process that takes PSW candidates through real-life scenarios. This approach gives candidates a more realistic idea of the nature of the work they are applying for. It also allows the circuit recruitment team, which includes clients, to see candidates in action – demonstrating their skills at interacting with clients in some challenging, but realistic, situations.

Once everyone completed the circuit, the team discussed the strengths of each candidate to differentiate between good and great applicants.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Role-Play Recruitment *(Continued from page 3)*

“Clients and families tell us that they appreciate a flexible PSW who is responsive to their needs. Circuit recruitment goes beyond interview questions and lets us see an honest display of who the candidate really is, how they’d react in a sudden situation and how well they think on their feet,” says Beth Posen, VHA’s Human Resources Manager.

Michelle Amerie, a VHA client and a member of our Client and Carer Advisory Council who volunteered to participate in VHA’s circuit recruitment interviews, was enthusiastic about being part of the role-playing activities. “If we have a program that helps prepare a PSW for their job and makes sure they are educated about what we need as clients, then absolutely I want to help with it,” she says.

“Being involved in this as a client ensures that the PSW gets a more realistic experience. My vision and an HR recruiter’s vision are different when it comes to planning scenarios. And for me to come in and be a part of this whole program creates a more realistic way to find out how these situations would be for a client,” she says.

The circuit recruitment pilot proved to be a great way to reinforce VHA’s commitment to spectacular care and to involving clients in all aspects of our work. “The program is still a work in progress,” says Beth. “Our pilot results were really positive and helped us hire PSWs we are confident will have the skills and personality to provide the best possible experience to our clients and their families.”

## VHA Gets the Royal Treatment



VHA Home HealthCare had the honour of hosting the Crown Prince and Princess of Norway’s “royal health care contingent” at our midtown Toronto office in November (unfortunately the Prince and Princess were previously engaged). Through conversations with leading health organizations in Canada, the delegation hoped to gain a better understanding of our health systems. These insights will help them improve and refine emerging technologies developed in Norway so they can be applied in a Canadian health care context.

Representatives from the Norwegian companies introduced us to some exciting health innovations that have met with great success in Norway including:

- an arterial flow “boot” by Otivio for people with peripheral arterial disease;
- a tool by Motitech to motivate individuals with dementia to do physical activity and improve cognition; and
- technology by Picomed that enables people with limited mobility to easily control a range of electronics and devices in their home.

It was a royally refreshing inter-cultural experience for all involved!



# Eye on Quality

## We Did It Again!

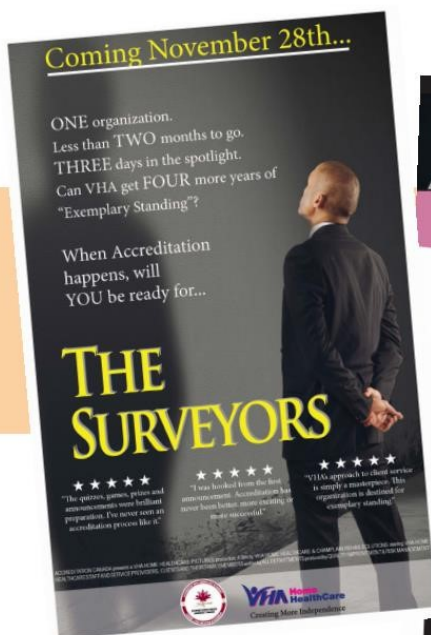
VHA received very positive feedback from Accreditation Canada surveyors on November 30th following the three-day onsite survey. We were awarded “accreditation with exemplary standing” having met a range of national standards for quality and safety. VHA also achieved exemplary standing in our last survey in 2012. We are absolutely delighted with this recognition and also appreciate the useful feedback from the surveyors that helps us continue to improve our care and services, as we know full well there is still a lot we could do better for our clients and their families.

### High praise from our surveyors included:

- The Board’s continued commitment to high quality, ethical, and safe care.
- Our commitment to provide client and family focused care and engage clients and families in decision-making. Surveyors reported that “The engagement of clients and families is a true strength of the organization.”
- New programs, all with an evaluation component, introduced to address ongoing needs of clients.

- VHA’s collaborative work done with community partners to provide new programs and services.
- Our robust orientation and staff educational programs.
- A strong commitment to quality and safety with a comprehensive quality improvement structure and incident management process.
- VHA’s eagerness to participate in research that fosters innovation and creativity in the quality care of clients.
- Being a leader in Ethical Practice in Home and Community Care.
- A comprehensive and thorough emergency preparedness program with a strong education component and a proactive committee.
- Dedicated staff and resources for planning and implementation of best practices and clinical education.

Our next accreditation survey is not until 2020, but the survey experience and results received in 2016 will help drive our improvement activities and strategic directions in the interim!



**I'm gonna let you finish, Kanye.**

**But first take a look at THIS superstar:**

**VHA rocks at empowering its workforce.**

- VHA Spark! lets staff and service providers (SPs) suggest improvements, and see what has been done with their ideas.
- Online and class-based learning and our orientation program ensure our staff are current with best practices and org-wide initiatives.
- \$200,000 in available funding through the Simple Comforts and Ideas to Innovation Funds to drive spectacular care.
- We provide preceptoring/mentoring of point-of-care staff and SPs to ensure they are comfortable and ready to start client visits.

**ACCREDITATION 2016**  
**We've got stuff to brag about.**

*Quizzes, contests and eye-catching posters like these helped to remind and educate staff about accreditation priorities.*



**Creating More Independence**

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



**United Way**  
Member Agency



**Visit our website at [www.vha.ca](http://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 Triantafyllou at 416.482.4617 or [patricia@vha.ca](mailto: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

**Pamela Stoikopoulos** : 416.489.2500 x4344 or 1.888.314.6622 email: [pstolk@vha.ca](mailto:pstolk@vha.ca)

Available in other accessible formats on request.