



# VHA Voice

ISSUE 13 ■ WINTER/SPRING ■ 2018

## Weathering the Storm: Winter Survival Tips

Ice, snow, cold temperatures, injury and illness can make winter a very hazardous time—especially for seniors. Like most things in life, when it comes to winter risks, it's always better to be prepared. By following these tips, you can keep yourself and your loved ones safe and healthy through to spring.

**1. Check and inspect:** Winter weather calls for extra checks to ensure safety. Get furnaces and hot water heaters inspected, and replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

**2. Stock up:** Severe weather can cause power outages and isolate seniors until roads are cleared. Be ready for major storms by making an Emergency Kit. Essentials like warm blankets, flashlights, non-perishable food, bottled water, medications and pet supplies will help ride out the storm safely. Make sure the kit is stored somewhere that is easy to access.

**3. Prevent falls:** Falling is one of the biggest dangers seniors face, and it can cause serious and long-term injury. Keep lots of salt or sand ready for icy walkways and steps, and if possible, hire someone to take care of shovelling. Make sure you and loved one wear sturdy, high-traction boots and replace worn cane tips. To prevent indoor slips, put a winter mat in the entranceway to safely store wet boots.

Check out more of our winter tips at [www.familycaregiving.ca](http://www.familycaregiving.ca)



## Nominate Your Amazing VHA Worker for a Client Choice Award

VHA is committed to bringing the voices, feedback and ideas of clients and their families into everything we do.

That's why, for the fourth year in a row, we are asking clients and their family members to help us pick who should win our 2018 Barbara Blackstock-Cody Client Choice Awards—by nominating an outstanding worker. Let us know who our standouts workers are—the people who go above and beyond to support you or your loved one!

**Share your stories of spectacular VHA care by nominating your VHA Nurse, Personal Support Worker (PSW), Rehab Service Provider or Client Service Co-ordinator for our Client Choice Awards.**



## How do I nominate my VHA worker?

Tell us about how your VHA worker has truly impacted and made a difference in your life.

- Give us the name of the VHA worker you are nominating.
- Provide your name and contact information so we can follow up with you.
- Tell us why they should receive the award.
- Give an example or examples of why you feel the worker is so spectacular. How do they make you feel? What impact has their support had on your life? The more details you give us the better.

### The deadline is March 16, 2018!

**Please note:** Because we get so many submissions it may take 2-4 weeks for us to confirm your nomination. Thanks for your patience!

## How do I submit my nomination?

- Go online at [www.vha.ca/clientchoice](http://www.vha.ca/clientchoice)
- Call 416-489-2500 ext. 7007 or toll free at 1-888-314-6622 ext. 7007
- Write us a letter and send it to

VHA Home HealthCare  
Client Choice Awards  
30 Soudan Avenue, Suite 600  
Toronto, ON M4S 1V6

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Loved our newsletter? Thought we missed something? Want to be profiled or contribute?

We're interested in hearing your ideas, stories and suggestions! Email [communications@vha.ca](mailto:communications@vha.ca) or call 416-489-2500 ext. 4344, toll free at 1-888-314-6622 ext. 4344

We're All Ears!



Newsletter available in alternate formats on request.

# Peer Stroke Program Fosters Hope and Support

After having a stroke nine years ago, Jane knows firsthand the isolation, frustration and anger that goes along with this condition. “When I was in the hospital there was no one to talk to about what I was going through. Nurses and doctors told me what they thought would happen, but they don’t know. They only know what they’ve seen through in their work, not what it’s actually like to have a stroke,” says Jane.

In response to this need, VHA has partnered with March of Dimes and The Toronto Stroke Network on a pilot initiative called *Peers Fostering Hope Community Pilot (PFH)*. PFH partners VHA clients who

are recent stroke survivors with trained peer volunteers. The three organizations bring unique strengths to the partnership: the March of Dimes has expertise in peer programming at hospitals; Toronto Stroke Network contributes knowledge and insight into stroke recovery, and VHA brings expertise in home and community care.

Jane says that there’s a real need for this type of program because there, “are plenty of groups out there for other illnesses like cancer, but not enough for the stroke community.” Through the PFH program, Jane was paired with Deb as she recovers from a severe stroke that affected her mobility and use of her arm and hand. During weekly visits or phone calls, they share their stories and experiences and talk about concerns and fears. This connection provides hope, reassurance and emotional support for both women. “I enjoy talking to Jane,” Deb says fondly. “She talks about what she’s gone through and what’s worked for her. It helps me know what’s coming.”

In fact, when Deb reaches a goal or sees a new improvement, Jane is often one of the first people she wants to share the news with. “When my hand moved for the first time, I called [Jane] right away. She appreciates just how important every little movement is,” says Deb. “Other people don’t understand that.” Jane loves celebrating each seemingly minor win with Deb because “stroke recovery is such a slow, slow process,” she explains.

Jane and Deb’s relationship has offered a trusting and meaningful connection “that works both ways,” insists Jane. “Since my stroke, I can’t work and there are certain things I can’t do. This program helps me feel better about what I’m doing or not doing. It helps me feel as if I’m working and giving back, and that means a lot.”

The PFH pilot program is now being evaluated from a number of perspectives, including that of the peers, with the hope that the program will be continued.

For more information please contact [Christina Darlington](#) at **416-489-2500 ext. 1113**.



Jane and Deb pose together for a photo after one of their Peers Fostering Hope Community Pilot (PFH) sessions.

**Become a partner! Share your voice!**

VHA is always looking to improve. Join the conversation. If you would like to share your thoughts and become a Client Voice partner at VHA, please contact [Stacey Ryan](#) at **647-460-8595** or [sryan@vha.ca](mailto:sryan@vha.ca) for more information.

