



Top 3 New Year's Resolutions for Caregivers

A new year means a fresh start and a chance to regroup, reflect and make some positive changes. As we welcome 2018, take a minute to recognize all your hard work and then commit to making your health a priority in the coming months. This year, resolve to:

1. Take care of you: Caregivers are often generous people who are willing to put other's needs before their own. For 2018, identify a priority for your wellbeing and try your best to stick to it. Taking care of yourself will benefit everyone you love.

2. Spend time together: In the throes of caregiving, you may find it difficult—or even forget—to set aside time to just enjoy your loved one's company. Commit to doing one fun activity together every week to help you build a connection and create lasting memories.

3. Practice saying yes: It's not uncommon for caregivers to resist offers of help or be unwilling to ask for support. Make a list of the things you could easily delegate. When someone asks how they can help, look to your list. Family, friends or neighbours can assist with school drop offs, doctor's appointments or respite care when you need a break. Your loved one will probably appreciate the new face and you'll return feeling refreshed.

Need more resolution ideas?
Visit <http://blog.vha.ca/>



Why VHA Loves Patty Louis-Hislop!

After moving to Canada from Trinidad, Patty Louis-Hislop dedicated ten years to raising her five children. When she decided to return to the workforce, Patty was reluctantly pushed by a friend to go back to school to be a Personal Support Worker (PSW). Although she wasn't sure this was the right path, Patty notes that "wherever I've been placed, I have flourished," developing a love for things she didn't think she would.



Since graduating and getting a job at VHA nearly five years ago, her reluctance has been replaced with a sense of fulfillment. "I like the satisfaction I get when I see the finished product," says Patty. "I go in, clean [the clients] up, give them a shower, make the bed and make their environment clean and calm. When I've done something to make someone's life better, that's priceless."

Patty believes that in this job, "a positive attitude is number one." When she visits clients, her priority is to make them feel comfortable and treat them like family. "You learn how to do things in school, but when you get out there you have to make it work for each client. The book says top down and they want bottom up. You have to be flexible." Patty acknowledges that "Every individual is unique and every case is different." Patty has also learned to never take client complaints personally. She's accepted that it's usually not about you. "Clients and families are worried about their future, mortality, finances, family, pain—there are so many factors."

Patty's contagious laugh and big sense of humour have also helped her meet the challenges of client care. She loves "using humour to make connections and goes out of [her] way to find



Patty shares stories of her experiences during our Paediatric Interprofessional Forum.

something that will make clients laugh." Just recently, at our Paediatric Interprofessional Forum, Patty shared how she connected with a father that had a long history of conflict with his daughter's PSWs. Instead of just doing things her way, Patty said that she asked him to "mentor me on how he wanted me to care for his daughter." If Patty was going to be open about her methods, she asked that he also do the same. They made a deal, shook on it and found a way to work together—later laughing about their rocky start.

Patty believes that by "developing relationships with the whole family, not just the client, patient-centred care is so much stronger." Eventually, the father became so comfortable with Patty, that he was finally able to use her visits to get things done, or take a much deserved break. Patty adds, "When I can take the stress off the caregiver—dad, sister, daughter—take that burden off of them, and give them a break, it makes me feel so happy."

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 or call **416-489-2500 ext. 4344**, toll free at **1-888-314-6622 ext. 4344**

We're All Ears!





VHA's Spectacular Spirit Surprises!

For the past few years, VHA has made the holidays extra bright for some of our clients and workers who could use a boost during the holiday season. We asked our workers to nominate clients, caregivers and VHA staff/service providers who they thought could use a “pick-me-up,” and here are some of the people we selected. Pick any of our featured videos below or watch them all together at bit.ly/spectacularspirit2017. Their stories prove that even the smallest acts of kindness can lift spirits and bring smiles to everyone's face.



Kevin Duncan

Watch his video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritkevin

Jill Lindo nominated Kevin because he has dedicated his life to being a loving caregiver to his mother, Amy, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. “Even when he is exhausted, Kevin is encouraging and caring to his mom, and kind, polite and gracious to her care staff,” says Jill. We surprised Kevin and Amy with a beautiful poinsettia and several prepared meals so that they can skip the cooking and enjoy the holidays.



Jacqueline and Luzviminda (Mindy)

Watch their video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritJacquelineMindy

In this double-shot of fun, we got to surprise two staff at once. PSW Mindy and her supervisor Jacqueline unknowingly nominated each other and even suggested the same gift! “Woah! Hold on a minute...” said Jacqueline when she started to realize this wasn't like any of our other surprises. What a fantastic coincidence!



Marie Murphy

Watch her video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritmarie

Marie is one of the nicest women you'll ever meet, according to her PSW and nominator Christine Froude. She is housebound and unable to see her great grandchildren in Nova Scotia this season. We decided to surprise Marie and bring a little bit of Nova Scotia to her in the form of a beautiful gift! “Where did you get the pictures?” she exclaimed, before thanking everyone who was in on the surprise!



Jennifer Rochester

Watch her video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritjennifer

Jennifer is an amazing caregiver to both her son and her husband—so much so that she struggles to find time for herself. One of her regular service planners, Gladys, recognized this and nominated her for VHA's Spectacular Spirit Surprise! “You tricked me. I wasn't expecting this! My Christmas came early,” she said. Now, after receiving her surprise, Jennifer is excited for a night out on the town!



Sandy Morales

Watch her video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritsandy

“Am I being Punked?” was the hysterical question Sandy asked at the start of this Spectacular Spirit Surprise. Occupational Therapist Kala nominated Sandy because the mother of three always manages her children's special needs with a smile. So it's no surprise she also took this surprise in stride—even doing a little jig when we presented her with prepared meals to help with Christmas dinner.



VHA's Customer Service Centre

Watch their video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritCSC

Most of us look forward to relaxing over the holidays, but for VHA's customer service team, it's one of the busiest times of year. That's why nursing and regional supervisor Sandra Tedesco thought the entire team deserved a pick-me-up. The group erupted in cheers when we surprised them with a delicious lunch and onsite massages for the afternoon!



Michael Bruskin

Watch his video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritmichael

Both Michael and his wife, Debby, have health issues that keep them at home most days. Their PSW Jennifer nominated Michael because of the great care he provides to Debby despite his own challenges. “I'm so surprised!” said Debby, when Michael opened a new TV that they can enjoy together.



Madolina Sasa

Watch her video at bit.ly/spectacularspiritmadolina

Madolina is a VHA extreme cleaner who does everything with a smile—from work to supporting her community and local youth shelter to caregiving for her daughter! She has a big heart. Her supervisor Samantha felt someone as inspiring as Madolina deserved special recognition. If you watch her video you'll find it hard not to smile along with her!



Do you know a spectacular family caregiver? 2018 Heart of Home Care nominations are open!

Each year, VHA Home HealthCare recognizes the true heart and soul of home care – the family members and friends caring for people living with chronic disability and disease. Do you know an **unpaid caregiver** whose caregiving is nothing short of spectacular? Then why not submit a nomination? We are accepting nominations for Ontario non-professional caregivers until **January 31, 2018**.

Nominate at www.vha.ca/hohc

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** for more information.

