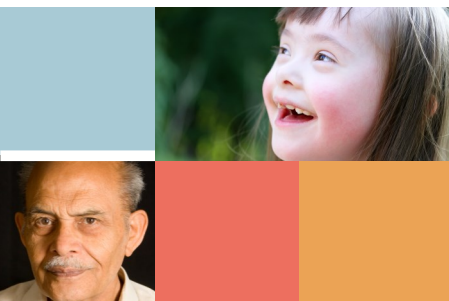




# VHA Voice

ISSUE 1 ■ SEASON Fall ■ 2014



## Join the Conversation!

Welcome to the first edition of VHA Voice—a newsletter that shares tips, information and updates with VHA clients and their caregivers.

In fact, the idea for this newsletter came directly out of our Client and Family Voice workgroup who were surprised by all the improvement projects happening at VHA. “You should be sharing this information!” was what our client and family members told us.

Well, we’re listening! The design, topics, length and frequency (four times a year) were all considered by our client and family editorial partners and this is the result.

But this is really just the start of a bigger plan to involve clients and their caregivers in shaping VHA services, processes and improvements. Many projects are happening—from discussing what to look for when hiring, to feedback on the rehabilitation equipment process to creating an advisory committee—that are getting ideas, feedback and advice directly from clients!



### Share Your Voice

Whether it’s answering a quick survey or spending a few hours a month to be part of an ongoing committee, we want to hear from you! Call Patricia Triantifilou at **416-482-4617** or (outside GTA) at **1-888-314-6622 ext. 4617** to register for consideration for upcoming projects.

We hope you enjoy the read!

### Meet Tina: A VHA PSW!

“I love

being a  
PSW  
because  
for me it  
is a



rewarding job. When I go out there I see many people with different backgrounds, different cultures and all I notice is that they need me to be there. Every day when I go home I’m so happy because I know that I made the difference in people’s lives. When I’m working with them (clients), the way they’re happy, the way they thank me: some of them even bless me... I’m so happy to be there.”

## We’re All Ears!!

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

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: 1-888-314-6622 ext. 4344.**



### Caring for Yourself to Care for Others

Caring for a loved one who is ill or disabled has its rewards but its challenges too. You might feel your own life has to be put on hold so it's important to take – and make – time to attend to yourself. Not only to stay healthy, but also to recharge and re-energize so you can be the best caregiver possible. Look after yourself and:

**Ask for help.** You don't have to do it alone. If family members are available, get them involved. Often other relatives hang back because they don't know what to do or how to help. Tell them! Remember: the more specific you can be about your needs, the better.

**Take advantage of supports.** Many organizations, including VHA, offer help or respite for caregivers. VHA's free **Ring and Reach** seminars cover a range of topics

such as advance care planning and communicating with loved ones with dementia. Our **Rebound and Reconnect** program gives caregivers the opportunity to be physically active.

**Take time outs.** Though your schedule probably needs to be flexible, try to schedule in breaks—no matter how small—to clear your body and mind. Whether it's time to take some deep breaths, go for a walk or to the gym, remember that physical exercise can boost the brain's feel-good chemicals or *endorphins*. If respite care is possible, take advantage of it.

**Connect with other caregivers.** Whether it's online or an in-person support group, talking to other people with similar ups and downs can provide encouragement and advice. It can also be a great way to make new friends.

**Stay social.** Set aside time each week for socializing, even if it's just a walk or quick coffee with a friend. Whenever you can, make plans that get you out of the house. Building a strong support system is the key to managing caregiver stress and has been shown to boost people's overall emotional well-being too.

While you may feel time away from your loved one means you're not caring enough, if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to take good care of your loved one. And ultimately isn't that what every caregiver wants?

## Stop the Flu!

The flu can be annoying for healthy adults. But for young children, those living with health conditions or older adults, it can be downright deadly. Reduce your risk of getting the flu and:

**Get a flu shot.** The shot prevents 70-90% of flu illness in healthy children and adults. More importantly, if caregivers and health care workers get it, they can prevent the spread to people with weakened immune systems.

**Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.** It limits the spread of viruses which can live on your hands for up to five minutes and on hard surfaces you touch – like countertops and telephones – for up to two days.

**Keep hand sanitizer (gel or wipes) handy.** They need to be at least 60 per cent alcohol to be effective and **keep common surfaces and items clean and disinfected.**

