

Edmonton branch: Health Care Aides a cornerstone to branch and its clients



Walk into Bayshore Home Health's Edmonton branch any weekday,

and you'll discover a hive of activity. It's the central hub for 24 office staff and about 250 field staff, the majority who work as Health Care Aides (HCAs). Over 30 years old, it's also one of the company's oldest branches.

"We provide home support services for seniors and disabled people who live in the Capital Health area," says Donaldal Farwell, Area Director, who has been at the branch for 14 years. "We have a large government contract, and we're the largest provider of home health care services through Capital Health."

HCAs play an increasingly important role in the health care system, especially since nurses continue to be in short supply at hospitals and in the community. The services that HCAs provide include assisting with personal care, eating, grooming, bed transfers and therapeutic activities, and this makes it possible for many people to continue living independently in their homes. The job can also be enormously rewarding – many people are drawn to the profession because it offers the opportunity to help others and improve their quality of life.

To work in the field, HCAs must have either a certificate from a Health Care Aide education program, such as the ones offered at Norquest and Nightengale Colleges.

Farwell serves on various committees that contribute to improving home support and the role and training of Health Care Aides in the province. She is the vice-president of the Alberta Home Care & Support Association's board of directors and is a member of the province's HCA Education and Skill Development Steering Committee, whose purpose is to develop principles and recommendations on certification/skill assessment of HCAs. Bayshore's Edmonton branch is also developing partnerships with local colleges, and Farwell hopes that together they will start offering course opportunities for students.

The branch is located in the Weber Centre, on the south side of Edmonton, which is convenient since most of its HCAs work in the southeast and southwest areas of the city to serve clients from Capital Health.

At any given time, the Edmonton branch serves about 1,000 clients. In addition to its work for Capital Health, it has a contract with the provincial Workers' Compensation Board to provide services to workers with spinal cord injuries. The branch also has numerous private clients, delivers palliative care services and performs home infusion therapy. The branch has a close relationship with the Canadian Paraplegic Association, supporting its fundraising initiatives and providing service to clients it refers.

"We have a really solid reputation. Our client satisfaction levels are very high, and we get a lot of referrals through word of mouth," says Farwell. "I think we've got a really committed team of staff who work to provide services to anyone we can."

When not fielding referrals and scheduling home care visits, branch staff support several charities. The branch is a major supporter of Pilgrims Hospice in Edmonton, and it has raised money for a women's shelter and World Vision, an organization that works in developing countries. "There really is a culture of giving back to our community," says Farwell.

Branch staff also have a lot of fun together. Recent events include a pumpkin-carving contest and Christmas decorating contest, with field staff choosing the winners. The branch also holds an annual picnic for staff and their families at William Hawrelak Park, a large inner-city park, as well as a Christmas party.

"We have a really friendly, warm office atmosphere," says Farwell. "The office staff are very supportive of our field staff, helping them meet their needs and clients' needs. We all work together as a team, and staff really feel like they're part of the Bayshore family."

For more information, please contact dfarwell@bayshore.ca

Seated, left to right:
Joan Aronyk, Eloise Kolach,
Michelle Piercey, Doris Cyre,
Linda McCurdy, Tracy Maher,
Denise Miller, Crystal Strand.
Standing, left to right:
Donaldal Farwell, Laureen
Beaudry, Rebecca Smith,
Chareen Hodson, Donna
Miller Weighill, Michael
Therriault, Susan McLevin,
Diane Farquhar, Nicole Bay,
Taylor Jordan



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