

Smiths Falls branch: Teamwork and respect are secrets to success



Smiths Falls, a picturesque town in the heart of the Rideau Canal in Ontario, is home to one of Bayshore's fastest-growing branches.

The Smiths Falls branch opened as a satellite of Bayshore's Brockville branch in 2004. It became a full-fledged branch – the first to grow out of an existing one – about a year and a half later when its volume of business grew. It serves Lanark County and the northern portion of Leeds and Grenville County. The branch will soon have a satellite of its own in Pembroke, which will serve all of Renfrew County.

The branch has about 175 field staff (125 home support workers and 50 nurses) and 17 office staff. It also has an enterostomal therapy (ET) nurse and an incontinence nurse for specialty visits to the clients of the two Community Care Access Centres that the branch works with, the Champlain CCAC and the South East CCAC.

"We're a little more diverse than other branches because we service a number of small towns, including Carleton Place, Perth and numerous others. We serve quite a large rural population," says Lori Lachance, Area Director of the branch, who joined the company in 2002 as a field nurse in the Brockville/Smiths Falls area, and was later promoted to Director of Clinical Management for Bayshore's Ottawa branch before returning to Smiths Falls in 2008.

She estimates that at least 75 per cent of the branch's referrals come from the CCACs, which she attributes to providing "exemplary" customer service. The branch has also enjoyed phenomenal growth among its private clients. "Our private business grew by leaps and bounds last year, approximately 175 per cent," Lachance says.

As a result, the branch was invited to join Bayshore's prestigious President's Club, which celebrates business growth, and Sandra McGregor, a Manager of Clinical Practice at the branch, won a leadership award for business development.

"We have an outstanding team, with more than 215 years of experience. We're kind of known as the branch that never says 'no' – we'll jump through hoops to get things covered because the bottom line is the client," explains Lachance.

The staff are a close-knit and loyal group, many of who worked together at other service providers before joining Bayshore. "We already had great respect for each other and the knowledge that we each bring to the table. I think that makes a big difference. Everybody knows we're all working together, so nothing is not do-able," says Lachance.

"Our goal is to provide exceptional customer service, and everyone is committed to that. We work as a team, and we have a lot of fun doing it. We're also all really happy with Bayshore. It's the first company where we feel we're valued for the knowledge we bring."

The Smiths Falls branch is very active in the community. The staff are gearing up for the annual Hike for Hospice, to be held May 3, with plans to raise funds by selling raffle tickets in the community. "This year, we're sponsoring the Lanark County Volunteer Hospice Visiting Service, which gives people with life-threatening illness a chance to die at home. It offers respite care, and we complement that service by providing the home support and nursing," says Lachance, who serves on a palliative care education committee, an end-of-life network for palliative care, and a health care advisory committee for a local college.

She hopes the branch can also lend its support to a hospice "Day Away" respite program, which provides opportunities for people affected by life-threatening illnesses to participate in social activities and meet others who are facing similar challenges. Currently, no such program exists in the area.

Fun activities at the branch includes Halloween costume contests, a family drop-in day and a pyjama party for the office staff in December. To engage the branch's nurses and home support workers, the office staff organize lunch-and-learn sessions and events in the towns where they work.

"I love my job! The service we provide is so important that I think everybody feels good at the end of the day because of it, like we're making a little bit of a difference," says Lachance. "We're a great little branch and we have fun."

For more information, please contact llachance@bayshore.ca

Front, left to right: MaryAnne Morin, Lori Lachance, Bev Ross. Back, left to right: Kelli Pierman, Amy Nadeau, Sandra McGregor, Sharon Scarrow, Bev Verkerk, Tracy Parrish, Sheila Summer, Ros MacMillan. Missing from photo: Paulette Doyon, Carol Ann Dobbie.



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