

Calgary branch: Reaching out to enhance community health



Bayshore Home Health's Calgary branch is known in the community as a home care provider that goes the extra mile to provide excellent care and enhance health awareness.

The branch, which has been operating for over 20 years, has 15 administrative staff and 111 field staff. It serves north central Calgary, and it has a contract to provide nursing to what was formerly called the Northern Lights Health Region (now amalgamated into Alberta Health Services). It also serves private clients as well as those referred by The Workers' Compensation Board—Alberta and pharmaceutical companies, and provides relief staff to health care facilities. "We specialize in patients who have Alzheimer's disease, dementia or multiple sclerosis, as well as palliative care," says Tyla Jones, Area Director for the branch.

The branch's office is usually buzzing with activity. Each morning, the staff have a team meeting to review what happened overnight and what is coming up. "We have a small, intimate branch, and it's quite a collaborative family environment. We work together toward a common goal instead of just working in our own areas," says Jones. "Everybody really pitches in to make sure help is provided when it's needed."

She adds the branch stands out from local competitors, large and small. "Our National Service Centre in Mississauga certainly sets us apart. We have strong support from our national team and our clinical knowledge is excellent. And we have our Bayshore culture of trying to make a difference and do everything we can to meet clients' needs and support their families."

To enhance its services, the branch is developing a spinal cord injury (SCI) team involving caregivers, supervisors and schedulers, to be launched in 2010. It is also working on a conference about spinal cord injury care for clients and referral sources. "There isn't a local provider specializing in this service, so this would fill a need in Calgary, to have caregivers who are specially trained for the unique needs of clients with SCI. We also have a high-quality national training program for our care staff," says Jones.

The branch promotes healthy aging, health and wellness, and home care services through free seminars at community centres, pharmacies, associations and long-term care facilities. It supports Hospice Calgary through participating in the

annual Hike for Hospice, and also provides educational programs for the hospice's staff and clients. "People who attend our seminars love hearing about how they can improve their health and slow down the aging process," says Jones. "Also, there isn't a strong awareness of what home care services are available and how people can make home care more cost-effective or gain funding. The individuals who attend appreciate this information. They get to know our faces and names, and they'll often call when they need services or they want to discuss services they may need in the future."

Jones is also on the board of directors of the Alberta Home Care and Support Association, which represents home care providers in the province and works to increase the quality of home care. "It has been a great benefit, because we're at the forefront of helping policy-makers and government decision-makers align their decisions with the needs of home care clients. The association gives us a bigger voice than being just one organization."

To recognize staff who go above and beyond the call of duty, the branch has "Employee of the Month" awards. Caregivers are also nominated for a "Lifesaver Award" and entered into an annual draw when they provide care to clients on short notice. "We do a lot of bonuses and incentives that are quite fun," says Jones. "Recently, a caregiver won an entertainment system. She was ecstatic!"

To stay in touch with field staff, who often work quite far from the office, the branch holds meetings in the community, sometimes with pizza or coffee and muffins. These get-togethers give staff an opportunity to pick up forms, ask questions and find out what's happening at the office. The branch also holds well-attended holiday parties and summer barbecues.

Jones is proud of her branch's collaborative spirit and the dedication of its employees. "We ensure that we're meeting our clients', caregivers' and staff's needs. Creating a positive experience for everybody is a goal that we emphasize."

For more information, please contact tjones@bayshore.ca

Front row, left to right:
Rosalind Brown, Shereen
Thompson, Pam McCormack,
Susan Smith, Lyndsay Latiff.
Back row, left to right:
Kathleen Earnshaw, Tyla
Jones, Nadia Bushnaq, Carie
Croteau, Shelley Gates.



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