

Kitchener branch: A culture of collaboration and respect



Bayshore Home Health's branch in Kitchener, Ont., may be one of the company's newest, but it is already known in the community for superb customer service.

The branch, which opened in the fall of 2006, serves Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, and also provides some services in Guelph. It offers private nursing, personal support, home support and companion services, and also sends staff to group homes, retirement homes, long-term care facilities and a hospice. The branch covers workers' compensation and automotive accident cases, and it has an overflow contract for nursing and personal support work with the Waterloo Wellington Community Care Access Centre (CCAC).

Marie Graham, Area Director, is excited about the branch's development. "We started with no staff and no business. We're very proud of our growth and recognition within the community." The office has four full-time staff plus on-call support, which it shares with the London and St. Catharines branches. Susan Cindric, Client Service Manager, and Tracy Ruelland, Client Service Coordinator, manage the schedules of about 100 field staff.

The branch also has a contract with Waterloo Region Family & Children's Services for a hair-sampling program. "A nurse takes samples from the children, parents or anyone who might be involved with the children," says Graham. "The hair is sent to a testing facility at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and tested for a variety of drugs and/or alcohol. This may be required to ensure the safety of the child in the home environment, or to determine if the child can return home to a safe environment."

Graham believes many qualities set Bayshore apart from the competition in Kitchener. "We're part of a national company, we're ISO certified and we have nurse-supervised staff. We do a lot of personal support work, and if an issue arises, then Wendy Forler, our Manager of Clinical Practice, will intervene by going to visit, calling the doctor or discussing next steps with the family. A number of our competitors don't have the nursing component, so that's a big difference."

She adds that the branch goes to great lengths to ensure that clients' needs are met. "I feel we've developed an excellent

reputation, particularly with CCAC. Because we have an overflow contract, we're often the last agency they call, and they give us a lot of compliments because we're always able to help out when they're stuck," says Graham. "We jump through hoops to make it happen. Our motto is to never say no – we always try to find a solution for the client and the employees. We get lots of last-minute requests. Everybody pulls together to help out, and it's certainly not unheard of for people in the office to go out and help out a client. That's happened on a number of occasions."

The branch also believes strongly that in order to maintain great customer service, it must take care of its staff. "I've gotten a lot of positive feedback from our staff. Our culture is very much about working as a team. We stress open communication. The client comes first, but we do take good care of our employees."

As a natural extension of its work, the branch has formed a strong relationship with the Brain Injury Association of Waterloo Wellington, and Graham serves on its board of directors. In 2007, Bayshore was the gold sponsor for the provincial brain injury conference, held in Kitchener.

The branch's culture of collaboration extends to other activities. The staff raises money for Lissard House, a hospice in Cambridge, through dress-down Fridays. Each summer, the branch holds a well-attended staff barbecue. The office also creates a bimonthly newsletter featuring articles about branch activities, staff members and local events.

Graham enjoys working at the Kitchener branch because of the dedicated staff and support from Bayshore's national office. "Everyone is committed to providing excellent service, to growing our business and to supporting each other in the process," she says. "What really makes my day is when a client expresses appreciation for the service our caregivers have provided. The work can be challenging, but when we hear positive feedback from our clients, it makes it all worthwhile!"

For more information, please contact mgraham@bayshore.ca

Back row, left to right: Mary Martindale, Marie Graham, Tracy Ruelland and Susan Cindric. Seated in front is Wendy Forler.



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