

Oakville branch:

Serving the community with care and compassion



Although Bayshore Home Health's Oakville, Ont., branch is among the company's newest – it opened in April 2006 – it has already become a part of the community and earned a reputation for excellence. The branch, which has six administrative staff and about 145 field staff, offers home care (nursing and home support), staff relief for long-term care facilities, and nursing consultation services at Heritage Place, a retirement home in Burlington.

The branch also provides 24-hour nursing and personal support staff for The Darling Home for Kids, which offers pediatric hospice care and respite services to families of terminally ill children. Located in Halton Hills, it is one of only three pediatric hospices in Canada. "We are thrilled and proud to have the privilege to serve this home," says Luanne Ellison, Area Director for the Oakville branch. "It's a six-bed home right now, but they're breaking ground next month and expanding to become a 12-bed home."

Bayshore's staff began helping out at the Darling Home on a casual basis last September. "Because we have such outstanding field nurses, that one shift turned into two, then into weeks and months, and now we've been awarded the whole contract," explains Ellison. "The home is happy about our partnership, and that's exactly what we feel it is – a partnership."

Kids who stay at the hospice are medically fragile, technically dependent or at the end of life. They can stay up to two weeks per quarter of the calendar year, free of charge, and families divide the time as they wish. "Some choose a two-week block, some choose a day at a time or a weekend," says Ellison. "What's unique is that we see the kids, we see their changes, we see their growth and development, and we see their deterioration. You can imagine that as rewarding as it is to be part of the home, it's also emotional. We love these kids."

The families who use the home appreciate the quality of care, and feel reassured that their children are well cared for. The staff do their best to make the experience enjoyable, often playing and singing right along with their young charges. "It's not just about meeting clinical needs," says Ellison. "The home is like camp for some of these kids – it's a fun place to be!"

When selecting nurses for the Darling Home, Ellison looks for those with a desire and passion for working with children. "Attitude and willingness come first," she says. "Technical expertise can be learned, if it's the right person. We've mentored a lot of our nurses through an orientation program. On average, we are providing 500 hours of service a week at the home, which is significant."

The branch's culture is built around serving clients – both patients and employees. "If our staff aren't happy or not proud of the company they're working for, they're not going to represent us well," says Ellison. "If we're not providing clients with the best possible service from the moment our staff answer the phone to the care they provide in the home, then we haven't done our job. We have a bulletin board in our office with pictures of our loved ones, family and friends, and we step back and try to imagine that it's our husband or child [who needs care] – what kind of service would we want for them? That's how we try to live around here."

The branch's caring attitude extends to charitable causes. Staff often participate in fundraising events, including Hike for Hospice (to support The Carpenter Hospice in Burlington and Ian Anderson House, a cancer hospice in Oakville), walk-a-thons and golf tournaments. "I'm a bad golfer, but I have fun!" Ellison laughs.

The branch is located in the heart of Bronte (West Oakville), and visitors are always welcome. "We get to know our neighbours and encourage people to drop in," says Ellison. "We host blood-pressure clinic days, for example, where we just open our doors to the public and the many seniors who live nearby."

The staff are pleased to be part of Oakville's thriving community. "We're very proud of how far we've come in two years," says Ellison. "We have developed a reputation for providing quality service and care, and we continue to grow upon that."

For more information, contact lellison@bayshore.ca

Some of the Bayshore staff who work at the Darling Home for Kids (left to right): Beena Sthankiya, Janner Arredond, Shamena Beeharry and Panzie Flemming.



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