

## Markham branch:

# Staff are as diverse as the clients they serve



Since it opened in May 2009, Bayshore Home Health's branch in Markham, Ont., has been serving the vast expanse of Ontario's York Region – a total of 1,800 square kilometres, including Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King Township, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"We offer everything from homemaking and companionship to personal support and nursing," says Marisol Severin, Acting Area Director (Julie Adams returns in the fall). "We also offer health clinics and educational workshops to the local community, on topics such as heart health and strokes."

Including Severin, the busy branch has four administrative employees and 150 field staff – about half are personal support workers, 20 per cent are RPNs and 30 per cent are RNs. Their clients are mostly seniors.

The team at the branch puts a high priority on excellent service with a personal touch. "Relationship building is part of what we do," explains Severin. "It's really important for the people in the community to feel that you're connected with them, so we try to establish through our education and information sessions and our marketing that we're not just here to provide a body – we're here to really support them, to understand their needs and fulfill those needs."

The branch's staff members are very diverse, and that's beneficial to its equally diverse clients. "We have workers who speak Italian, French, Portuguese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Spanish, Tagalog, Russian, Farsi, Arabic and more," says Severin. "We try to use everyone's talents."

Maintaining strong relationships with staff members scattered over such a large service area can be challenging, but it's something that the branch does successfully. "There's a lot of communication that happens between the office and the field staff, including a quarterly newsletter. We promote a high level of openness," says Severin. "Our branch is very family-oriented in the sense that we believe in helping each other, patting each other on the back for a job well done and supporting each other in things that we're developing." Staff members also get together at social events such as a summer barbecue, staff appreciation awards ceremonies and a holiday party.

Since the administrative team is small, its members work closely to get the job done. "That's the nice thing about small

From left to right are: Marjorie Stuart; Marisol Severin; Julie Adams and Nancy Dagondon. Missing is Catherine Sit.

branches – you really get to know each other, and it's not just everyone in their separate roles. It's really a unified effort," says Severin, who works alongside Nancy Dagondon, Manager of Clinical Practice; Marjorie Stuart, Client Service Coordinator; and Catherine Sit, an administrative employee. "We have to wear many different hats, go above and beyond what we were originally assigned, and make it work no matter what. That's the type of effort everyone puts in to make our clients happy and meet their needs. These are the things I think are really important in our business."

The branch provides continuous training to field staff to refresh their skills and enhance service delivery. Topics at in-service training sessions organized by Dagondon include palliative care, epilepsy, aging and wellness (including range-of-motion exercises) and improving communication.

The Markham branch is also very community-minded – its calendar is crowded with wellness clinics and charitable events, often held in partnership with local health providers. This summer, it held a health education series at a library in Holland Landing. It is also working with Epilepsy York Region to promote awareness about seniors and epilepsy.

Each year, staff participate in the Hike for Hospice Palliative Care and other events to raise money and awareness for Evergreen Hospice, with which the branch has a close-knit relationship. The branch also lends support to the Alzheimer Society of York Region for its Walk for Memories, and it's building partnerships with local charities such as GetRecD (which organizes charitable events to benefit cancer research and treatment) and Losing Our Parents (which supports people coping with the declining health or death of a parent). The branch is an active member of TIPS (The Integrated Partnership for Seniors) in York Region and participates in many events and fairs.

These activities are an extension of the branch's dedication to the local community. "We have a very diverse branch with one common goal," says Severin. "We want to provide the best possible service we can in the most effective way possible."

For more information, please contact [mseverin@bayshore.ca](mailto:mseverin@bayshore.ca)



*Better care for a better life*

[www.bayshore.ca](http://www.bayshore.ca)

**Bayshore**  
Home Health