

## *Charlottetown branch:* Growing to meet the needs of the community



**Bayshore Home Health's branch in Charlottetown, PEI,** may be one of its smallest – it has only two office staff and about 30 field staff – but it has lots of heart.

The company opened the branch in 2004. Its employees serve the whole province, with the majority of clients living in Charlottetown and the surrounding area. Its services include nursing, personal support, home support, companionship and respite care. Most clients are seniors who want to continue living independently, and the branch also works with younger clients who have disabilities.

"We're centrally located in Charlottetown. We actually just moved into a larger, wheelchair-accessible office last August, so we have room to grow. Our clients can visit, and we have more exposure to the public," says Mary McDonald, Area Director, who joined the branch in 2008 as Director of Clinical Management.

The branch has a lot of competition across the province, from other home care companies to private individuals. McDonald says that Bayshore's service philosophy sets it apart. "We're committed to excellent care every visit, every time. We also do a very good job of making things happen – we're not satisfied with having someone go without service, so we'll bend over backwards to meet our clients' needs."

McDonald's favourite thing about working at the branch is the people, both staff and clients. "I also like the variety – not knowing what each day will present, and the challenge and excitement of all things possible. It's very exciting to have a branch that's growing and evolving"

In an effort to make training and skills assessment more accessible to nurses who live outside a major city, the branch is taking part in a unique Bayshore pilot program that trains infusion nurses. Using a webcam and Skype (online software that enables free video and voice calls), a nurse from the National Service Centre in Mississauga will evaluate the infusion skills of a nurse in PEI and provide necessary training. "This will hopefully benefit all branches that have the challenges we do, from not being centrally located. It will also minimize the cost of travel associated with training," says McDonald.

The branch places a strong emphasis on ongoing education. It offers a series of in-service training sessions for its field staff

as well as training in response to issues that arise. When the H1N1 virus became a national concern, the branch provided education several times over the year to help staff prepare. It also offers fit-testing for N-95 protective masks.

Mary McDonald and  
Nadine Leger.

Nurses involved in the branch's pharmacy program receive education on specific medications. "We have a lot of people with multiple sclerosis in PEI, so the majority of our pharmacy program is centred around MS education," explains McDonald. The branch also looks for opportunities in the community through which staff can increase and impart their knowledge, such as presentations and in-service sessions at other organizations. Occasionally, nurses visit other cities for training. Recently, a number of Charlottetown nurses, including McDonald, attended wound care training in Moncton, along with other nurses from the Atlantic region.

Each summer, the branch holds a staff meeting at a local restaurant, where employees are invited to offer ideas and input on business opportunities. "They're our ambassadors out in the community. How our staff talk about us and market us really says a lot," says McDonald. The staff also get together for a winter holiday party.

The branch is a supporter of the Hospice Palliative Care Association of PEI. "In collaboration with the association, we recently held our first dance and silent auction for hospice, at our local legion," says McDonald. "It turned out very well— about 125 people attended and we raised nearly \$3,000."

This emphasis on community is a natural extension of the branch's personalized approach to health care. "We like to customize the services we offer, knowing that people in PEI have different needs than those in a larger community," says McDonald. "I like the fact that we have the support of a larger entity in terms of quality standards, but also the flexibility to fine-tune and customize with local flair and make it more meaningful to people in the community. We've got the best of both worlds."

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