

Brockville branch: Education and staff recognition support excellent health care



For more than 20 years, Bayshore Home Health's branch in Brockville, Ont., has served Brockville, Kingston and Belleville. "We cover almost all of the South East Local Health Integration Network," says Anita Fitches, Area Director, who joined the branch in 2007 as Director of Clinical Management. "We work with the South East Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), with whom we have a large contract for nursing and home support in the Brockville area."

The busy branch has 28 nurses, 95 personal support workers and 16 administrative staff. In the same Brockville plaza where its main office is located, the branch operates an community care clinic for CCAC patients, who receive services including wound dressing and intravenous therapy. The branch started offering tuberculosis testing this fall, and it plans to launch private foot care this year.

"Our clientele is diverse. The majority is seniors, but we also have pediatric clients with disabilities or chronic illnesses. They're challenging cases that require lots of nursing hours. We go into schools with them, and a nurse might be with them for the whole school year," says Fitches.

Competition from other health care agencies is strong, but Fitches says that Bayshore is well known in the area as the preferred nursing provider. "I think that's because of our high quality. We're very organized, we can provide staff when others can't, and our nurses are very skilled."

The branch places a strong emphasis on continuing education. About three years ago, Leslie Marvell, Director of Clinical Management, launched the Verification of Competence program for nurses, and she is starting a program for personal support workers this year. "We bring in certified individuals such as an intravenous nurse or an incontinence nurse and review their knowledge. We also have training sessions. For instance, we have an enterostomal therapy nurse who does a session on wound care and ostomies, and the incontinence nurse leads a review of catheters, etc.," explains Fitches.

Employees also attend in-service training sessions on topics such as diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and palliative care. Some staff members attend external training events. Both nurses and personal support workers earn points for continuing

education, and those with the highest totals win an award, presented annually during Nursing Week and Caregiver Week. "We really recognize our staff. It's definitely a priority for us," says Fitches. "In addition to the Nurse of the Year program, we have several awards that are unique to our branch." For example, the branch honours nurses who demonstrate tremendous compassion; promote health and well-being; promote informed decision-making for clients; and seek fairness or justice for clients.

This year's Nursing Week event was "A Red Carpet Affair," and it was held at Fulford Place, a mansion overlooking the St. Lawrence River. Caregiver Week had a delicious Italian theme.

Throughout the year, the branch publishes a staff newsletter, and it recently established an Advisory Social Committee. Staff and their families will take part in a "Fall Fun" event – complete with wagon rides, a hot-dog roast, pumpkin painting and a bonfire – at a local farm in October.

The branch's high profile in the community is partly due to its outreach efforts. "Everything we hear about, we're there," says Fitches. "We had a huge booth at the 55+ Games, a national event that Brockville hosted this year. We also offer all kinds of talks; we're doing information sessions in Belleville on several health topics. It's rewarding to have such good relationships with people in our community."

To raise funds for Brockville General Hospital's hospice, the branch held a "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" night in August. "We had about 15 exhibitors, including people doing manicures, pedicures and massages. There were purses and jewellery for sale, a silent auction and tons of food," says Fitches, adding that the event raised more than \$4,000. "It was our first year, but it was very well received and the buzz afterwards was huge. We're definitely doing it again."

Fitches is effusive when praising her staff. "I love our staff. We have an amazing team. They make a difference in our clients' lives. Everybody lives by Bayshore's vision and the mission, and that's our focus every day here."

For more information, please contact afitches@bayshore.ca

Left to right: Manon Brayton, Ruth Ballerscheff, Bea Chenier, Leslie Marvell, Angie Gagnon, Anita Fitches, Lisa Gallacher, Chantelle Fournier, Virginia Steele, Candi Wingeat and Kim Martin.



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