

Summer 2016 Issue

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NOW



NEW APPROACH TO CARE

Integrated Comprehensive Care program gives patients enhanced access to medical expertise and services in the community Pg. 14

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NOW

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Niagara Health Now is produced by Niagara Health's Corporate Communications Team.

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Message from Suzanne Johnston **President**

Welcome to the third edition of our magazine!

This edition is full of many examples of the extraordinary caring and work happening across our sites.

You'll read how discharged patients at risk of readmission now have enhanced access to services in the community and medical expertise, thanks to a new partnership and model of care designed to reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital.

You'll learn about the important work happening in our Research Lead Office, which has created a unique coaching program to guide healthcare trainees and professionals at Niagara Health through collaborative, quality-focused and patient-centred research projects.

And you'll read the compelling story of a client of our Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program, and the difference the multi-disciplinary team of healthcare providers is making in her life.

And, of course, there's much more inside. I hope you enjoy this issue of Niagara Health Now.

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IMAGINE

a Healthier Niagara.

We did

Niagara Health launches new 10-year Purpose, Vision and Values and strategic plan

Niagara Health is proud to present our bold new Purpose, Vision and Values and our first strategic plan.

"Niagara Health is entering an era of great opportunity," says John MacDonald, Chair of the Board of Directors. "The inspiration behind our strategic plan is one unifying goal to provide all of our patients, families, staff, physicians, students, learners and volunteers extraordinary experiences."

We heard from thousands of people over the last year from inside our organization and all across the peninsula about what matters and the feedback we've received has inspired us to imagine a Healthier Niagara.

"We've listened and have heard what we're doing well and what we need to improve on," says Niagara Health President Dr. Suzanne Johnston. "Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our journey toward a Healthier Niagara. Your participation has been invaluable in the process."

We're excited to share our new Purpose, Vision and Values. For more information visit our website niagarahealth.on.ca.



Our Purpose:

Extraordinary Caring. Every Person. Every time.

At Niagara Health, Extraordinary Caring is what our patients, their families, our volunteers, our teams and our community need and deserve. Caring is so much more than care. Both the physical and emotional part of caring is at the heart of our purpose. Every person. Every time.

Our Vision:

A Healthier Niagara

We're helping build A Healthier Niagara by contributing to the overall health of our region in the following ways:

- In population health;
- In the economic health;
- In the health of our environment;
- In being good partners.

Our Values: our guide to decision making and behaviours



Compassion in Action

Our compassionate and respectful culture is one in which we quickly take action to meet the needs of those we serve and to make healthcare better. We treat each other well.



Driven by Optimism

We are hopeful and optimistic in tackling our challenges. In partnership we accomplish more. We are resilient through change and drive innovation.



Achieving Ambitious Results

We hold ourselves to the highest standards. We are accountable for high-performing, high-quality, sustainable and innovative healthcare. We are transparent about performance and commit to improve.

EXTRAORDINARY

Members of the Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program team (from left): Social Worker Carlee Patterson, Nurse Practitioner Nadine Smith, Registered Dietitian Kristen Goode, Psychotherapist Aurelia Spadafora, Clerical Administrator Katy Smart, Clinical Lead Brenda Yeandle and Medical Director Dr. Debbie Wilkes-Whitehall.



‘You are not alone’

Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program
helping to improve quality of life for clients

There was a time when Laura Scott would rarely leave her home. She would often avoid answering her door or telephone. She would go without eating for days at a time.

“I was not functioning,” says Ms. Scott. “I could have curled up in a ball and waited for the world to come to an end. That would have been easy for me to do.”

She suffered from anxiety and depression, the result of experiencing major trauma in her life. And she had little interest in food.

“Eating wasn’t on my radar whatsoever,” says the Beamsville resident.

Ms. Scott had lived like this for years, but then her life began to change for the better after she was connected with the Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program, based at Niagara Health’s New Port Centre in Port Colborne.

Today, the 54-year-old attends the program about every other week, receiving counselling with psychotherapist Aurelia Spadafora and other supports through the program.

The ultimate goal of the program, which provides care to people aged 16 and older, is to help patients live a better quality of life and to help them get to the point “where they feel they deserve that better life,” says Ms. Spadafora.

“We want to help them learn new ways of coping,” she says. “We want them to know they’re not alone and that there are people who can help.”

Clients are encouraged to get a referral to the program through their primary healthcare provider to ensure medical stability while waiting for assessment and ongoing medical care.

When a patient begins the program, they receive a medical and psychosocial assessment.

A treatment plan is developed and agreed upon with the client. Group programming and individual therapy are provided, as well as outpatient medical management. A program dietitian offers clients a supportive nutritional assessment, allowing the client to work at their pace to normalize food, debunk food myths and misconceptions, and build a healthier relationship with food. The program team also works in cooperation with the client’s other care providers.



PARTNERSHIP WITH BROCK UNIVERSITY, NIAGARA COLLEGE

The Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program has a longstanding partnership with Brock University, where Dr. Debbie Wilkes-Whitehall visits Brock Student Health Services once a month to complete on-campus assessments and medical follow-ups.

Starting last fall, Carlee Patterson, a social worker at the eating disorder program, has been welcomed by Brock University Student Health Services to offer individual counselling on-campus to Brock students who are patients of the eating disorder program.

“This has been a great development in bridging the gap and making service available,” says Ms. Patterson.

The eating disorder program also has a partnership with Niagara College that started last fall.

Nurse Practitioner Nadine Smith visits the college’s Student Health Services to perform assessments and medical follow-ups to students who are part of the eating disorder program. Ms. Smith also provides supportive consulting with the team at Student Health Services.

“Along with working on the eating disorder and working towards recovery, each individual brings with them their own story, which is often more complex than it just being about food,” says Carlee Patterson, a social worker at the program.

“Deep down, it’s often not about the food,” she adds. “We see people who have experienced trauma, loss, abuse, addictions, medical and other mental illnesses, amongst other detriments. Our patients are individualized and the staff assert themselves to providing patients with treatment to best suit where they are at and what would best serve them as they work towards recovery.”

“Our team provides a vital service to our clients. This evidence-based approach makes the program extremely effective and, most importantly, it is making a significant difference in the lives of so many people.”

Dr. Edgardo Perez

Chief of Mental Health and Addictions

The team strives to promote self-efficacy and empowerment of clients. Their focus is on healthy lifestyle and self-acceptance.

Dr. Edgardo Perez, the Chief of the Mental Health and Addictions Program, notes that the eating disorder program provides evidence-based treatment, including the use of interpersonal psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, trauma-informed therapy, dialectic behavioural therapy and mindfulness.

“Our team provides a vital service to our clients,” says Dr. Perez. “This evidence-based approach makes the program extremely effective and, most importantly, it is making a significant difference in the lives of so many people.”

Dr. Debbie Wilkes-Whitehall, a family doctor with expertise in mental health and psychotherapy, helped to develop and launch the program in 2001.

OUR PARTNERS

The Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program is for patients aged 16 and older. Clients requiring more intensive treatment are offered referrals to other programs. For adults, these programs include the Homewood Health Centre in Guelph, Toronto General Hospital and Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga.

For those under the age of 16 requiring treatment, the appropriate referral sites are Pathstone Mental Health and the eating disorder programs at McMaster Children’s Hospital in Hamilton or the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

For more information about

Niagara Eating Disorder Outpatient Program, please call 905-378-4647, ext. 32532

Visit: www.niagarahealth.on.ca

Dr. Wilkes-Whitehall says the team takes a client-centred approach to care.

“We have to adapt as much as we can to the needs of the client,” she says. “Nobody is the same.”

Dr. Wilkes-Whitehall has high praise for the program’s team, which includes Ms. Spadafora, Ms. Patterson, Nurse Practitioner Nadine Smith, Dietitian Kristen Goode and Clerical Administrator Katy Smart.

“They’re amazing because of their expertise and passion and just genuine caring for the clients and belief in what we do,” she says.

Ms. Scott agrees.


“You can see three different people in the same day and they’re all on the same page,” she says. “They’re always prepared for you. It’s so easy to ask questions. They make you feel comfortable. It becomes like a second home.”

Today, Ms. Scott goes out regularly with friends, her eating habits have greatly improved and she spends hours focusing on her art and crafts.

She’s living life. So much so, she says “there are not enough hours in my days. Before, every day was the same.”

Ms. Scott offers this advice to others facing a similar situation to her: “Never give up.”

“People don’t realize how much they count and how important they are,” she says. “There is hope. Get out and talk to people. Look for the help. Even though it might seem it’s slow at first, never give up. You are not alone.”



On the Wright path

Dr. Barry Wright has been instrumental in helping Niagara Health chart a new course

Barry Wright looks back fondly and proudly on his more than three years as Chair of Niagara Health's Board of Directors.

Fondly because of the experience of working with fellow board members and the Niagara Health team to help chart a new path for the organization.

And proudly because of our team's extraordinary accomplishments, including for the first time being Accredited with Exemplary Standing, the highest rating a hospital can receive under Accreditation Canada's health-quality improvement process. Dr. Wright, whose term concluded on June 28, was

the first chair of Niagara Health's new volunteer Board of Directors that was selected in April 2013 by our Community-Based Nominating Committee. Niagara Health had been without a board since August 2011, following the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care's appointment of Dr. Kevin Smith as Niagara Health Supervisor.

Dr. Wright, who is Interim Dean of Brock University's Goodman School of Business, says his interest to join the Niagara Health board was sparked by the vital role healthcare plays in peoples' lives.

"Healthcare is something that touches every family and every individual," he says. "It is an important area for all of us."

He credits the Community-Based Nominating Committee for selecting board members with a "variety of different perspectives."

"They worked hard to make sure we had a good skills-based board," he says. "Anytime you're trying to look at a discussion point, the many lines of reference that you can bring to it will afford you a more richer understanding and therefore hopefully a better decision."

He also applauded Niagara Health's Senior Executive Team and Brian Guest, an expert in governance and Senior Vice-President of Corporate Renewal and Mission at St. Joseph's Health System in Hamilton, for helping the board become familiar with the complex healthcare system in those early days.

"Healthcare is something that touches every family and every individual..."

Dr. Barry Wright

"They did a great job of informing us of what was going on in healthcare, all the intricacies and complexities that make up healthcare. And they provided an opportunity for us to blend together as a board, so there was a great opportunity for us to get together to know each other. We were a brand new group. To use a rowing analogy, we all got in the boat, we were taught well how to work those oars and I think we've been rowing well together ever since."

Dr. Wright says one of the board's top highlights during the past three years was adding to an already strong leadership team with the appointment of Dr. Smith as CEO -- a role he also holds at St. Joseph's Health System -- and the recruitment of President Dr. Suzanne Johnston and Dr. Tom Stewart, Chief of Staff and Executive Vice President Medical.

"Leadership in an organization is paramount to success," says Dr. Wright. "We were fortunate to keep Kevin and add some very visionary leaders (Dr. Johnston and Dr. Stewart) to an already great team at Niagara Health. We already had a lot of great people here."

Other proud moments for him include Niagara Health unveiling our new Purpose, Vision and Values and strategic plan in June 2016 and receiving a \$26.2-million grant in 2014 from the provincial government for planning a new hospital and other services in South Niagara.

Dr. Johnston says Dr. Wright has been a strong leader with a calming presence.

"He draws calm around him as a leader. I think that's

a great attribute to have in healthcare when you can have that kind of calm presence," she says.

"He's been able to ensure that diverse opinions land on the table and that thorough discussions happen on the board. He's a highly skilled facilitator of challenging conversations."

Dr. Wright's focus on the importance of culture and collaboration in an organization is also impressive, she says. "He knows the work that needs to take place has to happen on the ground. It cannot be theoretical or imagined. It has to happen as a collective."

Dr. Johnston adds that "while recognizing he's the board chair, Barry is also a partner, not just to me but to other members of the executive team and to the board members themselves. He illuminates what collaboration should be."

Dr. Wright, who remains on the Board, says the Board will be well-served by the new Chair, John MacDonald, a former Chief Administrative Officer with the City of Niagara Falls.



John MacDonald

"John has great consensus skills," he says. "He understands complex environments. He understands the important role that leadership will play. But he also understands the importance of gathering information and to listen, and John is a great listener. But he's also a great decision maker and he'll make sure the board continues on its journey."

About Dr. Barry Wright

- Dr. Wright, who originally hails from Red Deer, Alta., resides in St. Catharines with his family.
- He became chair of the Niagara Health Board of Directors in 2013. He is also a board member for Leadership Niagara.
- A member of Brock University's Business faculty as an Associate Professor since 2003, Dr. Wright became Interim Dean of the Goodman School of Business in December 2015. The appointment is set to run until June 2017.
- His research has largely focused on leadership, organizational change and how small business can use information technology.

Planning for our future

Our planning for the future continues to move forward.

In March, we submitted the first stage of our capital development project to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, which included our plans for the Niagara Health - South Site, Niagara Falls and Ambulatory Care & Urgent Care Centre, Welland.

Between now and November, 40 user groups made up of 140 members of the Niagara Health team, representing a wide range of expertise, will identify program requirements and other needs at the new sites. For example, the user groups will determine the size of departments, including Emergency, Diagnostic Imaging and Critical Care, and which programs should be located beside one another to function best.

Patient experience and innovation are at the forefront of this work.

A capital development project of this large scale is a multi-staged initiative with five phases of planning. In 2014, we received a \$26.2-million capital planning grant from the provincial government, and we're currently in the second phase of planning.

Pending Ministry approval, our plans call for opening the new buildings in 2023.

Here are some details of our planning, which follow Dr. Kevin Smith's 2012 Supervisor's Report:

Niagara Health - South Site, Niagara Falls

The new site is estimated to provide both inpatient and outpatient care, including emergency and urgent care. We are still in the planning stages of this work and there are many factors to take into account. What we know for sure is that among many things, we plan to create five Centres of Excellence -- Stroke, Seniors Wellness, Complex Care, Eye Centre and Academic Education -- to ensure we provide the top-notch care of the 21st century and continue to bring the best and brightest to work in our facilities across Niagara.

Niagara Health - Ambulatory Care & Urgent Care Centre, Welland

In Welland, our plans call for developing a broad range of ambulatory care services (for example, outpatient medical and surgical clinics, dialysis, breast screening, mental health and addictions services to name a few), urgent care services, and long-term care. To do this, we plan to construct two new standalone buildings on the current Welland Site. These two buildings combined will be two-thirds of the size of the current Welland Site.

As proposed in our plan, one of the Welland buildings will be located at the corners of King and Third streets. It will include the ambulatory care services, urgent care services, an Ontario Breast Screening Program, a satellite dialysis unit, space for medical learners, and more. The second Welland building would be a two-storey Extended Care Unit to be constructed south of the existing Medical Arts Building on King Street. (The long-term care construction is part of a separate capital project.)

Our planning is consistent with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care capital development process. The five stages are:

Stage 1: Working with community partners, staff and residents to develop a Clinical Vision for our future. Detailed analysis of what services will be located at each site and in a community setting. (Submitted March 2016).

Stage 2: A detailed description of programs and services to be delivered by Niagara Health, and determining staffing, funding, equipment needs, and space required. (November 2016).

Stage 3: Working with architects and engineers to develop design drawings. (Winter 2018)

Stage 4: Niagara Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Infrastructure Ontario, will ask companies to submit proposals to design and construct the new buildings. (Spring 2019)

Stage 5: Construction begins. (Spring 2019)



Plans for the Niagara Health - South Site, Niagara Falls call for five Centres of Excellence, including Seniors Wellness.

Partnering with our communities

In addition to this planning, we will continue our discussions and consider models of care that capitalize on the strengths of community partners, including primary care providers, to meet local needs in all of our communities. By teaming up with our partners and thinking about healthcare delivery in new ways, there is great potential to improve access to services right across Niagara.

When we plan healthcare services for any community, among the information we look at is population and healthcare data, which includes the makeup of the community and the types of health strengths and illnesses that exist both now and in the future. Over a 30-year planning horizon all of these factors have been taken into consideration as best as possible. For example, we understand transportation can often present challenges for accessing health services, and we will be working closely with the Regional Municipality of Niagara on this issue.

Seeking the public's input

We are mindful of the concerns voiced regarding our planning. Input is an important part of our planning, and we will continue to involve our staff and community as we build the best healthcare system for Niagara. There are a number of opportunities already underway as a result of earlier feedback. For instance, we formed a Community Advisory Committee, which provides valuable insight and input into services and planning. And we will be scheduling further opportunities for community conversations as we continue the work of planning for the future.

Please check for updates on our website,
www.niagarahealth.on.ca.

Uniting staff through research

A program unique to Niagara Health is promoting staff engagement through research



Niagara Health Research Lead and Intensivist Dr. Jennifer Tsang.

“The reason Katie and I are in this role is because we are passionate about health services research and quality improvement.”

Dr. Jennifer Tsang

Research Lead & Intensivist

Niagara Health Research Lead and Intensivist Dr. Jennifer Tsang knows firsthand the importance research plays in caring for our patients.

“The reason Katie and I are in this role is because we are passionate about health services research and quality improvement,” says Dr. Tsang.

Together, Dr. Tsang and Research Support Katie Ross make up the Niagara Health’s Research Lead Office, which has been focusing on promoting staff engagement and accessibility to research since January 2015.

Among other projects, the department has created a Personalized Research Coaching Program to guide healthcare trainees and professionals at Niagara Health through collaborative, quality-focused and patient-centred research projects.

“We know that a lot of clinicians and staff members at Niagara



Dr. Tsang and Research Support Katie Ross are excited about the work happening in the Research Lead Office.

Health don’t have a research training background, but they have the heart to do research because they want to improve patient care,” says Dr. Tsang. “We try to help them turn their vague idea into a concrete hypothesis, develop methodology and carry out their research project.”

In its early stages, the Personalized Research Coaching Program is already guiding projects in both Family Medicine and Cardiology, bringing together doctors, medical learners, nurses and other members of the multidisciplinary team to evaluate the use of additional screening for heart attacks and the use of cognitive behavioural therapy in managing

patients with eating disorders.

“Research plays a vital role in healthcare,” says Dr. Tom Stewart, Niagara Health Chief of Staff and Executive Vice President Medical. “The programs being established by Dr. Tsang are bringing physicians and staff together to work on research initiatives that will ultimately help improve the quality of our patient-centred care.”

Within the next few years Dr. Tsang wants to write a paper on the Personalized Research Coaching Program to share the experiences gained at Niagara Health with other community hospitals to help them adopt their own research strategies.

Niagara Health Research Lead Office facts:

- Since its inception, the Research Lead Office has met with various Niagara Health physicians interested in pursuing clinical research to develop their ideas into concrete projects. The office also welcomes all Niagara Health physicians and staff to share their research ideas or projects.
- With assistance from the research team at the Niagara Regional Campus of McMaster University, the Research Lead Office developed a project assessment tool to help select research projects they can support.

A new way of caring

Program provides discharged patients enhanced access to services in community

Discharged patients at risk of readmission now have enhanced access to services in the community and medical expertise, thanks to a new model of care designed to reduce unnecessary trips to the hospital.

The Integrated Comprehensive Care (ICC) program, launched by Niagara Health in April, directly integrates hospital and community care services for patients who are admitted with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and congestive heart failure (CHF) and require home care after discharge.

Key to the program is a team of Niagara Health Integrated Care Co-ordinators who help patients through every step of their journey, in the hospital and back into the community.

Here's how the program works:

- While in hospital, patients who have been diagnosed with COPD and CHF are connected with an Integrated Care co-ordinator.
- The co-ordinator is the patient's link between hospital specialists and connects them with necessary service providers in the community, including home care provided by St. Joseph's Home Care.
- Patients and their family members have access to support on a 24/7 basis while enrolled in the program.
- The program provides patients 60 days of support post-discharge from hospital.
- The use of mobile technology, such as iPads, allows home care staff to update the care team in real time with any changes to a patient's condition, and staff review all patients in the program on a weekly basis holding "virtual rounds."

Barb Berketo, one of the Integrated Care Co-ordinators, says the program has been well received by patients

and their families.

"It's meeting a need that's out there," says Ms. Berketo, a Respiratory Therapist. "When we offer the program to the patients and families, it's usually a sense of relief for them."

Important to the program, she says, is educating patients about how they can manage their symptoms at home.

"People are finding it really satisfying. They want to stay home. They can call us if they have any questions, or we can send a nurse that day or a respiratory therapist to help them. If the healthcare team has any concerns, they email us (the co-ordinators) right away."



Barb Berketo with Heather Paterson, Director Clinical Services and the ICC Project Lead for Niagara Health.

Derek McNally, NHS Executive Vice-President of Clinical Services and Chief Nursing Executive, adds: "This is a wonderful example of an innovative model of care that creates a seamless patient journey and ensures patients have timely access to medical expertise. Patients are well supported by a network of healthcare providers in the hospital and the community, which will help reduce their anxiety about being discharged home from the hospital."

The program builds on the success of St. Joseph's Health System's early work in launching an innovative approach to integrated care and currently includes all acute care hospitals in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN. Early results across the LHIN suggest we are doing a better job of caring for individuals with congestive heart failure and COPD.

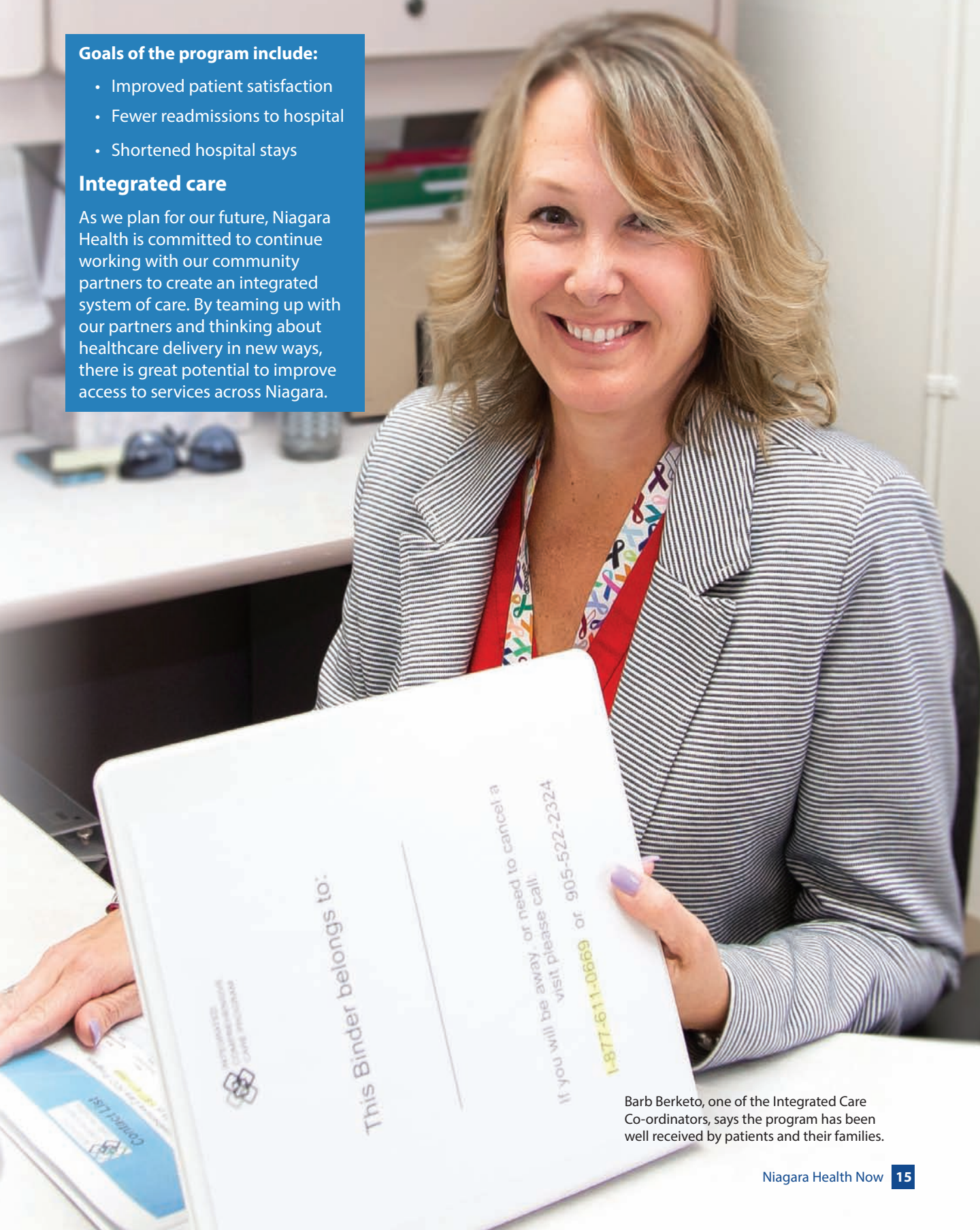
Niagara Health hopes to expand the ICC program to other patients in our care in the future.

Goals of the program include:

- Improved patient satisfaction
- Fewer readmissions to hospital
- Shortened hospital stays

Integrated care

As we plan for our future, Niagara Health is committed to continue working with our community partners to create an integrated system of care. By teaming up with our partners and thinking about healthcare delivery in new ways, there is great potential to improve access to services across Niagara.



Barb Berketo, one of the Integrated Care Co-ordinators, says the program has been well received by patients and their families.

Niagara Health Highlights

ACCREDITED WITH EXEMPLARY STANDING

For the first time ever, Niagara Health has been Accredited with Exemplary Standing.

Exemplary Standing is for organizations that go beyond the requirements of Accreditation Canada and demonstrate excellence in quality improvement. "This is an extraordinary achievement and reflects the incredible efforts of the entire NHS team as we continue our ongoing quality and safety journey," says President Dr. Suzanne Johnston. "While there is much to be proud of, it is imperative we continue to reinforce important quality and safety practices and work together to achieve excellence in care."

In November, a group of surveyors from Accreditation Canada travelled to Niagara to complete our on-site accreditation. They visited every NHS site, program and service, spending time talking with staff, physicians and volunteers, interviewing patients and families, and reviewing documents. Accreditation Canada is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits healthcare and social services organizations in Canada and around the world. The accreditation standing runs until 2019. In addition, Niagara Health was recognized nationally with two Canadian Public Relations Society awards -- Canadian Healthcare Campaign of the Year and Internal Communications Campaign of the Year -- for its Route NHS internal communications program developed to support our teams.



PHYSICIAN LEADERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

We're excited about several recent appointments to our Physician Leadership team:



Dr. Johan Viljoen assumes the new role of Deputy Chief of Staff, in addition to his responsibilities as Chief of Obstetrics/Gynecology. Dr. Viljoen will work in partnership with Dr. Tom Stewart, our Chief of Staff and Executive Vice President Medical, and President Dr. Suzanne Johnston to realize our Board of Director's vision.



Dr. Rafi Setrak has been appointed to the role of Chief of Emergency Medicine. Dr. Setrak will manage one of the busiest emergency services in the province, and will take on many other responsibilities in the regional program, including assisting in physician recruitment and retention and improving patient flow. Dr. Setrak had been the Site Chief of Emergency Medicine at our St. Catharines Site.



Dr. Julian Dobranowski was recruited to the position of Chief of Diagnostic Imaging. Dr. Dobranowski comes to Niagara Health from St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton where he was the Senior Consultant for Strategic Quality Initiatives and the Director of the Centre of Radiological Anatomy based at the Charlton Campus. He is also an Associate Professor of Diagnostic Imaging at McMaster University. Provincially, Dr. Dobranowski holds the position of Provincial Head for the Cancer Imaging Program at Cancer Care Ontario and Provincial Lead Access to Care MRI and CT.



Paisley Janvary-Pool



Marie Kordos

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

We celebrated our more than 850 dedicated, passionate and hard-working volunteers and auxiliaries as part of National Volunteer Week April 10-16.

Our volunteers help provide quality patient-centred care in a wide range of departments, including Cardiac Rehab, Critical Care, Emergency Department, Medical Imaging, Mental Health, Outpatient Clinics, Palliative Care, Surgical Services, the Walker Family Cancer Centre and Women's and Babies. Volunteers also support the important work of OneFoundation for Niagara Health System and our auxiliaries by raising money for equipment through Gift Shops, lottery ticket sales and other resource-generating ventures.

This year, three of our auxiliary members marked 50 years of volunteering with Niagara Health. Congratulations to Marie Kordos and Em McKague, members of the St. Catharines Hospital auxiliary, and Paisley Janvary-Pool, a member of the Greater Niagara General Hospital Auxiliary, for this milestone.

"Hospital volunteers and auxiliaries truly understand that it is the everyday little things that make a difference to our patients' and their loved ones' experience with Niagara Health," says Natalee Little, Coordinator of Volunteer Resources. "Something as simple as taking a patient to the department that they need to go rather than providing them with directions truly enhances our patients' experience."

RECOGNITION FOR PROMOTING ORGAN DONATION

Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) presented Niagara Health and a member of our team with two awards in April for dedication to helping improve organ and tissue donation in Ontario and saving lives through transplantation.

Ann Nagypal, a Registered Nurse at our Douglas Memorial Site in Fort Erie, received the Tissue Donation Champion Award, which is given to a healthcare professional who is an active advocate for tissue donation.

As well, Niagara Health was presented with the Hospital Achievement Award -- Provincial Conversion Rate, given to hospitals that met or exceeded TGLN's target of a 67% Conversion Rate in 2014/15. Conversion Rate is the percentage of actual organ donors from the total number of potentially eligible organ donors.

"We are honoured to be partners with Trillium Gift of Life Network in this important effort," says Heather Paterson, Niagara Health's Director of Clinical Services. "The Hospital Achievement Award speaks to the important work happening across our organization to help save lives."

Krystle Etherington, a Safe Patient Handling Consultant at Niagara Health, helped to develop a brace that meets Infection Prevention and Control regulations.

Bracing for change

Niagara Health employee's wrist brace innovation is helping some injured staff return to work sooner

You might call Krystle Etherington a professional problem solver. As the Niagara Health Safe Patient Handling Consultant, Mrs. Etherington finds solutions to help staff recovering from injury and illness return to work. One reoccurring issue for Niagara Health staff with repetitive motion hand and wrist injuries presented her with a major challenge.

"The individual would be in a return-to-work meeting and they would be wearing a splint or brace," says Mrs. Etherington. "They couldn't perform patient care if they had to wear it at all times because it couldn't be cleaned as needed. We would have to keep them at a desk."

Over-the-counter splints and braces don't meet Infection Prevention and Control regulations as the cloth and Velcro material they're made from can't be washed. This means staff who interact with patients can't return to their full duties until their injury is healed enough to take off their splint.

Mrs. Etherington reached out to dozens of her counterparts at hospitals across the country to see if washable braces existed. When it became apparent that no such splint was readily available, she decided it was time for her to create one.

"In my mind, in most cases there is a solution to something," says Mrs. Etherington. "It's just finding someone who's willing to listen and adapt to what you need."

Alan Rigby, owner of Niagara Prosthetics and Orthotics, turned out to be the partner Mrs. Etherington needed. Mr. Rigby's company, which has a location at Niagara Health's St. Catharines Site, creates custom orthotics and prosthetics for a wide range of needs.



Alan Rigby, owner of Niagara Prosthetics and Orthotics, partnered with Mrs. Etherington to create the brace.

"Krystle was kind of the physiology and infection control requirement brain and I was the mechanical person that came and said, 'What can we make?'" says Mr. Rigby.

"It was more perseverance. In my mind, in most cases there is a solution to something and it's just finding someone who's willing to listen and adapt to what you need."

Krystle Etherington

NHS Safe Patient Handling Consultant

The custom braces Mrs. Etherington and Mr. Rigby designed and created are made of blended plastic and nylon cord lacing that is adjustable, but most importantly they're also washable.

"It's exciting to work on these kinds of projects where it's a very specific need and something that can be fulfilled in terms of a collaborative approach," says Mr. Rigby. "To work with Krystle has been fantastic. She's very creative, very clever and very articulate about what she needs."

The braces are already speeding up the back-to-work process for some Niagara Health staff members suffering from repetitive motion strains and the reaction has been positive.

"People don't want to be off work," says Mrs. Etherington. "They do what they do because they like to do it. Yes, they're hurt but they want to get back as soon as possible. This allows them to do that."

"This innovation is just one example of how Krystle plays an important role in removing barriers to returning our staff to their full duties," says Flo Paladino, Niagara Health's Executive Vice President of People and Organizational Development. "Krystle's demeanour, professionalism and open-mindedness set her apart, yet she remains humble about her many great accomplishments."

Mrs. Etherington was recently recognized for her innovation at the Niagara Health Awards of Excellence event (see page 18). She says it has always been one of her career goals to develop and create something.

"I like what I do because I like helping people," says Mrs. Etherington. "It feels good."

Celebrating excellence

Awards gala recognizes tremendous work being done by individuals and teams at Niagara Health

A Mental Health professional with Niagara Health's Outpatient Mental Health Services who is continually recognized by patients and their families for going above and beyond is the 2015 recipient of Niagara Health's highest honour.

Belinda Santamaria, a Psychometrist who works at our St. Catharines Site, provides exceptional care that positively impacts the lives of her young clients. She is often more than just a counsellor to those she works with. In one case, Belinda became a constant in the life of one of her most vulnerable patients. For years Belinda went well beyond the parameters of her job to coach this young woman on basic life skills, help her find a home and to finish high school. Belinda even attended her graduation. Now, her former client has ambitions of attending a therapy program so she can help others like Belinda helped her.

"This story is just one example of Belinda's extraordinary service, compassionate care and respectful interaction with her young patients," says President Dr. Suzanne Johnston, who presented Belinda with the President's Award of Excellence at the 11th Annual Awards of Excellence event in April. "She has made a significant



Belinda Santamaria, a Psychometrist who works at our St. Catharines Site, provides exceptional care that positively impacts the lives of her young clients.

impact on children, youth and their parents through exemplifying all of Niagara Health's values each day."

Each year the President's Award is given to individuals or teams who exemplify all of Niagara Health's success factors and demonstrate the values of compassion, professionalism and respect.

This year we received a total of 84 nominations, representing 302 individuals and one department. From these nominations, six additional awards were presented to members of our team for demonstrating exceptional behaviours related to our Success Factors or Core Values.

Focus on those we serve: Dr. Mamoon Bokhari, General Internal Medicine, Oncology, St. Catharines Site.

Bring out the best in each other: Dr. Kim Scher, Family Medicine, Urgent Care and Palliative Care, Douglas Memorial Site in Fort Erie.

Create a better way: Krystle Etherington, Safe Patient Handling Consultant, Occupational Health and Safety.

Build strong and successful relationships: Lise Buliung, Recreational Therapist, Outpatient Mental Health, Welland Site.

Use our resources wisely: Connexall Implementation Team: Graham Campbell, Stevie Christopher, Shelley Cote, Christine Delaney, Ashley MacDonald, Scott Poirier and Jack Samchyk.

Compassion, Professionalism and Respect: Michele Maiden, Registered Nurse, Greater Niagara General Site in Niagara Falls.

We are Niagara Health

Our nurses and doctors are outstanding all year round, but each May we take some extra time to show our appreciation for all they do for our patients and their families.

Nursing Week

At 2,200 strong, Niagara Health's Nurse Practitioners, Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses make up almost half of the Niagara Health staff population, caring for an estimated 500,000 patients each year. The second week of May was set aside to celebrate excellence in nursing and to recognize our nurses for all they do to provide an extraordinary patient experience.

This included our annual Nursing Awards and Celebration Gala.

Here are this year's recipients:

Excellence in Customer Service: Janice Whitford, Registered Nurse – St. Catharines Site.

Rising Stars: Melissa Cercone, Registered Nurse – Welland Site; Tina Jose, Registered Practical Nurse – St. Catharines Site; Sarah Kerr, Registered Nurse – Welland Site; Stefanie Lees, Registered Practical Nurse – Greater Niagara General Site.

Excellence in Patient Education: Charlene Duliban, Advance Practice Nurse – St. Catharines Site.

Excellence in Nursing Leadership: Jennifer Lee, Nurse Practitioner – Port Colborne Site; Denise Crockett, Registered Nurse – St. Catharines Site.



Registered Nurse Deny Thomas walks with patient Joyce Mackay at our Douglas Memorial Site in Fort Erie.

Excellence in Patient Care: David Corbett, Registered Nurse – Welland Site; Jennifer Law, Registered Nurse – Greater Niagara General Site; Claudia Danyluk, Registered Nurse – Welland Site; Karen Garner, Registered Practical Nurse – St. Catharines Site.

Excellence in Team Nursing: 2016 Nurse Educators: Lisa Boyd, Carmen Cernusca, Derek Christensen, Natalie Doucet, Teresa Duguay, Vera Girard, Monica Hlywka, Karen James, Davene Korince, Lezlie Lambert-Burd, Karen Mings, Barb Sawatsky, Nathalie Stewart, Kelly Sylvester.

Doctors' Day

On May 1, we celebrated the contributions of our more than 650 talented and caring doctors making a huge difference in the lives of our patients and their families by marking Doctors' Day.

Over the past year, there have been 24 physician recruitments and leadership appointments at Niagara Health as we continue to attract specialists from across Canada and the world. These new members of our team are adding to our existing strengths by bringing much-needed specialties to Niagara.

Doctors' Day is a chance for us to celebrate the incredible accomplishments of all our physicians who have dedicated their careers to bettering the lives of those we serve.

As part of the celebration, the annual Niagara Region Physicians Awards were presented to the following individuals:

Niagara Region Physician Distinguished Service Award: Dr. Brian Kerley.

Niagara Region Family Physician of the Year Award: Dr. Pran Kundi.

Niagara Region Consultant Physician of the Year award: Dr. Y.K. Chan.



Orthopedic Surgeon Dr. Matthew Gunton with patient Douglas Swales at our Welland Site.

Program making big strides

Running group in Outpatient Mental Health helps participants improve their wellbeing



Kathryn Richmond and Cynthia Lubberts have high praise for the Strides to Recovery program.

Kathryn Richmond admits she's learned a lot while participating in Niagara Health's Strides to Recovery program.

But there's one lesson she likes to highlight most: "When life knocks you down, I've learned how to get back on my feet."

Strides to Recovery is a learn-to-run group that is offered twice a year in our Outpatient Mental Health program. The 13-week program is an exercise-based approach to assisting in the management of symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. It also includes a health-teaching component to provide awareness of the links between physical fitness and mental health.

Mrs. Richmond says the program has been key in her recovery.

"The group keeps me accountable to not sit around and ruminate about my illness, but to take steps to manage it and to be healthy," she says. "The wonderful thing about the journey with Strides and the other courses here in the Mental Health program is being a discovery of recovery and that recovery is possible."

Cynthia Lubberts, who was also part of the Strides group with Mrs. Richmond in the fall of 2015, is grateful for the program. "It got me out of the house," she says. "It got me into a social group. That's very important. There are lots of times when I've had a difficult time and I would keep challenging myself to go to the running group because it was a good place to be, rather than sitting at home."

The Strides to Recovery running group -- whose motto is to support one another, never leaving anyone to run alone -- was created in 2014 by Megan Ransom, a Recreation Therapist in the Mental Health Unit at our St. Catharines Site. Mrs. Ransom runs the group with Lisa Smith, a Registered Social Worker in the Mental Health Program.

"This group has been so much more than individuals learning how to run. It's become a community of individuals who are collectively making strides towards the same thing, improved wellbeing," says Mrs. Ransom. "Not only is exercise a powerful tool in treating mental health, but it is also an incredible metaphor when dealing with struggles. Our group has faced hills, inclement weather and the regular challenges associated with exercise, but with support, education and determination we have experienced great accomplishment in conquering these barriers. While the barriers experienced in everyday life may take a different shape, it has reminded our participants, that they too can be overcome utilizing similar strategies."

Remembering John Walker for his generosity and kindness

We would like to express our sincere sympathy to the family of Mr. John Walker.

Mr. Walker's exemplary leadership, devotion to the community and immense generosity have touched the lives of so many people in Niagara. Mr. Walker passed away on May 26, 2016.

We are exceptionally grateful for the difference Mr. Walker has made to healthcare through his support of Niagara Health.

Mr. Walker was Honorary Co-Chair of the \$40-million It's Our Time Campaign that raised funds for the new St. Catharines hospital and improvements at Niagara

Health sites across the region.

Under the leadership of Mr. Walker and his brother, Norris, the Walker Family and Walker Industries donated \$5 million towards the campaign, helping to bring advanced cancer care to Niagara through the creation of our first regional comprehensive cancer centre — now known as the Walker Family Cancer Centre.

To date, the donation is the single largest gift in Niagara Health's history.

Mr. Walker's contributions will continue to be felt at Niagara Health and in all corners of our region.

We will always remember Mr. Walker's kind heart and generous spirit.



Mr. John Walker speaks at a donor wall unveiling event in 2013 at our St. Catharines Site, shortly before the hospital opened.

ONEFOUNDATION

for Niagara Health System

Doreen Estelle Bent and her Legacy of Caring



Pictured at the GNG Donor Wall are family and friends of Doreen Bent, along with OneFoundation and NHS representatives.

OneFoundation for Niagara Health System celebrates Doreen Bent, her life's work and her continuing legacy



Doreen Bent.

If ever there was a face of compassion and dedication, Doreen Bent is it.

Sadly, Doreen's family was at her side to say a final goodbye on Dec. 31, 2013. Happily, she is remembered with affection, warmth and humour by those who loved her. What's more, the people touched by Doreen's giving spirit are even more far-reaching than even she could have known.

After her passing, OneFoundation was the very grateful recipient of a generous bequest gift from Doreen Bent's estate to be used for patient-care equipment at the Greater Niagara General Site. To understand what makes this gesture especially moving, we go back to the 1950s.

Doreen was an 'NHS Family Member' – her connection with GNG dating back to her training days when she studied nursing while living in the hospital's on-site residence. Graduating in 1961, she devoted herself to her nursing career.

Doreen was passionate about caring for patients. Fuelled by that passion, she was driven to continually improve her knowledge and practices. Only leaving the Greater Niagara General Hospital for short periods to upgrade her nursing education, she rose through the ranks moving from Registered Nurse to Head

Nurse to Director and then Vice President of Nursing. Throughout that time, many nurses at varying stages of their careers were inspired by her determination to make the patient experience better. The gift she bequeathed to the hospital at the end of her life seemed a natural extension of her untiring commitment.

In recognition of her gift, a plaque honouring Doreen Bent was added to the GNG Donor wall. On April 8, Doreen's family and friends visited the hospital to see the dedication. Being one of five children, it was no surprise that a sizeable crowd made up of local and Toronto-area friends and relatives gathered to pay her tribute. Joyful, tearful, sometimes comical – Doreen's loved ones enjoyed sharing their memories. Nieces Elizabeth Black and Sherry Bell recounted how Doreen was cared for in her final days by a nurse who she herself had trained in years past – the "ripple effect" of her caring finding its way back to her.

Through her bequest gift, Doreen's caring spirit will be felt by many more people – leaving her family heartened to know that her legacy will live on.

(Story submitted by OneFoundation for Niagara Health System)

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