

## WELL AWARE – FALL 2019

October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The North Bay Regional Health Centre is pleased to provide you with our quarterly e-newsletter update! NBRHC Well Aware is designed to keep you up to date on changes to our services, new initiatives and news that impacts our communities

### **Come Dine with Me**

*A fine dining experience for patients at NBRHC*

Eating in the hospital isn't usually your first choice. When it comes to mealtime, hospital cuisine has traditionally gotten a bad rap. But a hospital menu does more than curb hunger—it's an essential part of the treatment and care of patients.



*Tables were adorned with linen, menu cards, table numbers and centrepieces that were handmade by NBRHC patients as a social activity.*

Three times a day, 365 days a year, Patient Food Services staff at the North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBRHC) focus on serving quality meals that are planned to meet patients' needs. Providing the same comforts of home cooking can be a challenge, as many hospitalized patients are required to adhere to a strict diet—often with salt restrictions.

“In hospital, we can’t just provide anything. We need to know who is allowed to eat what,” notes Natalie Lepine, Manager of Patient Food Services at NBRHC. “Food served to patients goes through a vetting process together with physicians and dieticians to ensure meals meet various dietary requirements and therapeutic needs.”

Sandy Sikora, a Peer Specialist with the NBRHC explains outside of the hospital setting, many people do not eat meals alone, in silence or watching television. “Mealtime is a social activity and a chance to bond with family and friends,” says Sikora. “Food is also connected with self-worth and role identity. Cooking for others gives people a sense of purpose and an opportunity to give back.”

For long-stay patients, the opportunity to prepare food or go out to eat is limited, so the Health Centre created a cooking group to bring a small touch of normalcy to the patients’ daily routine.

“During the holidays, we noticed some patients couldn’t go home. So last Christmas we decided to start a cooking group to make a home-cooked meal,” says Sikora. “It gave patients a chance to develop basic skills while socializing in a group setting. The feedback was amazing, so we decided to continue meeting for special occasions such as during Mental Health Week.”

The group participated in meal planning and menu selection. Sikora said they were surprised most of the requests were for simple, everyday items. One of the biggest request was to have a sit-down dinner with salt and pepper shakers.



*NBRHC staff transformed the hospital cafeteria into an upscale venue.*

### **A Special Night Out, In**

The request sparked an idea: a formal event called *Come Dine with Me* for patients and their guests to sit-down for a plated meal with linens, menu cards, centrepieces, music, and of course salt and pepper shakers.

Sikora fondly remembers her first fine-dining experience and it was something she wanted to share with patients. “Our patients have the opportunity to eat out, but it’s often fast-food restaurants and they do not have a lot of

experience being served. And our senior patients have trouble leaving without the help of family or friends,” says Sikora. “We wanted to give them a special night out here at the Health Centre.”



*The Goldings made Come Dine with Me into a date night.*

Bob and Christina Golding have been married for 50 years, and made *Come Dine with Me* into a date night. Bob, a retired pipefitter, is a patient at NBRHC.

“I didn’t know what to expect when I accepted the invitation,” Christina says. “When I walked into the room I was astonished by the effort given to make it a dining experience. It was good for Bob and me, because everything was taken care of and we were able to just relax. Bob and I sat there, held hands and talked.”

An important part of the *Come Dine with Me* experience involved patients selecting the menu. On the wish list was potatoes.

*Come Dine with Me* gave Patient Food Services staff an opportunity to be creative and work outside the strict perimeters of everyday requirements. “We were excited to get involved and be a part of the discussion,” Lepine said. “For us it was fun to try something new, such the roasted red-skinned potatoes.”

For the Goldings, it was a hit. “The potatoes had so much flavour. Bob thought he died and went to heaven,” laughs Christina. “Bob loved those potatoes.”

### All Hands on Deck



*Over 20 NBRHC employees volunteered their time to greet and serve the invited guests.*

An event on the scale of *Come Dine with Me* is only possible with a lot of hard work by NBRHC staff. For everyone involved the goal was the same: remove the humdrum of hospital life and create a memorable experience.

The event was made possible through funds generated leasing vacant space to CTV’s critically acclaimed and award-winning drama *Cardinal*. “In the past, this money for leasing space went to a general building fund, however this time the money was used to specifically support recreational activities for the Regional Mental Health program and services,” says Kim McElroy, Manager of Communications and Volunteers at NBRHC.



*Patient Food Services staff had fun getting creative while preparing the formal three-course meal.*

The day of the event the entire hospital was a hive of activity: staff in Patient Food Services were busy preparing the formal three course meal in addition to the regular service; in the cafeteria Recreation Therapists and Peer Specialists transformed the plain tables and chairs into a venue fit for a wedding; and the Communications Department staff set-up a photo booth to offer patients an opportunity to capture a moment with their loved ones.

When the 97 invitees arrived for dinner, they were escorted to their seats by staff dressed in black and white. The handmade centerpieces looked beautiful on the table where the sun captured all of the colours in the peacock feathers. Overhead music set the tone as staff from management and frontline interacted with guests and served their meals.

“Every staff member that participated volunteered their time that evening, knowing that they would make a difference in the lives of many,” says Tanya Nixon, Vice President of Mental Health at NBRHC.

After the main course, guests were treated to an assortment of desserts. “Bob is a ‘seafood’ lover – he sees food and eats it,” jokes Christina. “But he almost fell over when he saw the desserts. I was so happy to see him get excited about something, because there isn’t a lot to get excited about anymore.”

At the end of the night, it was clear *Come Dine with Me* achieved its goal to create a memorable experience. “To have staff come around and ask ‘how are you doing’ and serve coffee was special, and you could tell it was uplifting to the patients and their family. The plates were empty at the end of the meal, which was a good sign,” laughs Armand Lalonde, another Peer Specialist at NBRHC. “There was a lot of excitement building up to the event and people are now asking ‘when can we do it again?’”

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## **NBRHC benefits from \$2.04 million provincial investment towards home and community care**

The Ontario government announced it’s investing an additional \$2.04 million towards the continued operation of the North Bay Regional Health Centre’s (NBRHC) Cedar Lodge to support patient flow and help ease health system pressures in Nipissing.



*Paul Heinrich, NBRHC president & CEO (right) listens as Vic Fedeli, MPP for Nipissing announces additional funding towards the Health Centre's transition unit.*

The funding is a critical component of the government's plan to end hallway health care. "Patient flow is a serious issue affecting our organization due to a number of contributing factors. For instance, the closure of Lady Isabelle Nursing Home caused the Health Centre's alternate level of care (ALC) numbers to jump dramatically from 7.5 percent – one of the lowest in the province – to 25 percent," explains Paul Heinrich, president & CEO, NBRHC. "When we aren't able to provide a patient a bed or excellent transitions of care, our system breaks."

The Health Centre's 14-bed transition unit helps relieve bed pressures by co-locating patients who no longer require full hospital resources while they wait for placement in the next appropriate level of care, such as a long-term care (LTC) bed. The primary goal for Cedar Lodge is to support patients in achieving their optimal level of independence in preparation for discharge.

Feedback from patients and their families demonstrate that this integrated care model is effective in meeting a critical need in the community while changes take place in the LTC sector, such as redevelopment projects and capacity reviews.

"We as a family are pleased that Ross got into this unit, the care has been exceptional," Heinrich began as he read a letter written by a grateful family during a press conference at NBRHC. "The hospital should be very proud that they have such great staff in this unit who truly care for our loved ones. I hope this unit remains open, it is really needed."

The government's investment is part of \$155 million in additional funding for expanded home and community care in the province, including \$45 million for new targeted innovative integrated care models in high-need areas, and \$63 million in funding for existing integrated care models in communities across Ontario.

“Home and community care play a critical role to end hallway health care in Nipissing,” said Fedeli. “By making these significant investments and supporting partnerships between home and community care providers and busy hospitals, patients will experience quicker transitions between care providers with the appropriate support they need to properly recover, while also making sure hospital beds are available for those who need them.”

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## Launching Safer, Better, Smarter Care

Patient care is improving. The way we work is changing.

On October 29, North Bay Regional Health Centre is launching a new electronic health information system. The transformation will benefit our patients in many important ways.



On October 29, North Bay Regional Health Centre is launching a new electronic health information system.

While becoming more familiar with our new technology, some processes may take longer than usual. Our focus remains providing the best care possible to our patients and their families.

**The transformation will benefit our patients in many important ways, including:**

- ✓ **Helping prevent medication errors.**
- ✓ **Providing care teams with complete and timely access to a patient's journey.**
- ✓ **Helping patients tell their story/history.**
- ✓ **Eliminating difficult-to-read handwritten notes.**
- ✓ **Keeping a patient's medical record in one single, secure, and accessible place.**

**Ask a member of your Care Team for more information.**

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## New volunteer program LEADs to opportunities for personal and professional development

A new volunteer program at North Bay Regional Health Centre (NBHRC) offered youth aged 16 to 29 the opportunity to develop valuable skills and connect with the hospital community this summer.

The program called LEAD (Learn, Experience, Accomplish and Develop) combines a volunteer placement with learning opportunities geared toward youth who are interested in healthcare. It is a summer program designed for individuals interested in personal growth and professional development while meeting new people and giving back to their local hospital. In its first summer, 21 volunteers participated in the program.



One of these participants is Jo-Anna Fleury. The first-year nursing student decided to start volunteering at the NBRHC to get an idea of the different type of roles available in the healthcare field.

“Being a part of the LEAD program gave students such as myself opportunities to not only give back to our community, but as well gain deeper knowledge of the healthcare profession. In doing so, I was given the opportunity to participate in different learning sessions that enriched my knowledge on different aspects of healthcare and its workforce,” says Fleury. “When volunteering, I gained a better idea of what my future may look like and whether or not this work environment is best suited for me.”



*Caius Cartmill-McCrea (left) and Sarah Irwin experience some simulated age-related changes firsthand while attending one of the learning opportunities offered through the LEAD program.*

LEAD builds on the success of the Health Centre’s already established youth-specific programming while responding to changing volunteer trends.

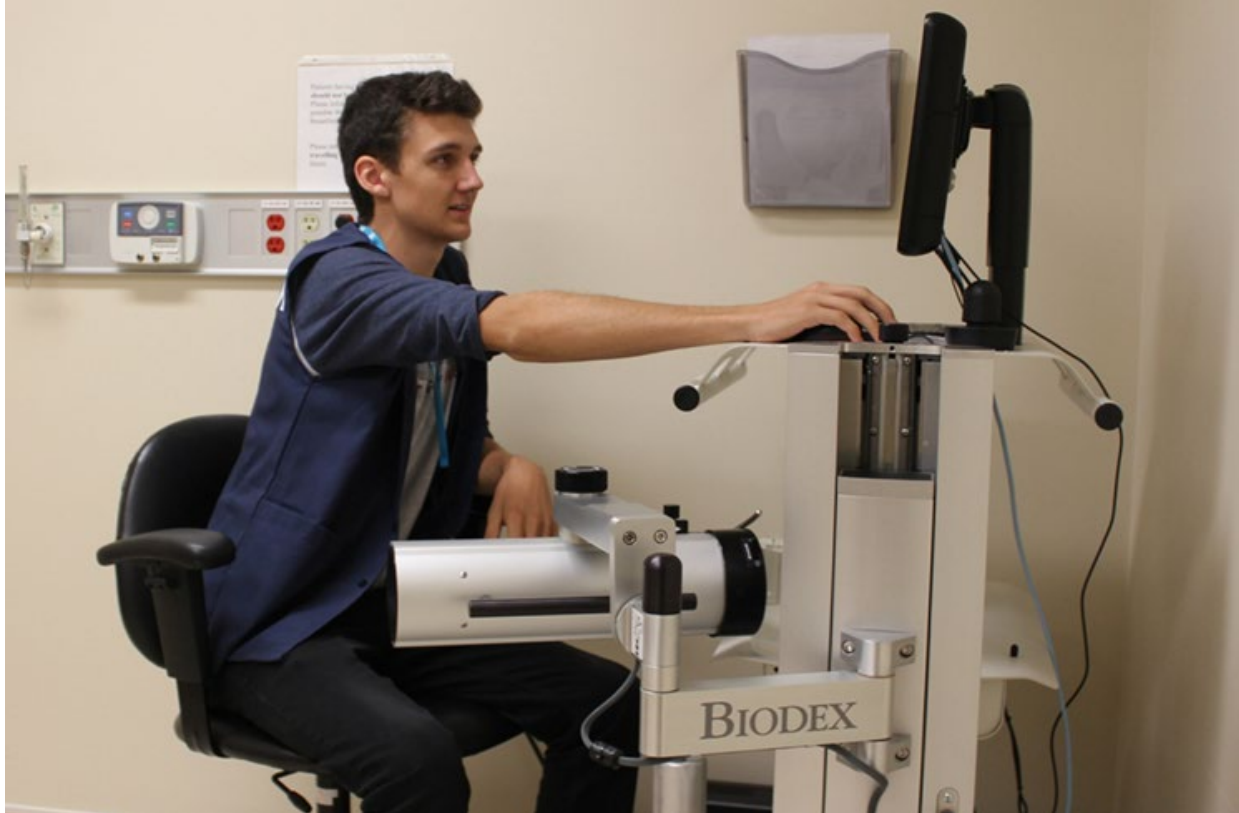
“We know young people want to be involved, they are just interested and motivated differently. In the past, volunteer engagement was focused more on direct service opportunities whereas today applicants are looking for more hands-on, episodic experiences,” explains Kim McElroy, Manager of Communication & Volunteers, NBRHC. “So we’ve needed to adapt how we recruit, support and retain these highly skilled volunteers.”

Last summer, the Health Centre’s Volunteer Department invited youth volunteers to provide feedback and recommendations related to their volunteer experience. “We recognized our registered volunteers had invaluable perspectives that could help us identify opportunity for continuous improvement within our volunteer program,” say McElroy. “Overwhelmingly, we heard they are interested in giving back to their community and looking for learning opportunities connected to future careers.”

The LEAD program was designed to meet the goals of today’s youth volunteers. Participants are required to maintain a consistent volunteer placement during the summer, and attend two learning sessions to help them gain

a stronger understanding of the healthcare sector. At the end of the summer, LEAD volunteers submit a written reflection to share some of the insights and knowledge gained through their volunteer experience.

Owen Watkins, a third-year biology student says the program helped him explore future career opportunities while volunteering in Diagnostic Imaging.



*Owen Watkins, volunteered in Diagnostic Imaging during the summer while participating in the LEAD program.*

“I have been able to widen my knowledge of the healthcare system, explore career options and meet some amazing people. I have an interest in this type of work and being able to experience it first-hand has provided me with great insight into the healthcare system,” explains Watkins. “I’ve been able to find out what I like and what I dislike about the field of work and I find that very helpful for my future schooling decisions.”

For other participants like Alyson Ranger, a high school student, the program built tangible skills. “The extent to which my skills have developed is something that I never imagined myself being capable of. When I first started I was a very shy, inexperienced person who was more of a follower than a leader,” states Ranger. “My volunteer position really allowed me to push myself and motivated me to develop communication, confidence and leadership skills. By the end, I found myself training new volunteers and taking on more shifts because I loved it.”

The LEAD program provides a new opportunity for the NBRHC to cultivate future talent. “We believe providing a positive volunteer experience is the best way to encourage young people to stay or return to our community and organization for work,” says McElroy.