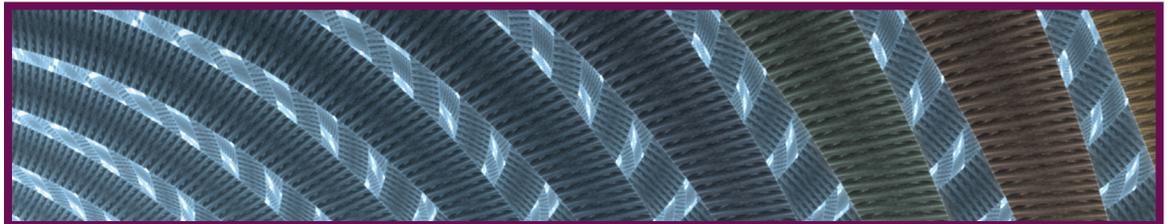


Putting our Ideas into Action

Carol Annett ~ CEO & President, VHA Home HealthCare

If 2010 was the year of new ideas, then 2011 is clearly the year for taking these concepts and bringing them to life. Our work on attracting more talent and innovation is in high gear with the recruitment of Beatrice Mudge to *Vice President, Best Practices, Education and Research and Chief Nursing Executive (CNE)*.



Bea is passionate about innovation and evidence-based practices and I'm sure her influential leadership will build on the excellent care we've already established at VHA and take us to a new level of more outstanding home care for our clients.

More independence was also highlighted in June with the presentation of the **Heart of Home Care Award** to Baylee Levy, an incredible caregiver and mother to Sar—a much-loved 24-year-old who, despite a myriad of serious medical conditions, remains upbeat, positive and a source of incredible joy. It's hard to believe, but for more than a decade, Baylee had no home care support and was unaware that CCACs even existed. Fortunately, she discovered home care and was more recently connected to VHA. More independence isn't just what Sar gets by being able to live with his loving family—it's what Baylee receives when VHA support services allow her a few precious hours of deserved respite and time to reconnect outside the home. The award not only recognizes Baylee's incredible care of Sar, but was also created to draw attention to the need for more caregiver support in our communities.

Finally, we introduced our new tagline (with a twist) at the Ontario Association of

Community Care Access Centres' (OACCAC) annual conference. *Creating S'More Independence* and our truly "campy" theme was a great chance for people to reconnect with familiar faces and make new friends. We were delighted that many attendees chose to "hang out" at our booth while snacking on s'mores and canoeing (Wii style) their hearts out and even happier to share top prize for **Best Booth** at the conference.

The fall looks to be even busier with a number of initiatives underway including our Ring and Reach series of moderated phone seminars for caregivers sponsored by Solutions: East Toronto's Health Collaborative (www.vha.ca/home/ring-and-reach) and VHA's Hoarding Symposium (www.vhahoarding.ca) on October 3rd in London, Ontario—a practical hands-on event designed to help a range of community support professionals learn how to apply our Community Clutter and Hoarding Toolkit in real-life situations. Those who aren't able to make it to London can still purchase the toolkit on our website. If actions speak louder than words, then VHA's voice is one that is growing clearer and more confident every day.

VHA Welcomes a New VP and CNE

We are pleased to welcome Beatrice (Bea) Mudge to VHA's team as Vice President, Best Practices, Education and Research and Chief Nursing Executive (CNE).

Bea is a collaborative senior leader with extensive experience in complex health care systems, planning bodies and in government environments. Most recently, she worked as a consultant in leadership development. Prior to this, Bea served as Vice President, Patient Services and CNE at Cambridge Memorial Hospital (CMH), an organization she helped transform into a leader of clinical innovation, practice standards and benchmark utilization. She also championed a professional practice strategy, positioning CMH as a Best Practice Spotlight Organization.

Bea's work history also includes several leadership, education, and clinical practice roles, primarily in the critical care environment, as well as faculty appointments at the University of Toronto and McMaster University. She currently sits on the board of directors for the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario and won the Canadian College of Health Leaders' National Nursing Leadership Award in 2009.

At VHA, Bea will lead initiatives supporting clinical excellence, research, innovation, continuous learning and improvement. Building upon the excellent



nursing care already in place, she will also help lead the organization in establishing, implementing and evaluating standards of professional nursing practice in accordance with the College of Nurses of Ontario.

We are delighted to have Bea on board and know she will bring her passion for clients and families, nursing excellence, leadership qualities and commitment to championing professional practice standards to VHA. Bea will be instrumental to VHA in realizing our mission of creating possibilities for more independence.

Up Close and Personal VHA's Heart of Home Care Award Winner

Have a birth plan—that's the advice that most obstetricians and midwives will tell you as you await the arrival of your new bundle of joy.

But the difficult reality is that some birth events don't just stray from the plan, but actually turn your life upside down and back again. This was the case for Baylee Levy, VHA's Heart of Home Care Award winner (formerly known as Heroes in the Home Award) when she gave birth to twins 24 years ago.

It was a difficult pregnancy and while her one son, Gavriel, was born premature but healthy, her second

son, Sar, had to be delivered by emergency C-section and was critically ill from the start. Sar was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis and cerebral palsy, and contracted a rare form of meningitis.

"When you're pregnant, you have great expectations. You think all these wonderful things are going to happen. It was nothing like I was expecting," says Baylee. "I didn't even get to see him (Sar) for the first few days because he was too sick. I was scared to get too attached to him because I was afraid of losing him."

The good news is that Sar proved everyone wrong and survived—but not without struggles. Because of his medical conditions, he requires 24/7 care that

Baylee tirelessly provides; “He’s my number one commitment. My life revolves around him. And that’s okay—it’s what he needs,” she says.

A beacon of joy

Sar and Baylee’s daily routine includes over 100 pills and four injections, but despite the extensive medical care her son requires, Baylee says their days are also filled with laughter.

Sar is full of life and loves music and activities like horseback riding and swimming. He’s clearly very smart though sometimes his intelligence is “masked” by his disabilities. Though Sar is non-verbal, he uses a communication board to “speak” with his family and caregivers.

“In many ways, he’s like every other young boy,” she says. “He’s active. He likes to go out and when he comes home, he heads for the fridge.”

Sar’s brother and father are equally smitten with Sar, happily sharing stories about him at the award reception, including his mischievous ploys to get food out of the cupboard or sneak a peek at a cute girl.

While undoubtedly care for Sar’s conditions present some challenges, it’s clear Sar is a constant source of happiness and hope for his family who are thankful for each moment they can spend with him. While Sar’s condition continues to deteriorate, the joy he finds in life is infectious and reminds Baylee to be optimistic. When he is happy, she can’t help but feel happy too, noting that his positive attitude has inspired her to keep fighting no matter how hard things may seem.

Support at home

Caring for Sar has brought out Baylee’s inner strength as she takes on the role of advocate for her son to ensure he receives the best care possible. But there are many challenges and demands on stay-at-home mom who provides round-the-clock care and Baylee says she found herself in need of relief.

In the early years, she had no idea where to look for help. When she finally learned about home care services less than a decade ago, she tried out different agencies looking for a good fit. She found that fit with VHA. VHA’s caregivers now visit five days a week to help with Sar and Baylee says they offer a unique brand of compassion and understanding.

“I’ve been through many agencies but I’ve been lucky lately with the workers that we have from VHA,” she says.

She was surprised but appreciative when she received VHA’s Heart of Home Care Award in recognition of her tireless commitment to her son’s care and well-being.



“My life is looking after my son,” she says. “I just never knew you could get an award for it.”

The Heart of Home Care Award highlights the work of dedicated family and friends like Baylee who are often the primary caregivers for their loved ones.

“The award is about advocating for those people who are really the heart and soul of home care,” says President and CEO of VHA, Carol Annett. “It is their blood, sweat and tears that make home care possible. We need to highlight that work and the need for caregiver support and relief. Baylee is a caregiver and a role model that her children can look up to. But most importantly, she’s a mother who is incredibly proud of her son Sar, his struggles and his triumphs.”

Has Baylee’s dream of motherhood worked out as she planned nearly a quarter of a century ago? From her pride and incredibly positive outlook, it appears the journey has brought her much more than she could have every imagined: “Everyone needs a Sar in their life,” she notes, “to remind them about what’s important and to learn to appreciate the little things.”



Eye on Quality

For the first time, VHA submitted integrated annual quality reports to our CCAC partners, combining the results of VHA's nursing, personal support and rehabilitation services.

Working on these Annual Reports together, managers of the different services and geographic areas learned more about each other's quality successes and related initiatives.

In describing the 2010-11 fiscal year in our reports, we were struck by how much VHA had accomplished as well as the number of quality improvement projects on the go in 2011.

Examples of just some of our successes in 2010-11 include:

- 24% decrease in the rate of abandoned calls
- 50% decrease in the missed visit rate in personal support services
- 8% reduction in the number of complaints concerning the Customer Service Centre
- 26% improvement in completion of Best Possible Medication Histories (BPMHs)

- 100% of billing rejection rate targets in each service area not just met but exceeded

VHA is energized by these improvements and is inspired to accomplish even greater successes in 2011-12. Currently, we have formal quality improvement projects for any performance standards where we fall short of our target or our customer's target. Detailed objectives, actions, milestones and timeframes are monitored regularly by the project's Lead and Senior Manager Sponsor.

In part to support our quality agenda, VHA is launching an upgraded IT system in October 2011. Enhanced functionalities will permit more timely collection and reporting of performance measurement data. Of note, Managers, Supervisors and front-line user groups will have access to customized workspaces with 'real-time' workflow and performance data. VHA's quality improvement momentum is in high gear!



Visit our website at www.vha.ca

All of our services are available in your own home, at school, in hospital or in a long-term care facility.

VHA SERVICES

- Adult and Elder Care
- Child and Family Care
- Respite or Caregiver/Family Relief
- Palliative Care
- Mental Health Support
- Foot Care
- Attendant Care
- Extreme Cleaning
- Information and Referral Services
- Supplementary Staffing in Care Facilities
- Supportive Housing
- Consultation and Education

VHA PROFESSIONAL STAFF/SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Dietitians
- Occupational Therapists
- Personal Support Workers/Homemakers
- Physiotherapists
- Registered Nurses/Registered Practical Nurses
- Social Workers
- Speech-Language Pathologists
- Client Service Coordinators/Supervisors
- Other Skilled Professionals as Required

VHA Home HealthCare is a member agency of United Way Toronto and a contracted provider with Toronto Central, Central, Central East, Central West, South West, Mississauga Halton, Champlain, and Erie St. Clair CCACs, the City of Toronto's Homemakers and Nurses Services program and the Regional Municipality of Durham.

