

# Message from the President

Carol Annett ~ CEO & President, VHA Home HealthCare

**I**t's the time of year when we say goodbye to those cold winter days and let in the fresh spring breeze. At VHA we are taking in a breath of fresh air and want to share with you many of the new projects, initiatives and ideas that we've been developing over the last few months.



Some of our most obvious changes have come out of our Blueprint, including our new Strategic Plan for 2011-2013 and logo. Hopefully you've received a copy of our Strategic Plan in the mail. If you haven't I invite you to take a look at it online at [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca). We've centred our plan around three compelling pillars: more independence, more outstanding home care and more talent and innovation.

One of the challenges will be taking these amazing ideas and bringing them to life. This is already well underway! Of note, and featured in this issue, is the incredibly innovative work coming out of VHA Rehab Solutions with the launch of The Community Clutter and Hoarding Toolkit –the first community-based resource of its kind created to support every sector that encounters hoarding on the job.

These winds of change and innovation have also inspired us to give our [familycaregiving.ca](http://familycaregiving.ca) site a refreshed new look and expanded resource section to support all caregivers helping a loved one (child, adult or senior) with health conditions.

Our Heart of Home Care Award (formerly known as Heroes in the Home Award) is again looking for more heartwarming stories to tell and more incredible caregivers to celebrate. Although we've changed the name, the purpose of the award stays the same: to honour the important work, dedication and patience that non-professional caregivers do to support ill or disabled loved ones, and to underline the importance of and need for respite care. When we get caught up in the minutia of day-to-day stresses, these stories of selflessness, compassion and love always breathe new life into the work we do and people we support.

At VHA we are feeling refreshed and inspired by the winds of change that have blown through the organization and hope you're as excited and eager as we are!

Newsletter brought to you by

# Renovations Change More than Rooms

**O**ur logo and tagline aren't the only things that have gotten a face lift of late. Adams House—a home that helps 26 clients living with mental illness learn to manage daily activities and regain a sense of wellness—was also recently spruced up by its landlord, VHA.

Day-to-day activities in the building are run by COTA Health. The staff focus on creating a sense of structure that helps clients better manage their health and reclaim life's opportunities. "The most rewarding part of this job is to know that you are helping someone regain a sense of who they are by encouraging them to get back out into the community and educate themselves," noted one Adams House staff member.

The goal of renovations, which included repainting the

house, a refreshed common area, safety improvements, brighter lighting and a new kitchen, was to make the space feel more homey and comfortable for residents.

According to staff, the improvements have positively impacted the atmosphere in the home and the outlook of clients. "Since the renovations," one worker commented, "the impact of the environment has improved positive client interactions with other clients and staff."

Both the clients and staff could not thank VHA enough. The renovations have made such a difference to clients, that for the first time this year, they celebrated with a dinner on Christmas. All the clients came together to prepare and share a holiday meal. The staff said it was amazing to witness. Clients are happier, more comfortable and clearly content with this new and improved home that allows them to live life with more independence.



A fresh new look helps Adams House feel like a true home.

## Save the date!

- What:** VHA's AGM  
**When:** Monday, June 6, 2011  
**Where:** 30 Soudan Ave.  
Ground Floor  
**Who:** Dr. Sholom Glouberman  
Guest Speaker, Author &  
Founder of the Patient's  
Association of Canada

## We welcome your support!

### Membership

VHA welcomes new associate members and encourages people in the community to get involved with VHA. Our membership fee of \$25 can be waived in special circumstances. Please contact Patricia Triantafilou at 416.489.2500 or [patricia@vha.ca](mailto:patricia@vha.ca).

### Donation

Charitable donations to VHA Home HealthCare make a meaningful difference in the lives of people in need. Donations are welcome online, by mail, phone or in person. Our sincerest thanks for your generosity.

**Comments or Suggestions?** Contact the editor of Community Care Connection  
**Pam Stoikopoulos** : 416.489.2500 x4344 or 1.888.314.6622 email: [pstoik@vha.ca](mailto:pstoik@vha.ca)



# Eye on Quality

## 2011 promises to be an even busier year than 2010 in ramping up quality improvement initiatives.

Client experience survey results came in from Ipsos Reid. Overall results show high levels of satisfaction in our core service areas—Personal Support, Nursing, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. Upcoming team meetings will focus on the results and gather ideas from staff and service providers about improving VHA's performance to make the client experience even better. We'll continue to survey clients receiving these and other services in upcoming months.

Whether or not it's an accreditation year, we're committed to ongoing review of VHA's service and overall organizational quality. As a result, we continue to use accreditation survey tools to help identify our strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The Accreditation Canada Board Functioning Tool, for example, was sent out to Board members and received a 100 per cent response rate. The results were very positive, showing improvement over 2008 findings. Nonetheless, the board continues to forge ahead with a workgroup focused on continuous improvement in governance.

Additionally, nearly 800 staff and service providers responded to Worklife Pulse—another Accreditation Canada assessment tool. Like the client experience findings, we'll share these results at team meetings to generate new ideas and strategies for internal work life improvements.

We're also working hard to:

- Create a more standardized approach to project management through rollout of training and tools for our management team
- Improve IT infrastructure of operational systems and our intranet so that our diverse staff and service provider groups can access valuable information more quickly and easily

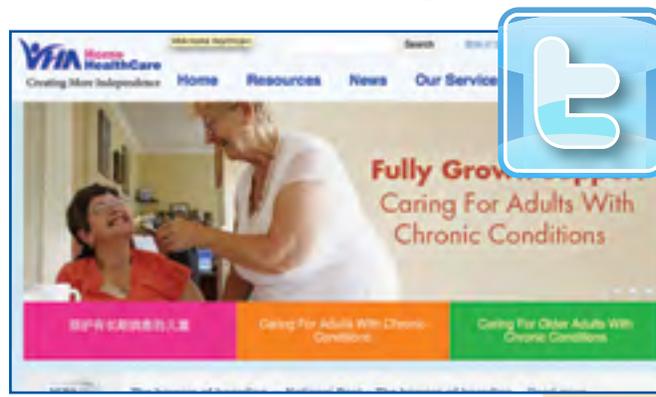
Clearly, the quest for quality never stops. But with all the initiatives in the works, 2011 is sure to be a banner year in quality improvement for VHA!

## Check it Out

We're re-launching [www.familycaregiving.ca](http://www.familycaregiving.ca)! With an enhanced look, feel and functionality, our new and improved website now provides support to all caregivers looking after a loved one with a health condition. "We really wanted to create a circle of support for caregivers," says Pamela Stoikopoulos, Communications Manager for VHA. "We know that caregivers are strapped for time and don't have hours to spend searching for information. The simple layout and relevant resources help people—whether they're looking after a child, adult or senior—get to valuable information quickly and easily." She notes that the site is also unique because it provides resources in **Simplified and Traditional Chinese**.

## Follow us on Twitter

VHA has entered the world of Social Media and wants you to join the conversation on caregiving! Follow us on [twitter@VHACaregiving](https://twitter.com/VHACaregiving).



# More Innovation Helps People Dig Out of Clutter

**W**e've all seen the images. Piles of boxes, books, clothing and empty food containers nearly consuming a home—burying treasures, memories and sometimes even the hopes and dreams of an individual whose clutter and hoarding have spun out of control. And while these circumstances make for compelling television, the reality of a life confined by clutter is a challenging one that faces an estimated five percent of the population.



Though severe clutter and hoarding affects those living amidst the chaos, it can also make delivery of home and community support services difficult if not impossible. It was an issue staff and service providers at VHA kept running up against in the field. The problem was there were no real resources available for community professionals who encounter hoarding on the job. That's when two Occupational Therapists at VHA—Catherine Chater and Emily Levitt—not only took up the cause, but decided to take it to the next level by creating *The Community Clutter and Hoarding Toolkit*. The toolkit took several years to develop and is the first resource of its kind to support all sectors working in the community—whether they're health care professionals, community workers, landlords/building managers or family and friends of the person with the hoarding problem. The toolkit

launched in late February and has grabbed the attention of health and community workers from as far away as Australia.

“Time and again, we were approached by partners and colleagues for advice,” says Barbara Cawley, VP of Client Services at VHA. “This toolkit came out of a genuine need. Whether it's a visiting nurse, a superintendent or a family member who discovers an incredibly cluttered home—we all can play a role in supporting someone who hoards to live a less cluttered and safer life.”

Unlike the spate of quick-fix reality shows that deal with the problem of hoarding in a very short time, the toolkit takes a more gradual and holistic approach to clutter. “It may seem like doing a clean sweep of the home is an easy way to stop hoarding,” notes toolkit co-author Catherine Chater, “but this is rarely a long-term solution for someone who hoards.” She adds that resolving the issue means understanding what caused the clutter in the first place and believes a gentler, less invasive approach—that uses Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and other practical strategies—is the most effective way to deal with the issue and prevent relapse. “When people who hoard are forced to get rid of the things they ‘collect,’ it can cause a lot of anxiety and stress. To them, the object often symbolizes something much bigger—it can define who they are or remind them of a memory they're afraid they'll forget otherwise. Our focus is on helping people who hoard to understand why they do it, how they can make different choices and take care of themselves.”

“We're thrilled to be taking the lead on discovering new solutions to hoarding challenges,” says Cheryl Perera, Director of New Ventures and Community Programs, who also chairs the Toronto Hoarding Coalition. Established in 2007, the coalition advocates for Torontonians who want to access much-needed services to help them maintain housing stability and optimize their own health and safety, as well as the community's. “It's a complex issue that really is best solved through co-operation of workers in the community, friends and family and, of course, the individual who hoards.” To further support effective use of the toolkit and bring more community

partners on board, VHA will soon launch workshops to deal with the issue in greater depth.

“These are people’s fathers, sisters, neighbours and friends. And when the clutter gets so out of hand, it can be a real safety hazard for falls, fire, and infestation,” says Perera. “And that can really impact the community as a whole. We hope that by sharing VHA’s expertise and knowledge, we can really raise awareness about the issue and together help those who hoard reclaim their living spaces and lives.”

For more on The Community Hoarding and Clutter Toolkit, please visit [www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca).

For workshop information, please contact:  
Cheryl Perera, Director, New Ventures and Community Programs: 416-482-4610 or [cperera@vha.ca](mailto:cperera@vha.ca)



## Know a caregiver who is all heart?



Then nominate them for  
**VHA’s Heart of Home Care Award!\***

Do you know a non-professional caregiver in Ontario who goes above and beyond the call of duty to provide a loved one who is disabled, elderly or chronically ill with the support they need to live at home in comfort and with dignity?

If so, then VHA Home HealthCare wants to hear from you!

**Tell us your story of a caregiving hero:**

- Who they are;
- What they’ve done to support a loved one and;
- The impact this has had on the lives of others.

Send an email or voicemail to Cheryl Perera at 416-482-4610 or [cperera@vha.ca](mailto:cperera@vha.ca) with “Heart of Home Care” as the subject and tell us why the caregiver is so special.

Or mail it to: VHA Home HealthCare, Att: Cheryl Perera:  
30 Soudan Ave. #500, Toronto, ON, M4S 1V6

Remember: the more detail you give, the better!

**Deadline is April 30th, 2011**

\* formerly known as VHA’s “Heroes in the Home” Award



Visit our website at [www.vha.ca](http://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



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.



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