



# VHA Voice

ISSUE 10 ■ SUMMER ■ 2017

## Caregiving: Benefits & Pitfalls Free Webinar

June 20 @ 7:00PM to 8:30PM

Join us and let's talk about caregiving! Every caregiving journey is unique. This webinar will give you first-hand insights and experiences from two amazing family caregivers.

Learn strategies and tools to help make your caregiving journey easier.

Register online at: [thecaregivernetwork.ca/vha](http://thecaregivernetwork.ca/vha) or contact Malak Sidky at 416-459-0266.

## VHA's New Palliative Specialty Steering Committee

Palliative care is an ongoing priority for VHA. This year we established a Palliative Specialty Steering Committee which includes three caregiver partners whose loved ones received palliative care services from VHA.

The goal of VHA's Palliative Specialty Steering Committee is to integrate palliative care services to ensure that clients and their caregivers are receiving seamless, compassionate and responsive care during this emotionally challenging stage. This committee also aims to provide point-of-care nurses, rehab service providers and personal support workers with the supports and recourses they need to deliver excellent care to our palliative clients.

To date, caregiver partner feedback has been nothing short of eye-opening and inspiring. We look forward to working with these partners to set priorities and deliver effective service solutions for this highly specialized and unique care. Stay tuned for updates!

## Meet our 2017 Client Choice Award Winners

We're committed to involving clients and their families in VHA initiatives. So when we asked for your help finding this year's Client Choice Award winners, we received more than 400 nominations! To those who nominated, thanks for your effort. It was a tough decision because all nominees are deserving. To view the videos, visit: <http://bit.ly/2017clientchoicewinners>.



**Alice Mae Mahinay**  
Personal Support Worker  
Nominated by Pradeepa De Silva

"She's a wonderful person, she's very caring," says Pradeepa. When Alice started coming and giving my dad exercises, making him shower and giving him extra care, it gives him a reason to wake up in the morning."



**Colleen Beaumont**  
Personal Support Worker  
Nominated by Eleanor Chrom

"She's so reliable and we have a great time together," says Eleanor. "She's got a fantastic personality. And we have so much fun... She's always there when I need her."



**Kala Subramaniam**  
Occupational Therapist  
Nominated by Carolyn La Fayette

"Kala is different because I can tell she loves what she does," says Carolyn. "I do think what I do is special as an Occupational Therapist. I see my role as providing parents and teachers with the tools they need to help the kids," says Kala.



**Maria Elena Grani**  
Personal Support Worker  
Nominated by Joe Iacolucci

"She does everything nicely. Just the way I like it. She is always on time. She is like a daughter, like a sister. She does many nice things for me," says Angela, Maria's 100-year old client, Angela.



**Marita Vitto**  
Personal Support Worker  
Nominated by Dino Beltsis

"After all of the time she has been around, she's, you know, a member of our family," says Dino "You are a leader and a peer for all of your friends. You're awesome!"



**Melinda Awa**  
Personal Support Worker  
Nominated by Claire Allan-Wilson

"She brings so much to us both...my life wouldn't be as rich as it is without her," says Claire. "I do think the reading she does with Stew (Claire's husband) is above and beyond. Plus the emotional support."



**Mira Perisic**  
Personal Support Coordinator  
Nominated by Renata Dobrik

"Mira has been instrumental in setting up and coordinating a schedule with the PSW that works for me and my husband's needs," says Mira. "For me, it's not about a specific example. I look at the whole picture as an integrated process. It's about continuously providing a service of excellence and helping clients to fulfill their needs."



**Najwa Mahfouz (left) and Kristine Coronel (right)**



**Leigh Scholl (left) and Lina Le (right)**



**Alexa's Care Team**  
Registered Nurses  
Nominated by Nicole

"They all go above and beyond every single day because Alexa requires...a lot of care. And because of her disorder, it's actually neurodegenerative," says Nicole. "We've found out that basically, she needs a lot of stimulation. And they've gone way beyond the call of duty with that. They exercise her every single day, they put her in her stander, and that's made it so that she is a lot stronger."

## Become a partner! Share your voice!

VHA is always looking to improve. Join the conversation. If you would like to share your thoughts and become a Client Voice partner at VHA, please contact **Stacey Ryan at 647-460-8595 or [sryan@vha.ca](mailto:sryan@vha.ca) for more information.**

## Loved our newsletter? Thought we missed something? Want to be profiled or contribute?

We're interested in hearing your ideas, stories and suggestions! Email [communications@vha.ca](mailto:communications@vha.ca) or call **416-489-2500 ext. 4344**, toll free at **1-888-314-6622 ext. 4344**

We're All Ears!



Newsletter available in alternate formats on request.

# VHA's 2017 Heart of Home Care Winners!

VHA honoured three caregivers who won this year's Heart of Home Care Award, held on April 4, 2017 at Toronto City Hall. The awards program, now in its 12th year, recognizes the extraordinary efforts of a friend or family member who has gone above and beyond the call of duty to provide a loved one who is disabled, elderly, or chronically ill, with the support needed to live at home with more independence. Watch the amazing videos of our winners by going to:

<http://bit.ly/2017HeartVideos>



## **Tracy Lafleur** **Winner of Caregiver to an Adult Child**

Tracy works the night shift as a paediatric homecare nurse, attending to children who are born with health issues or are terminally ill. But during the day, she turns her care to her most important patient: her son Ryan. Ryan was diagnosed with brain cancer just as he was beginning college studies in engineering. Tracy has been by his side ever since taking care of all of Ryan's activities of daily living. She sneaks in power naps when she can and sets alarms to ensure she is awake to administer Ryan's medications, routinely putting Ryan's needs ahead of her own. "She even offers to help when professional assistance is in the house and she should be taking a break," says VHA PSW Sarah Yeomans, who nominated Tracy for the award. "She is always happy and energetic even though I know she's running on no sleep. She truly does have a heart of gold."



## **Karen Gillespie** **Winner of Caregiver to an Adult**

For the last eight years, Karen has been an incredibly loving and positive caregiver to her husband Jack, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's in 2009. Once a lawyer, Jack is now unable to do even the simplest tasks, such as rolling over or speaking. Karen does everything for her "soul mate," including exercising his limbs, monitoring his fluid intake and chatting with him throughout the day even though he cannot respond. Her love is evident in the many cuddles she gives, and her "Spa Day Sundays" when Karen takes extra time to pamper and groom Jack. "She has made my father's life as comfortable and happy as possible," says daughter Meghan, who nominated Karen for the Heart of Home Care Caregiver to an Adult Award. "She makes certain that my dad is treated with dignity and respect. She has been able to grieve the losses all along this journey but loves my father even more."



## **Caridad Nalumen** **Winner of Parent Caregiver to a Child**

Being the parent of young twins can be a handful at the best of times, but when those children have special needs, it requires extra energy and effort. Caridad somehow stays on top of it all as the caregiver to her four-year-old twin boys, Jayren and Shandre, both of whom have Autism Spectrum Disorder. Caridad attends to the twins' needs and actively engages in their development every moment she can, using the skills she learned in a therapy program to positively impact the boys' progress. "She is a great advocate for the boys in school. She does her homework, listens to strategies and asks for help," says her nominator VHA Occupational Therapist, Allyson Hoch. Because of her dedication, the boys' development has exceeded expectations. "Overall, the family is fantastic. The progress I've seen with the boys is because Caridad has been such a great caregiver in following through," Allyson adds.

*Thanks to our Presenting Sponsors: PACE Consulting and Teak Printing, and Community Sponsors: Flashframe Digital Media, BDO Canada, and Home and Long Term Care Magazine.*

## **2017 Heart of Home Care Awards Event at Toronto City Hall**



## **Meet VHA's New Client and Carer Advisory Council Co-Chair — Amr Elimam**



Amr is a caregiver to his sister with special needs. He recently came into the role of caregiver after his mother passed away. Amr joined the Client and Carer Advisory Council last November and recently became Co-Chair of it. The Council regularly provides feedback on VHA's quality improvement initiatives and offers

insights and advice on what VHA's priorities and focus should be as part of these initiatives.

### **Tell us a little bit about your caregiving journey?**

I was initially a "light" caregiver for my mother and my disabled sister. My mother was also the caregiver for my sister. My mother passed away two years ago and I became the caregiver for my sister who lives with me now.

### **How did you get involved with VHA?**

Both my mother and my sister were clients of VHA through the CCAC. My sister is still a client. I was "complaining" about some aspects of the

service. When I was invited to take a more active role by joining the Council, I decided that it ... will have a higher impact to be part of the team.

### **As co-chair of VHA's Client and Carer Advisory Council, what projects are you most excited to support?**

I am currently soliciting feedback from my other advisory members. I feel I have a role of trying to encourage different feedback to come forward. Even though I have some personal preferences, I should probably not outline these as I would rather provide a more inclusive feedback.

### **Why do you think VHA's Client Voice Advisory Council is so important?**

The services provided by VHA are both critical and highly personal. Each one of VHA's clients has unique needs and circumstances. This means that it would be a challenge for VHA to identify priorities and understand key tangible and intangible process improvement opportunities. The Council can bring forward client viewpoints that would not be easily accessible in other ways. I also think it's a great forum to validate thoughts and go forward ideas for change. In my opinion, one of the biggest failures of many organizations is losing touch with the wants and needs of their end customers.