

THE LINK

Issue number two
APRIL
2010

PATS ...FOR PEOPLE!

P.A.T.S. is the wonderfully appropriate acronym for “Pacific Animal Therapy Society.” Almost every weekday morning and afternoon, a P.A.T.S. pet and his or her human companion visits the Saanich Peninsula Hospital. As the four-legged volunteers trot along the hallways, they brighten the day for the entire hospital community – bringing smiles to residents, patients and staff.

“It isn’t just a two-minute visit,” says a long-term Extended Care resident. The resident pauses and gathers her thoughts. “It takes me out of myself, reminds me of my own dogs, and gives me something to think about. The positive effect carries me through the day, sometimes even lasts for several days.”

Animal therapy has been documented to have a number of health benefits – it reduces stress, lowers blood pressure and even shortens hospital stays. Nursing staff at SPH have noticed that patients often sleep better after a P.A.T.S. visit.

Delighted laughter fills the hallways when people catch sight of Harley – a gentle giant of a Great Dane – who comes on Fridays with Vic Clive. As a group of seniors gather around Harley in the Sunroom, a physiotherapist watches and whispers, “I’ve never seen our patients so excited about anything.”



Shadow with David (owner)

Eight-year old “Shadow” is a familiar sight on Wednesdays as she visits the hospital with P.A.T.S. volunteer David Garlick. A rescue dog herself, Shadow seems to have an empathetic connection with patients. “Sometimes people who aren’t comfortable talking with me because I’m a stranger, will open up and have a conversa-



Back Row Left – Harley (owner, Vic), Muggins (owner, Carole), Mattie (owner, Marlene), Emma (owner, Sadey),

Front Row Left: Princess Haggar (owner, Ruth), Casey (owner, Bruce), Shadow (owner, David)

tion with Shadow,” says David. “Oh – Shadow is my best friend,” says one elderly resident, reaching from her wheelchair to stroke Shadow’s head.

Thursday is “Emma’s” day to visit, accompanied by P.A.T.S. founder Sadey Guy. Wearing her bright blue P.A.T.S. bandana, the tiny Yorkshire Terrier stops in to visit a patient in Palliative Care. As the patient strokes Emma’s head, his eyes brighten and his voice strengthens as he says “Hello there, little one.”

Sadey was one of the first nurses at SPH and remembers admitting the first patient in 1975. The next year, she and her husband founded the Happy Times boarding kennel. When she retired in 1988, Sadey brought her two loves together – pets and nursing -- by creating the not-for-profit society.

P.A.T.S. pets come in all shapes and sizes, from dogs and cats to horses and even llamas. Today 370 P.A.T.S. volunteers visit hospitals, seniors’ residences, care homes and schools across Vancouver Island. ■

By Carolyn Stout

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

When you arrive for an interview with the director of a hospital, you expect to find a desk-bound administrator sitting in an office, presiding over stacks of documents.

Not so at the Saanich Peninsula Hospital. Here you find yourself sprinting along the hallways behind Dawn Nedzelski, trying to keep up as she dashes from the classroom where she's been conducting a training session, back to her office where she's scheduled to meet you, before her next appointment.

You quickly realize that Dawn Nedzelski will put in all the hours that are necessary behind the desk, but her heart and her focus are on the units and in the rooms where patients are receiving care.

This is hardly surprising, given Dawn's career path. She started on the front lines of nursing, working in the Intensive Care and Emergency units at Royal Jubilee Hospital/Victoria General Hospital. While these positions were rewarding, she wanted to know what happened to the patients she'd seen, so she moved to the Rehabilitation unit at the Gorge Hospital. Dawn's determination to improve care for patients saw her return to University for her BSc in Nursing, and ultimately make the transition into management at SPH, becoming Manager of Acute Care in 1999 and Site Director in 2006.

In these roles, Dawn has a clear goal. "My constant challenge to myself and the team is 'How can we do a better job?' I am always looking for ways we can improve care."

For Dawn, a large part of the solution to that challenge is found in SPH Volunteers. "Volunteers are vital to us," she says. "I call it the 'power of the volunteer' and it helps make SPH the amazing place it is."

It's unusual for a hospital to have volunteers working in

Acute Care. At SPH, they play an essential role. "Saanich Peninsula Hospital prides itself in serving the oldest population on Vancouver Island, and it means that support from our volunteers is even more critical."

This is more than the "view from the top." SPH is Dawn's family's community hospital too. Both she and her family have first-hand experience as patients. On one occasion with her daughter, the volunteers helped make a very difficult time considerably easier. "There was always someone there. I'd find a biscuit and a cup of tea by my daughter's room," remembers Dawn. "I felt so supported, so cared for – I could focus all my energy on her well-being."

Leading by example, Dawn exemplifies the "power of the volunteer" herself as she is a community volunteer as a 4H Leader. She has twelve miniature horses, 11 of which are used for 4H Projects.

Last year Dawn was one of only 45 British Columbians to receive a BC Community Achievement Award – an honour endorsed and applauded by every member of the SPH family! ■



Dawn Nedzelski, Director of SPH and Manager of Acute and Palliative Care

By Carolyn Stout and Brenda Mason



Welcome to the second issue of The Link!

We've timed this issue to come out during April, for a very special reason. The Link is a newsletter for and about SPH volunteers and the week of April 18 to 24 is National Volunteer Week in Canada.

According to Volunteer Canada's website, some 12.5 million volunteers

gave more than 2.1 billion hours of their time to worthy causes across the country in 2009. As Volunteer Canada says, "They are the selfless individuals who demonstrate their genuine compassion for the well being of others and in support of essential causes, by taking action and by making a difference."

Canada's volunteering spirit is strong – and that is especially true on the Saanich Peninsula.

Here in the hallways of the Saanich Peninsula Hospital the spirit of volunteers shines brightly every day. Some

285 individuals come to SPH on a regular basis. Last year volunteers made an incredible contribution of time – more than 27,000 hours!

This hospital would not function at the level it does without volunteers. These dedicated people provide support, guidance, conversation, and company for the patients and residents at SPH.

I want to thank all of the volunteers who come every week, every month of the year, to share their skills, their talents, their time and their caring spirits with our patients and residents.

I am humbled by your commitment. There isn't a day that goes by that a volunteer doesn't make me laugh or make me think. I'm honoured to be able to work with such an amazing team, to be a small part of your lives and to see the big effects you have on people.

Throughout the year, we appreciate the difference you make. In April, we thank you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

Chris Foster, Manager, Volunteer Resources

THE ULTIMATE YOUTH VOLUNTEERS



Adele (left) Adrienne (right)

Listening to sisters Adele and Adrienne Duimering, weekly volunteers at Saanich Peninsula Hospital, talk humbly about their young lives leaves one in awe. Positive role models for youth, these confident and dedicated young women demonstrate all that youth could be. They seem to have found time to balance an active academic and social life with a very important slice of life-volunteerism.

Both Adele and Adrienne are students at the University of Victoria and both have scholarships to the University. Adele (19) is in her third year studying physics and biochemistry while Adrienne (17) is in her first year studying general science. They attended St Margaret's School in Victoria from kindergarten to graduation.

The family moved to our community in 2000 and the sisters have volunteered in the Extended Care Unit at the Hospital since April 2008. They consider their visits to the elderly as visiting their senior friends. **“Volunteering at the hospital on Friday evening has become the social highlight of the week.”** Both their parents are teachers and the girls have volunteered for many years with their mother who is very involved in the community.

Adele and Adrienne enjoy the scheduling flexibility at SPH as the Manager of Volunteer Resources, Chris Foster, allows them to volunteer within their University schedule.

Both girls visit, read to, and play games with and, weather permitting, garden with the residents. They enjoy talking to people in their 80s and 90s who have rich life experiences. They never cease to be amazed at how much people can recall from events that happened over 50 years ago. **“Clearly, what they are sharing holds personal significance.”**

Adele spends most of her volunteer time with one person in particular to whom she reads the newspaper and with whom she has discussions about her career. Adele finds this rewarding because her new friend is able to use his knowledge and keep current with advances in science. Adrienne takes interest in photos of holidays and trips that her “special” friend was able to take with her family in days gone by. Family photos mean a great deal to residents.

The residents are really interested in learning about their visitors and are enthusiastic about their career goals.

Adele and Adrienne are amazed that some of the Extended Care Residents are technically savvy. Some use their cellular phone and some listen to music on their iPod.

They have time for a myriad of other pursuits, including volunteering for several other organizations. They are considered rays of sunshine to the residents in Extended Care at Saanich Peninsula Hospital and we thank Adele and Adrienne for inspiring us. ■

By Brenda Mason and Barbara Harwood

CURRENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Palliative Care Unit

The Palliative Care Unit volunteer program at the Saanich Peninsula Hospital is recruiting new volunteers for the summer training session in August. If you enjoy supporting patients/families during this phase of their life this program may be for you. Information session to be held in June.

Meal Time Host/Greeters

Enhancing the dining experience of our residents in the Extended Care Units by portering, greeting and socializing with residents at meal times. This will include opening containers, refilling beverages, and pouring tea and coffee. Meal times are supervised by nursing staff. Shifts are – Monday – Sunday – Lunch 11:30am-1:00pm and Supper 4:30pm-6:00pm (those are the times that staff require extra help)

Emergency

Providing assistance and support to patients admitted to the Emergency and their family members. Previous hospital experience helpful but not necessary. Shifts are Monday – Sunday – 10am-1pm, 1pm-4pm and 4pm-7pm. A departmental orientation and mentoring shifts are provided.

Recreation and Social Programs in Extended Care

Assist staff with social and recreational activities – Shifts are weekdays Monday – Friday between 10am – 3pm most activities are 1-2 hours long, currently available. Garden friends – flexible days and hours including weekends. Carpet Bowling – Monday am – 10am-11am. Special Events - Wednesday pm – 1:30pm-3:30pm.

Social Butterflies

To foster relationships with patients. May include: visiting, reading, reminiscing, playing cards or board games, music, or assisting with structured activities. Many of these patients have some level of dementia. Some may have no family or friends who visit. Monday- Sunday starting at 9:30am – 8pm. Most visitors stay for 1-2 hours with patients/residents. Flexible days and times, units include Acute, South Medical and Extended Care.

Bon Appetit – Company’s Coming

To provide companionship for residents and patients who would benefit from extra attention and stimulation during meals, create a social dining atmosphere. Classroom training and practical mentoring are provided. Shifts are Monday – Sunday – breakfast-8:30am-10am, lunch-11:30pm-1pm, supper-4:30pm-6pm

Pet Therapy

Visit residents on the South Acute Medical Unit and Extended Care Unit. All animal volunteers must be approved by VIHA and have certification from a local therapy program such as PATS (Pacific Animal Therapy Society). Shifts are Monday- Sunday – starting at 9:30am for approximately 1-2 hours. There are primarily afternoon times open right now.

Guiding Star Program

If you enjoy talking to people, giving directions and helping people find their way. Lots of flexibility and variety. Shifts are Monday-Friday – 2 hour blocks starting at 8am.

Chris Foster, Manager, Volunteer Resources,
can be contacted at 250-652-7519
or email at: christine.foster@viha.ca

VOLUNTEER EDITORIAL TEAM



From back left to right: Bryan Warner (photographer), Barbara Harwood (writer), Colin Jackson (photographer),

Front row left to right: Carolyn Stout (writer), Chris Foster (Manager, Volunteer Resources), Brenda Mason (writer) missing - Ray Maddocks (graphic designer)



Looking for other volunteer opportunities either with VIHA or in general, then check out these web sites.

www.viha.ca - click on departments/services scroll down to Volunteer Resources

www.volunteervictoria.bc.ca - searchable database of over 1000 volunteer opportunities.